

Unbridgeable Barriers:
The Holocaust in Canadian Cinema

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral
Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Cultural Mediations

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

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ISBN: 978-0-494-83210-3
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Abstract

This dissertation explores the treatment of the Holocaust in Canadian cinema. It argues that Canadian films have emphasized experiential barriers that challenge the Holocaust's representation within a Canadian context. At the broadest level these barriers function historically, manifesting the geographic distance between Canada and the Holocaust during World War II (WWII). More commonly, Canadian films enact these barriers at the interpersonal level via emotional or cognitive barriers between individuals who experienced the Holocaust (i.e. survivors who have moved to Canada) and those who did not (i.e. Canadians surrounding the survivors who lack the experience to understand their past).

Chapter One establishes absence as a central problematic for Canadian Holocaust cinema. It pays particular attention to films that focus on Canada's WWII history, which does not (at least easily) include a confrontation with the Holocaust. Chapter Two considers the *legacy* of these historical barriers on an individual level through films that feature troubled relations between survivors and specifically *Canadian* socio-political contexts. Chapter Three looks at films that imply the invisibility of the barriers around Canadian survivors, which localizes the Holocaust squarely in their experiential memory, and thus renders it absent outside of them.

Chapter Four shifts focus to films that aim to "resolve" this barrier by making the Holocaust present outside the individual experiences of survivors – first by emphasizing the shared quality of the Holocaust experience amongst groups of survivors, and second by documenting the return of survivors to the spaces of their past. Chapter Five concentrates on films that also aim to efface the barrier of experience, but through the

process of those lacking a direct experience of the Holocaust appropriating an experiential perspective.

The final chapter looks at films by Jack Kuper, a Holocaust survivor from Toronto. Kuper's films posit a clear division between himself looking back on an event that he experienced, and the event itself. By emphasizing this division of subjectivity, this survivor's films suggest the perpetual cognitive absence of the Holocaust, placing the event outside of representation, even for those who lived through it. These films thus intimate a barrier *in*, rather than *of* experience.

Acknowledgments

While rewarding, this project was a challenge that often seemed insurmountable. I could not have brought it to fruition without the support and guidance of the following:

First and absolutely foremost, I thank my God for granting me strength when the possibility of actually finishing my PhD seemed so remote, and for allowing me to quarrel with Him so regularly throughout its duration.

Professionally, I am indebted to my supervisor, André Loiselle, who spent countless hours listening to my ideas, and bouncing ideas back to me, as I aimed to concoct a dissertation project, and provided frequent dinners and wine. I also thank my readers, Charles O'Brien and Gary Evans. A special thanks goes out to Gary as well for the work that he had done previously on Canada's Holocaust cinema, which made this study possible. I also graciously thank Mr. Jack Kuper for welcoming me into his home and granting me a generous interview.

Personally, I thank my parents, Melvin and Jocelyn Maron for their continuous emotional support and a well-timed trip to Cancun in 2010. Thanks also to Matt Croombs for sharing the agony of pursuing a PhD in a seemingly fruitless job market.

And finally, eternal thanks and love to my wife Cheryl. You've been beside me – perhaps closer than you wanted to be at times – throughout this journey. To say it has been an emotional rollercoaster for us would be a dramatic understatement. But your belief in me has been constant and your love unconditional. There is no doubt that without your encouragement, your listening ear, and your embrace, I would not have finished this. If I could, I would certainly award you an honorary doctorate for enduring these last five years. I love you, and shall forever.

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Introduction

Unbridgeable History: Towards a Heuristic for Analyzing Canadian Holocaust Cinema

This dissertation explores the treatment of the Holocaust in Canadian cinema. While the question of how the Holocaust has been represented in the cinematic medium has produced an extremely large amount of scholarship,¹ to survey this literature one could be forgiven for concluding that Canadian films about the Holocaust are at best negligible, and at worst non-existent. I received such a reaction the first time that I presented my research for this project at the first International Graduate Students' Conference on Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University in April 2009. When the time came for my presentation, the panel chair stood up at the podium to introduce my paper. After she read the title of my presentation, which was similar to that of this introduction, she looked in my direction and asked inquisitively and with friendly skepticism, "*Canadian Holocaust cinema?*" I told her that was precisely the reaction I was hoping for with this project, and the perfect introduction to my paper as I set out to convince a cross-disciplinary audience of scholars that there not only *is* a significant number of Canadian films that have been produced about the Holocaust, but that this corpus is worthy of scholarly attention.

At present, the only published piece to have considered Canadian film productions on the Holocaust as a corpus in its own right is Gary Evans' "Vision and Revision: Canadian Film and Video on the Holocaust," an article included in *Afterimage: Evocations of the Holocaust in Contemporary Canadian Arts and Literature*, a collection

¹ Since I refer to many examples of such scholarship throughout the rest of this dissertation, I opt at this point to refer the reader to the bibliography for a representative sample of literature on Holocaust cinema rather than providing all of these sources in a single citation.

derived from a conference of the same name held in Montreal in 2001.² To conclude this article, Evans included an annotated and chronological filmography, which he has also provided online, with the most recent version being posted this year (2011).³ As is discussed in greater detail below, aside from these exceptions, the question of how the Holocaust has been treated in Canadian cinema has been entirely unexplored. The following dissertation aims to rectify this critical lacuna not only by both offering a more sustained analysis of this corpus, but also (I hope) by serving as a launch pad from which a broader scholarly discourse derived from one, some, or all of these critically neglected films may emerge.

As Evans' piece serves largely as an introductory survey of Canadian Holocaust cinema – one that the present project is indebted to – it is constructed primarily as a descriptive chronology of a corpus comprised of virtually unknown films. Yet despite the descriptive impulse of the article, Evans does adopt the critical perspective that Canadian films have failed to offer a historical connection to the Holocaust. For Evans, the “majority of [Canadian productions about the Holocaust] are inadequate because they fail to incorporate or make reference to the Holocaust as an enduring bridge.”⁴ While Evans is somewhat ambiguous as to what exactly he means by “enduring bridge,” for my purposes, as will become clear shortly, I take it to mean that Canadian films have tended to leave unclear the moral relevance of the Nazis' attempted destruction of European Jewry for a Canadian context in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Now this point is

² Gary Evans, “Vision and Revision: Canadian Film and Video on the Holocaust,” in *Afterimage: Evocations of the Holocaust in Contemporary Canadian Arts and Literature*, ed. Loren Lerner (Montreal: Concordia Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies, 2002), 150-187.

³ Gary Evans, “Filmography: Annotated Filmography of Canadian Produced Films and Videos on the Holocaust,” (March 2011), <http://www.theverylongview.com/WATH/biblio/film.htm> (accessed June 7, 2011).

⁴ Evans 2002, 152. Evans has also indicated to me that an addition revised online version of this filmography is forthcoming.

something I agree with in principle. As this dissertation will demonstrate, the films that comprise Canada's Holocaust cinema approach the event by placing it "out of reach" so to speak, evoking various senses of remoteness (historical, spatial, temporal, cognitive, and emotional, for example) that seem to fall short of the bridge that Evans seeks. But I would argue that he limits the critical potential of his observation by articulating this "unbridgeable" quality from an evaluative standpoint.⁵ As the title of this dissertation suggests, my contention is that it is precisely this "unbridgeable" quality - this sense of unconquered distance - that marks these works as a corpus, and must thus inform a framework for considering them as such. With this introductory assertion in mind - and given the relative dearth of scholarship on Canadian Holocaust cinema - it is necessary to begin by first establishing this "unbridgeability" as a valuable and perhaps even essential point of entry for constituting a heuristic for critically addressing these scholastically untouched works. "Heuristic" in this case means a problem-solving strategy for analyzing Canadian Holocaust cinema, which derives from my viewing of this filmic corpus, and identifying "unbridgeability" as a theme that persists in different forms across a vast number of the texts that comprise it. To this end, I will begin by first addressing the problematic of a "Canadian" Holocaust cinema.

⁵ For instance, Evans suggests that Canadian cinema's treatment of the Holocaust can be viewed through the framework of Holocaust denial (Evans 2002, 150). There is perhaps an argument to be made that one could place on opposite ends of a "continuum of deniability" the benign evasion implicit in Canadian films that, for example, "present the story [of the Holocaust] as a means of achieving closure and assuaging the conscience of Canadians past and present" (Ibid.) and more odious and overt examples of Holocaust denial, which aim to undermine the historical legitimacy of the event. However, such an approach risks conflating acts of omission (i.e. not speaking about the Holocaust - which Canadian cinema is not actually guilty of since it has produced a significant number of films on the Holocaust - or not speaking about it *adequately*, which is invariably a subjective standpoint) and acts of commission (i.e. *actively* denying the historical veracity of the Holocaust). Moreover, simply invoking the term "Holocaust denial" carries with it profound implications and opens up a vast array of historical, legal and philosophical discourse that, while valuable, threatens to deflect the attention of the current project (see for example Deborah E. Lipstadt's studies *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* [New York: Plume, 1993] and *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier* [New York: Harper Perennial, 2005]). I will thus not invoke the terminology of Holocaust denial in any significant detail beyond this point.

Critically Accounting for a Canadian Holocaust Cinema

The lack of critical attention that has been paid to Canada's Holocaust cinema cuts across two distinct areas of scholarship – that is, scholarship devoted to Canadian cinema, and that devoted to Holocaust cinema. In the former area of study, Canadian films about the Holocaust have only been approached tangentially, such as within historical studies of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB). Certainly, such works have discussed a small number of documentaries that implicitly or explicitly deal with the Holocaust, such as *Guilty Men* (Tom Daly, 1945)⁶ or *Memorandum* (Donald Brittain and John Spotton, 1965),⁷ both of which are discussed below. But as such projects function primarily as *institutional* histories, an in-depth consideration of how these films fit within a broader Canadian Holocaust cinema is beyond their areas of focus. While I believe that there is much more to say regarding the *lack* of attention that Canadian film scholarship has paid to the nation's own Holocaust cinema, to which I will return towards the end of the Introduction, at this point it is sufficient to state that in this area of study there has

⁶ Throughout this dissertation, I will only be parenthetically identifying a film's director and year the *first* time that its title is referenced in the text. The strategy corresponds to the format adopted by most writing in the discipline of Film Studies. While I could have chosen to include such information the first time a film is mentioned in each *chapter*, I have decided to treat the dissertation as a single document. The reason for this is that since I discuss some films in a number of chapters, it would be redundant to include parenthetical reference to the same film more than once. That being said, when it is germane to my discussion, I may of course refer to the year or director of a given film within the text, even if I have previously provided this information parenthetically. For reader convenience, I have also included an alphabetized filmography on pp. 413-417 that indicates the national origin(s), director(s), and year for all of the films discussed in this project.

⁷ For such a consideration of *Guilty Men*, see Gary Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 221-222. For discussions of *Memorandum* see D.B. Jones, *Movies and Memoranda: An Interpretive History of the National Film Board of Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute, 1981), 117-121 and Gary Evans, *In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1949 to 1989* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 80.

been no sustained inquiry into this corpus aside from Evans' chronological survey referred to above.

In the latter area of cinema scholarship – that which is devoted to filmic representations of the Holocaust specifically - Canadian contributions have fared only slightly better. For instance, in her study *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust*, Annette Insdorf discusses two Canadian films in her chapter on Personal Documentaries – *So Many Miracles* (Katherine Smalley and Vic Sarin, 1986) and *Dark Lullabies* (Irene Angelico and Jack Neidik, 1985), which I consider in Chapters Four and Five respectively – but pays no attention to the fact that these films are Canadian.⁸ More sustained considerations of a Canadian film that addresses the Holocaust - this time a narrative drama - are found in Lawrence Baron's *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present* and Terri Ginsberg's *Holocaust Film: The Political Aesthetics of Ideology*. Both of these books include chapters on Eli Cohen's *The Quarrel* (1991), a dialogue-driven film in which two Holocaust survivors recognize each other from their respective pasts after a serendipitous meeting in Montreal's Mount Royal Park on *Rosh Hashanah* (the Jewish New Year) in 1948. In the case of Baron's analysis, he follows a similar path as Insdorf, discussing the film but within a context that effaces national specificity. As his book's subtitle – *The Changing Focus of Contemporary Holocaust Cinema* – implies, Baron's aim in this case is to identify certain themes that characterize contemporary Holocaust representations transnationally. As such, the fact that *The Quarrel* is a Holocaust film *from Canada* does not figure into his analysis.⁹

⁸ Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 206-207 (*Dark Lullabies*), 218-219 (*So Many Miracles*).

⁹ Lawrence Baron, *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present: The Changing Focus of Contemporary Holocaust Cinema* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 215-220.

This neglect of national context contrasts with Ginsberg's analysis of *The Quarrel* in *Holocaust Film*. Not only does she explicitly stress that the film has been ignored in scholarly literature devoted to Canadian cinema,¹⁰ but her reading takes into consideration a specifically national context, pointing to the Anglo-Québécois conflict ("quarrel") that "was being hotly negotiated when *The Quarrel* was released."¹¹ At the same time though, as I will explore more fully in my own discussion of *The Quarrel* in Chapter Three, Ginsberg's analysis situates the film not in relation to Canadian Holocaust cinema, but rather in an international Holocaust art cinema context in order to interrogate religious, philosophical and ideological questions that consist across her corpus, which is comprised of four Holocaust art films from four different nations. I am of course not implying that any individual film must *only* be read in relation to others from the same nation. But the fact that these rare critical analyses of an individual Canadian Holocaust film situate it within transnational contexts calls attention to the absence of scholarship on Canada's Holocaust cinema in its own right. And since there *have* been many films about the Holocaust produced in Canada, this "invisible corpus" points to the validity and necessity of an attempt to critically approach these films with their national context in mind.

In this regard, my project's emphasis on *Canadian* "Holocaust cinema" corresponds to a significant stream in Holocaust film scholarship that focuses on productions within specific national contexts. Notable full-length studies that take this approach include Judith E. Doneson's *The Holocaust in American Film*, Millicent Marcus's *Italian Film in the Shadow of Auschwitz*, and André Pierre Colombat's *The*

¹⁰ Terri Ginsberg, *Holocaust Film: the Political Aesthetics of Ideology* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 93, 126 (Note 8).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

Holocaust in French Film, a national cinema whose approaches to the Holocaust also constitute an important section of Henry Rousso's seminal interrogation of the intellectual history of the Vichy government in post-war France, *The Vichy Syndrome*.¹² The significance of this "nation-centric" approach to Holocaust representation is also evident in studies that consider films about the Holocaust from a more genre-oriented or philosophical-aesthetic perspective. For example, while many of the chapters in *Indelible Shadows* include films from a number of national contexts, Insdorf does include a chapter specifically on American (Hollywood) Holocaust films,¹³ as well as one devoted to the treatment of the Holocaust in New German Cinema.¹⁴ Similarly, Ilan Avisar's *Screening the Holocaust: Cinema's Images of the Unimaginable* includes a chapter on films about the Holocaust from Czechoslovakia.¹⁵ And while Ginsberg's *Holocaust Film* is primarily concerned with religious and political questions that may ultimately transcend national specificity, the four case studies that comprise her book acknowledge that such meta-national concerns can be illuminated by a certain amount of attention paid to the national contexts that inform the films. In addition to her chapter on *The Quarrel* ("The *Quarrel* in/over Québec"), Ginsberg's book includes chapters that emphasize art films within other national contexts such as Poland ("St. *Korczak*, Martyr of Poland"), France ("*Entre Nous* and the Erotics of Historical Erasure"), and Israel ("Holocaust 'Identity' and the Israeli/Palestinian *Balagan*").

¹² See for instance the centrality of Marcel Ophüls' *The Sorrow and the Pity* in Rousso's chapter "The Broken Mirror (1971-1974)," in Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991), 98-131.

¹³ Insdorf, 3-25,

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 177-196.

¹⁵ Ilan Avisar, *Screening the Holocaust: Cinema's Images of the Unimaginable* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 52-89.

But considering the Holocaust in a “Canadian national context” poses additional challenges as Canada invariably has a very different relationship to this history than nations that were directly touched by it - such as France, Italy, Germany, Czechoslovakia, or Poland – and that have produced many of the masterworks of Holocaust art cinema. Although Canada was involved in World War II (WWII) as one of the Allied nations fighting against Nazi Germany, and thus the war effort was felt emotionally, institutionally and financially across the country, the war itself was fought overseas. Given this spatial distance between Canada and WWII (and the Holocaust), Canadian society was not besieged by actual, physical danger, nor was Canada’s Jewish population ever threatened in an overtly tangible way by the Nazis’ ambitions of Judeocide. Canadian films about the Holocaust are thus unable to draw on a national historical context, unlike European films such as *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis (Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, Italy, Vittorio de Sica, 1970), *Lacombe, Lucien* (France, Louis Malle, 1974), *The Sorrow and the Pity (Le chagrin et la pitié*, France, Marcel Ophüls, 1969) or *Korczak* (Poland, Andrzej Wajda, 1990) that are not only informed by but explicitly reference aspects of the Holocaust manifest in their respective national histories.

It is precisely such qualities that are germane to a specific national experience (and the intellectual history of that experience) of the Holocaust that authors have often used as a framework for analyzing Holocaust films within such a context. For example, in *The Holocaust in French Film*, Colombat suggests that Holocaust representation in French cinema has “followed an almost perfectly parallel evolution” to shifts in how the Nazi occupation of France and French complicity during this period has been approached

by French historiography and understood in French society.¹⁶ According to Colombat, this trajectory went through a number of phases: first, an initial post-war concern with specific documentation of “what happened in the camps”; second, an acknowledgment of French collaboration, but with collaborators painted as evil but isolated or abnormal, while also emphasizing the heroic actions of the Résistance; third, a tide of films beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, of which *The Sorrow and the Pity* was paradigmatic, that shed light on the darkest and most controversial aspects of the Occupation and the extent of French complicity; and finally by the mid-eighties, especially after the release of Claude Lanzmann’s seminal documentary *Shoah* (1985), “any French film can refer to the Holocaust assuming that most of the audience will be exactly aware of both the specificity of the extermination of the Jews as well as the responsibility of French anti-Semitism in its realization.”¹⁷ Of course for my purposes, the specifics of this narrative of French Holocaust cinema (of which I am only offering a brief summary) are less important than the fact that for Colombat, the specific *French* experience of the Holocaust is essential to his methodology for reading French Holocaust films.

Similarly, in *Italian Film in the Shadow of Auschwitz*, Millicent Marcus establishes the importance of an Italian cultural and historical context to her analysis of Italian Holocaust films. In this study, Marcus reads the tradition of Italian Holocaust cinema, including the “relative dearth of films on Fascist anti-Semitism and the Holocaust to emerge in Italy during the postwar era,”¹⁸ in relation to the particularities of

¹⁶ André Pierre Colombat, *The Holocaust in French Film* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1993), xii.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film in the Shadow of Auschwitz* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 15.

Italy's historical relationship to the Holocaust and the persistence of its legacy in the national consciousness. Marcus' analysis thus considers how the Holocaust occurred within Italy, the national complicity inherent in Italy's role as an ally of Nazi Germany (until 1943), and a post-war reluctance to face the ramifications of the nation's collective past that resulted in the Italian experience of the Holocaust becoming a "residual 'blind spot,' an object of repression and avoidance of mass accountability."¹⁹ In addition, she invokes the national context of this cinema to consider the gradual move towards an active interrogation of this period in Italian history in the public sphere which, since 1990, has witnessed an "outpouring of films on Fascist anti-Semitism and the Final Solution" that corresponds to recent impulses to "memorialize the plight of Italian Jewry" at institutional levels.²⁰

Since Canada does not have such an overt national history of the Holocaust from which to derive representations, a critical approach to Canada's Holocaust films cannot so easily invoke such a history as a framework through which to read them. This rather basic observation is an essential starting point for considering the "unbridgeable" quality of Canadian Holocaust cinema that is intimated by Evans. But of course, this spatial distance between the European sites of the Holocaust and Canada is not unique. It is a distance that Canada shares with other countries, including the United States.

Like Canada, the US was part of the alliance at war with Nazi Germany (after 1941) but whose civilians faced little pragmatic danger from the war, including Jewish civilians. This fact of spatial distance – what historian Peter Novick refers to as a

¹⁹ Ibid., 3-9.

²⁰ Ibid., 15.

“disconnection” between the Holocaust and America²¹ - has not surprisingly informed discussions of the Holocaust’s treatment in American cinema. In the introduction to *The Holocaust in American Film*, Judith Doneson establishes her methodology with this disconnection in mind. The paradox for her is that while the Holocaust has assumed an important role in American culture, while it was occurring it “played little if any role in the lives of most Americans, Jew or Gentile.” After this set-up, the question Doneson asks is, “In what context does the Holocaust become relevant for a people who have no tangible understanding of its dimensions because they have not experienced it?”²²

In the American context, Doneson argues, “The Holocaust enters America as a ‘refugee’ event. Following the traditional path of refugees, the event had to be shaped and molded [sic] in order to make it comprehensible to an American public.”²³ And as her object of study implies, it is largely through the Holocaust’s treatment in American film, especially through the universalizing system of Classical Hollywood Cinema, that this “assimilation” occurred. As an example of the centrality of Hollywood *films* in this process, Doneson points to the construction of “the Holocaust as a universal symbol of suffering” in George Stevens’ 1959 adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, which “contributed importantly” to “allow[ing] Americans to find significance in an event that they did not experience.”²⁴ Canada, on the other hand, while sharing America’s spatial “disconnection” from the Holocaust, lacks such an established filmic tradition – or even,

²¹ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), 2.

²² Judith E. Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 4.

²³ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

to use the words of Peter Harcourt, a national *mythos* (such as American triumphalism)²⁵ - that could easily assimilate the Holocaust into a Canadian context, or “Canadianize.”²⁶ In other words, the Holocaust has “become American,” largely (although not entirely) through the event’s treatment in American cinema, in a way that it has not “become Canadian.”

Given these observations, it is reasonable to assume that a framework for considering the treatment of the Holocaust in Canadian films must differ from both a heuristic derived from historical experiences of the Holocaust germane to specific nations, and a heuristic derived from the elision of spatial and temporal specificity in order to establish qualities of the Holocaust as universal. But then, what framework is appropriate for the Canadian case?

As I began to reflect on this corpus, one blatant obstacle was that a narrative-historical approach that reads the trajectory of a nation’s Holocaust films in relation to collective shifts in national awareness of and attitudes toward the Holocaust would not work in this case. This is not to say that one could not chart an intellectual history of the Holocaust in Canada. As I discuss below, Franklin Bialystok undertakes precisely such a project in his 2000 study *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community*. However, Canada has simply not produced enough of a steady stream of films that are able to be read in relation to this intellectual history in the same way that

²⁵ Peter Harcourt, *Movies and Mythologies: Toward a National Cinema* (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1977), 2-3.

²⁶ My use of the term “Canadianized” borrows from the tendency to refer to the incorporation of the Holocaust into American culture as the “Americanization” of the Holocaust. (See Doneson, 7 and Hilene Flanzbaum, ed., *The Americanization of the Holocaust* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999]). This terminology does not simply refer to films about the Holocaust that are made in America, but that American culture has, in the words of Doneson, “molded” the Holocaust to make it universally applicable. Hence, “universalization” is an essential characteristic of the Holocaust’s “Americanization,” and many writers use the two terms almost interchangeably. I offer a more sustained consideration of American Holocaust universalization and Canadian Holocaust cinema’s distinction from this approach below.

Doneson, for instance, reads the American Holocaust films of the 1950s as manifesting a desire for Jewish assimilation in America,²⁷ those of the 1960s and 1970s as manifesting domestic concerns about racial tensions and social upheaval,²⁸ and those of the late 1970s and 1980s in relation to the gradual absorption of the Holocaust into the American consciousness.²⁹ As Evans' filmography makes clear, Canadian productions on the Holocaust were extremely small in number until the mid-1980s. And even though Holocaust films have been produced in Canada with a greater degree of regularity from the mid-1980s to the 2000s – perhaps due in part to the popular interest in the Canada's relationship to the Holocaust that was inspired by Irving Abella and Harold Troper's 1982 study, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948*, a seminal text that I will return to throughout the dissertation - this collection is simply too disparate to chart within it a cogent narrative history that would be possible if one were able to *select* films to *constitute* such a narrative from a much larger corpus.

As such, it quickly became clear that an analysis of Canada's Holocaust films would have to be thematic, with the texts "clustered" according to how they manifest an overarching theme in different ways. And as I made my way through the films from Evans' article/filmography, the possibility for such a thematic framework began to emerge. From short documentaries to feature length dramas, from publicly funded productions of the NFB and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) to privately produced projects, Canada's Holocaust films tend to approach the Holocaust by emphasizing its absence, positing an *unbridgeable* stance towards the event. In other words, the problematic of spatial distance that is bridged in American Holocaust cinema

²⁷ Doneson, 59-83.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 87-139.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 143-196.

through an assimilative “universalization” that makes the event meaningful to *everyone* according to Doneson, is rather placed at the forefront in the case of Canadian films.

The appeal to universality thus underlines the key distinction between American and Canadian Holocaust films. Hollywood cinema excels at transforming events of particular times and places – such as Biblical narratives or that of a Nazi war profiteer-turned-saviour - into stories that are universally relatable. Moreover, one could argue that this Hollywood tendency is a manifestation of the American ethos of the “melting pot,” which aims to discourage specifics of difference in favour of cultural homogeneity. Case in point – Jeshajahu Weinberg, the founding director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) stresses that “the most important lessons for visitors to take away from their museum experience are the insights that bystanders, by omission, became accomplices of the perpetrators, and that the Holocaust was a historical event of *universal, rather than Jewish significance.*”³⁰

Canadian films on the other hand tend not to appeal to the universal, and instead remain focused on the small and localized. Ergo, Canadian films about Jesus are either explicitly local, like *Jesus of Montreal* (Denys Arcand, 1989); or small, independent, low-budget parodies like *Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter* (Lee Demarbre, 2001). This tendency away from universality towards localization can thus be conceived as a potential explanation for the fact that Canadian films have tended not to approach the Holocaust directly, as Canadian cinema’s appeal to the local is unable to overcome the “lack-of-a-bridge-ness” (or unbridgeability) between Canada and the Holocaust. Accordingly, as will become more clear below, our “Holocaust films” focus less on the universal

³⁰ Jeshajahu Weinberg, “A Narrative History Museum,” *Curator* 37.4 (1994): 231, my emphasis. I return to this issue of universality in the USHMM in the Conclusion.

questions of humanity and morality explored in Hollywood films like *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Schindler's List*, and more on smaller, localized themes - a troubled Holocaust survivor living in Québec's Eastern Townships in the 1980s (*Emotional Arithmetic* [Paolo Barzman, 2007]) or the individual experiences of survivors who immigrated to Canada after the war (*Children of the Storm* [Jack Kuper, 2000]).

With the centrality and recurrence of this “unbridgeability” in mind, this dissertation argues that Canadian cinema has approached the Holocaust by delineating barriers between the experience and inexperience of it, and emphasizing the Holocaust as omni-presently absent outside of experience. At the broadest level these barriers function historically, manifesting the geographic distance between Canada and the Holocaust at the time of its occurrence during WWII. More commonly, Canadian films have enacted these barriers at the interpersonal level, emphasizing emotional or cognitive barriers between individuals who experienced the Holocaust and those who did not. In these films, such interpersonal barriers primarily exist between Canadian Holocaust survivors and their fellow Canadians who for reasons of geography or time lack the ability to understand or even imagine the experience that has so indelibly marked the survivors in their present. The inexperienced are thus unable to adequately empathize with the experienced, which in turn weights on the emotional relationships between the two. Other films aim to mollify this barrier by dispersing the Holocaust experience from single survivors onto groups of survivors, by documenting the return of survivors to the spaces of their past where the Holocaust was once *present*, or by exploring the possibility of individuals who did not experience the Holocaust appropriating historical perspective through a confrontation with the “experienced.” While the intricacies of these

experiential barriers will become more clear in the chapter breakdown below, at this point it is sufficient to state that Canadian films imply the absence of the Holocaust by positing it as “not there” outside the conduit of experience, thus localizing this tragic history entirely within the direct experience of it (within the Holocaust survivor in Canada for example).

Before getting to the chapter breakdown though, I must stress that my assertion of the importance of the Holocaust’s absence from Canada is not meant as an implication of national credulity. I am neither suggesting that Canadians were either completely ignorant about the Holocaust during the war,³¹ or that *no* individual Canadians made attempts to wrestle with the ramifications of the Holocaust in the years and first decades following WWII, before the event assumed what Peter Novick refers to as its contemporary “transcendent status as the bearer of eternal truths or lessons that could be derived from contemplating it.”³² For instance, even beginning in the 1950s the attempted extermination of European Jewry began to assume an important space in some of the writing of Canadian Jewish (secular or religious) authors like Mordecai Richer, Leonard Cohen, and A.M. Klein (all of whom are discussed in Rachel Feldhay Brenner’s *Assimilation and Assertion: The Response to the Holocaust in Mordecai Richler’s Writing*, to which I will return). But with these cases again, the problematic of experiential disconnection looms large.

Take for instance a *Montreal Gazette* review of the 1967 autobiographical novel, *Child of the Holocaust*. The author of this novel is Jack Kuper, a Holocaust survivor who

³¹ See for instance a petition for the Canadian government to grant haven to refugees fleeing Nazi persecution in the December 14, 1943 edition of the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, which is re-printed in the (unnumbered) photograph section in the middle of Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Key Porter Books Limited, 2000).

³² Novick, 110.

immigrated to Canada in 1947 who has written two books and produced several films on the Holocaust, and whose work comprises a significant aspect of this dissertation. *Child of the Holocaust* documents Kuper's experiences in the Polish countryside during the war, as he ran and hid from the Nazis after the round-up and deportation of his family. The review in the *Gazette* articulates the centrality of Kuper's immediate relation to the Holocaust in its title, "The Immediacy of Experience." The review goes on to explicitly spell out a clear distinction between experience and (intellectual) empathy: "Kuper doesn't possess the professional skills of contemporaries such as 'Mordecai Richler' or 'Leonard Cohen.' His skills were not hatched in the seclusion of a university campus; they were born in the turmoil of a pogrom that saw six million of his countrymen executed."³³ I would thus argue that examples of keen interest in the Holocaust from Canada such as Richler, or newspaper pieces about the murder of Jews at the hands of the Nazis during the war, do not negate the Holocaust's historical absence from this specific national context and thus do not undermine my decision to employ this absence as a critical heuristic for reading Canada's Holocaust films.

Moreover, my emphasis on historical absence not only aims to account for the experiential disconnection between the Holocaust and Canada that is implied in the above review of Kuper's book, but also corresponds closely to how the problem of approaching the Holocaust with a Canadian specificity in mind has been approached in other, non-film-related literature. For instance, in their seminal study *None is Too Many* (first published in 1982), which interrogates Canada's restrictive and not-so-subtly anti-Semitic immigration policies in the years preceding, during, and immediately following WWII, Irving Abella and Harold Troper begin by emphasizing the disjunctive chasm between

³³ "The Immediacy of Experience," *The Montreal Gazette*, September 23, 1967, 42.

the Holocaust as it was occurring in Europe, and what could have been the safe haven of Canada:

To the condemned Jews of Auschwitz, Canada had a special meaning. It was the name given to the camp barracks where the food, clothes, gold, diamonds, jewellery and other goods taken from prisoners were stored. It represented life, luxury and salvation; it was a Garden of Eden in Hell; it was also unreachable.

In effect, the barracks at Auschwitz symbolized what Canada was to all the Jews of Europe throughout the 1930s and 1940s – a paradise, enormous, wealthy, overflowing and full of life; but out of bounds, a haven totally inaccessible.³⁴

Similarly, in *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community*, which traces the intellectual history of the Holocaust in Canada from WWII through the 1990s, Franklin Bialystok argues that it took a number of decades for the Holocaust to register in the Canadian collective consciousness – even in the domestic Jewish community – not because of any sense of traumatic delay but simply because the Holocaust was so far removed from the Canadian experience. “[F]or most Canadian Jews,” Bialystok writes, “the Holocaust was an overwhelming tragedy, but it had happened in a world that some had never known and that others remembered as a vibrant entity, rich in tradition and culture. Canadian Jews during the war were, as Dr. [Maurice] Victor [a Canadian Jew who served during WWII] put it, ‘in the warm safety of North America.’”³⁵

In the sparse instances of scholarship that have considered Canadian *representations* of the Holocaust, the problem of the Holocaust’s absence from Canada is again central. In *Assimilation and Assertion: The Response to the Holocaust in Mordecai*

³⁴ Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2000), xxi.

³⁵ Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000), 15.

Richler's Writing for example, Rachel Feldhay Brenner begins by specifically stressing that the problem facing Canadian Jewish writers (like Richler), who aim to approach themes germane to their Judaic heritage via the Holocaust, is one of trying to “assimilate” an inexperienced event. In this study, She suggests that Richler’s engagement with the Holocaust has to be read in the context of the “The North American Jewish writer [who] does not respond to a direct experience in his [sic] treatment of the Holocaust. Yet, the event of the Holocaust touches directly upon his reality and undermines the psychological, historical and ideological framework of his [sic] existence.”³⁶ In a similar vein, Albert-Reiner Glaap begins a chapter on Canadian plays about the Holocaust by observing that “Although many Germans of our time may not want to be bothered with the misdeeds of their fathers[,]...[i]n my country [Germany], future generations will be left with the legacy of the Holocaust for a long time.” Glaap then implicitly posits a clear dichotomy between the experiential legacy of the Holocaust in Germany and its lack in Canada by asking, “But why should *Canadian* writers of our time, playwrights in particular, still be concerned with the Holocaust?”³⁷ All of these examples indicate that, as I stressed above, the relationship between the Holocaust and Canada is not axiomatic precisely because of the absence of the former from the latter.

Given this thematic framework of absence that manifests itself in Canada’s Holocaust films via barriers of experience, this dissertation proceeds as follows. Chapter One establishes the historical absence of the Holocaust from Canada as a problematic for Canadian Holocaust films. I begin by considering examples like *Guilty Men* and *Canada*

³⁶ Rachel Feldhay Brenner, *Assimilation and Assertion: The Response to the Holocaust in Mordecai Richler's Writing* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 3.

³⁷ Albert-Reiner Glaap, “Views on the Holocaust in Contemporary Canadian Plays,” in *Refractions of Germany in Canadian Literature and Culture*, ed. Heinz Antor et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 240.

at War (Donald Brittain, 1962), as well as the challenges that Jack Kuper faced in getting his autobiographical play *Sun in my Eyes* broadcast on the CBC, which carry with them the implication that the Holocaust and Canada constitute two discrete entities, having nothing to do with each other. I will then move on to analyze films like the CBC melodrama *Charlie Grant's War* (Martin Lavut, 1984), which call into question this division by pointing to the moral implications of the bureaucratic decisions and discriminatory attitudes in the Canadian body-politic that constituted immigration barriers that, in part, served to *constitute* the Holocaust as absent from the nation.

Chapter Two considers the *legacy* of these historical/geographic/bureaucratic barriers. It looks at films in which the ramifications of the Holocaust's historical absence from Canada inform barriers on a more individual level between survivors and institutions that have overt socio-political Canadian specificity. The two films that comprise this chapter's focus are Jack Kuper's *Children of the Storm*, which explores the challenges of assimilation that survivors faced upon their arrival in Canada after the war, and *Two Men* (Gordon Pinsent, 1988), a CBC drama about a Holocaust survivor in Toronto who is trying to bring a Nazi war criminal to justice. This chapter will also begin the dissertation's emphasis on how Canada's Holocaust films localize the experience of the Holocaust *within* survivors, thus rendering it absent outside of them, which thus reinforces the barrier of experience.

Chapter Three explores in more detail how the barriers surrounding Canadian Holocaust survivors are largely invisible, positing the Holocaust squarely in their experiential memory, thus rendering it perpetually absent outside *and upon* themselves. Such a tendency is evident in films like *Two Men* (which carries over from Chapter Two),

The Quarrel, *Emotional Arithmetic*, and *Fugitive Pieces* (Jeremy Podeswa, 2007) that enact experiential barriers on an interpersonal level by positioning survivors as emotionally and/or cognitively set apart from their surroundings, including but not limited to their immediate families. The focus of this chapter also differs from the previous ones since while these films are all, at least in part, set in Canada, the fact of their Canadian setting is less important than the interrelationship between experience and inexperience that is informed by the Holocaust's absence outside of the survivors (with the possible exception of *Two Men*).

The following two chapters explore films that purport to rectify this barrier of experience, but ultimately leave it intact. Chapter Four considers films that aim to "solve" this barrier by making the Holocaust present outside of the individual experiences of survivors. I will first look at examples that attempt to mollify the Holocaust's absence by emphasizing the shared quality of the Holocaust experience amongst *groups* of survivors, including *Undying Love* (Helene Klodawsky, 2002), *The Voyage of the St. Louis* (Maziar Bahari, 1994), and *The Boys of Buchenwald* (Audrey Mehler, 2002). I will then move on to films like *So Many Miracles*, *Visualizing Memory...A Last Detail* (Naomi Kramer, 1996) and *Memorandum*, which follow survivors back to spaces of their past where the Holocaust was *once* present, as opposed to their homes in Canada, from which it is and has always been absent. Through these two strategies then, the films of this chapter enact a purported dispersion of Holocaust experience outside of its internal manifestation in the singular, isolated survivor. At the same time though, the Holocaust's absence remains localized within survivor experience, as the films ultimately emphasize

that what the groups of survivors share, and what is still marked in the spaces of the past, is a perpetual and irretrievable *loss*.

Chapter Five looks at films that adopt an alternative mode of resolving the barrier of experience – the conveyance of experience (i.e. not simply information) to the *inexperienced*. This tendency assumes two main forms in Canadian cinema. The first is pedagogical documentaries, which invoke first-hand survivor testimony as an authentic conduit to the historical past by framing it as an essential resource to educate the inexperienced about the Holocaust. In these films, such as *Voices of Survival* (Alan Handel, 1988) and *Let Memory Speak* (Batia Bettman, 1999) the testimony is not simply presented, but posited as a way to establish second-hand witnesses by “passing on” a confrontation with historical experience. The second way in which this experiential appropriation is enacted is in films that I refer to as “cross-generational documentaries,” which feature children of survivors trying to appropriate their parents’ experiences as a means of stabilizing their own sense of identity. This process may document a literal journey to the sites of their parents’ pasts, such as *Dark Lullabies*, or a more metaphorical journey to bring together their parents and their own experiences, like Wendy Oberlander’s *Nothing to be Written Here* (1996) and *Still (Stille)* (2001). Yet these films ultimately posit an ambiguous conclusion to the journey that, especially in *Dark Lullabies*, leaves the second generation outside of the experience itself.

The final chapter considers the films of Jack Kuper, himself a Holocaust survivor currently residing in Toronto. While Kuper’s films - with the exception of *Children of the Storm*, as I discuss in Chapter Two - tend away from explicitly exploring the barrier of experience, they instead embody it as they collapse experience and inexperience into a

singular individual, thus undermining the assumption implicit in the rest of this corpus that the Holocaust is “property” of the experienced and that it is absent only “outside” of them. Kuper’s films posit a clear division between himself as a Holocaust survivor looking back upon an event that he experienced, and the event itself. By emphasizing this division of subjectivity, Kuper’s films thus suggest the perpetual cognitive absence of the Holocaust, placing the event outside of representation, even for those who lived through it. What Kuper’s films intimate then is a barrier *in* rather than *of* experience.

The analytical framework of this project thus borrows from (but does not copy) Ludwig Wittgenstein’s discussion of “family resemblances” as a method of categorization, whereby individual entities (humans or concepts) can be grouped into logical categories based on similarities or resemblances that they all share. For example, as Berys Gaut notes, since the 1950s several aestheticians have invoked Wittgenstein’s theories to try and define the “amorphous” notion of art by establishing concrete criteria that anything to be called “art” must contain.³⁸ More specifically, my project corresponds to Gaut’s extension of Wittgensteinian family resemblances in his work on art as a “cluster concept.” For Gaut, a “cluster concept” proposes that inclusion in the group “art” depends on a work possessing “some” properties constructed to be associated with art (for example, “being beautiful, being expressive, being original, and being complex and coherent”). However, while all artworks must possess *some* of these properties, “none of these properties has to be possessed by all artworks.” Gaut uses the term “cluster concept” for this theory since it specifies resemblance according to a set of

³⁸ Berys Gaut, “‘Art’ as a Cluster Concept,” in *Theories of Art Today*, ed. Noël Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 25. For a brief discussion of Gaut’s invocation of Wittgenstein, see Robert Stecker, *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: An Introduction* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 92-93.

general (or more nebulous, potentially subjective) qualities rather than in terms of specific “particulars.”³⁹ In this sense, the problematic of the Holocaust’s absence can be considered the “family resemblance” that the films comprising my corpus of Canada’s Holocaust cinema all share, which manifests in barriers of experience. However, the films’ mobilizations of these barriers assume different forms, which inform the focus of the different chapters. As such, the films in each chapter constitute a “cluster” that holds in common a general manifestation of the family resemblance of absence, even if a *particular* manifestation of this absence is not shared between the films of difference clusters (chapters).

The form of this dissertation also assumes a funnel-like quality by which the barrier of experience increasingly narrows but, in an asymptotic manner, never disappears. It begins by considering the expansive historical barriers between the Holocaust and Canada as they function in a historical collective sense. It then moves towards barriers on an interpersonal level - first between survivors and decidedly Canadian institutions, and then on a more individual level that emphasizes their internal and invisible quality. I then shift to films that strive to “bridge” the barrier that is ultimately left unbridgeable – first for the benefit of survivors by purporting to disperse the presence of the Holocaust outside of them, then for the benefit of the inexperienced by appropriating an experiential past. Lastly, in Jack Kuper’s cinematic oeuvre, the barrier of experience collapses within a singular experiential perspective, leaving the historical past perpetually absent *everywhere*, even for the experienced, rather than delineating between presence-in-experience and absence-outside-of-experience.

³⁹ Ibid., 26-27.

As I will return to in Chapter Two, the use of the term “barriers” to describe these manifestations of the Holocaust’s absence borrows from Phillip Weiss, a Holocaust survivor who eventually settled in Winnipeg after WWII, who describes a “barrier between those who survived and other Canadians.”⁴⁰ The term “barrier” also carries with it an emphasis that this experiential disconnection is not constituted simply by geographic or temporal distance, but is indeed *unbridgeable*, a chasm that cannot be breached. For instance, the geographic distance between the Holocaust and Canada made possible the construction of bureaucratic barriers – detailed in *None is Too Many* - that attempted to keep one of the consequences of the Holocaust (Jewish refugees) out of Canada. Films that feature Holocaust survivors trying to return to the sites of their past by traversing geographic space (from Canada to Europe), further emphasize that this spatial mediation does not actually bridge the gap between survivors and their past. Similarly, the films that highlight *temporal* distance from the Holocaust suggest that this chasm is unbridgeable by acknowledging (at times more explicitly than others) the mediated quality of “transferring” experience from survivors to non-survivors. Kuper’s films emphasize the subjective division that renders an individual’s Holocaust experience in the past cognitively unavailable for him/herself in the present.

Now that it has been explained how the trope of “absence” provides a useful and justifiable thematic framework for considering Canada’s Holocaust films, I would like to move on to a more sustained consideration of the relationship between this absence and the barriers of experience that lend the dissertation its analytical form. It is only by reflecting on the relationship between these two that the heuristic utility of the barriers of experience as a mode for reading this specifically *cinematic* corpus can be illuminated.

⁴⁰ Phillip Weiss, quoted in Bialystok, 68.

This can be done by considering the absence of the Holocaust in the Canadian case – and its negotiation in these films via experiential barriers – as being constituted by a lack whose subtlety renders it almost invisible.

Invisible Absence: Departing from a Margin-Centre Discourse

Certainly one could argue that the Holocaust's "absence" is now felt even in the empty spaces left by it in the nations where it occurred. For instance, in a 1997 *Critical Inquiry* article, Andreas Huyssen reads Berlin as a city constituted by historical "voids" left by a lineage of development and destruction. One such pattern that Huyssen identifies is the excesses of the Weimar republic that filled the "vacuum" created by World War I (WWI) only to be ravaged by the economic crash of 1929. This economic "void" was then filled by the promises of the Third Reich, which ultimately transformed Berlin into "a literal void that was the landscape of ruins in 1945."⁴¹ More explicitly, Ulrich Baer uses a 1985 photograph taken by Dirk Reinartz of the former Sobibór death camp as exemplary of the "landscape of loss" conveyed by contemporary Holocaust images, which situate the viewer "in reference not to a geographic location but to the experience of irremediable absence and of loss."⁴²

Yet the "absence" referred to in these cases is very different from the absence Holocaust from Canada. Rather than a violent void marking that which *once was there*, as is the case of the ruins of Berlin or the literal spaces of concentration camps, the Holocaust's absence from Canada is rooted in its *never having been there*. As such, the overt clarity that *something is missing*, in relation to the Holocaust, does not exist in

⁴¹ Andreas Huyssen, "The Voids of Berlin," *Critical Inquiry* 24 (Autumn 1997): 62-63.

⁴² Ulrich Baer, "Contemporary Holocaust Images: The Landscape of Loss and the Limits of the Photograph," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 96.4 (Fall 1997): 744.

Canada. And it is precisely this invisible absence that is taken up by the films that comprise Canada's Holocaust cinema corpus, and mobilized via the invisible quality of the experiential barriers that enact this absence.

With this in mind, while my project shares a concern with the historical absence of the Holocaust from Canada with historiographic studies like Abella and Troper's and Bilaystok's, and representational studies like Brenner's and Glaap's, I would argue that films are actually *better* than the written word (either historiography or literary representations of history) at conveying the invisible quality of this absence in a manner that makes its *presence* a central problematic. Most notably, film theorist Christian Metz has argued that the mode of presentation in the cinematic medium has inscribed within it the apparent contradiction of present-absence as a film shows *something*, via a projected photographic (or digital) image, that is not physically there (only a projection of it).⁴³ Canada's Holocaust films actually take a less abstract approach to the problematic of present-absence by delineating an *embodied* relationship between the two.

As is clear in the chapter breakdown above, one of the main tropes by which the Holocaust's absence plays out in these films is through an experiential delineation between survivors in Canada and those who surround them who did not experience the Holocaust. Accordingly, this barrier can be conceived as a mark of difference that emotionally and/or cognitively separates survivors from those around them. Yet while this demarcation of difference is a central problematic in these films, it stems not only

⁴³ Metz thus describes the cinematic image as an "imaginary signifier" given this *illusion* of presence, and argues that this illusion is essential to the appeal that cinema holds for spectators. Drawing on Jacques Lacan's influential formulation of the infantile "mirror phase," the present-absence of the cinematic image gives spectators the impression of (misrecognized) plenitude (i.e. identification with a strong, goal-oriented protagonist) that psychoanalytically recreates the experience of an infant (misrecognizing) its own plenitude in its reflection in a mirror. See Christian Metz, "Identification, Mirror," in *Film Theory and Criticism*, 5th ed., ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 800-808.

from the fact of the difference itself (experience vs. inexperience), but also from the fact that this difference is largely invisible. In other words, in addition to the delineation between presence and absence that consists in the relationship between survivors and their surroundings, this delineation is manifest within the figure of the survivor (as presented in these films) him- and herself, as the Holocaust experience is present *within*, but absent *on* him or her.⁴⁴ As such, just as the absence of the Holocaust from Canada is more invisible than the violent voids left in Berlin, so too are the barriers of experience that derive from this invisible absence.

The importance of the invisibility of these barriers – and the utility of cinema in conveying this - will become less abstract once I begin to analyze the films themselves, particularly in my discussion of *Two Men* and *Emotional Arithmetic* in Chapter Three. At this point though, this invisible mark of difference can be usefully illuminated by reading it in the context of the invisibility of Canada's Holocaust film corpus itself within film scholarship.

As was mentioned above, very little work on these films has been done in *either* Holocaust- or Canadian-cinema scholarship. This neglect in the former area is less surprising than the latter for two reasons. First, with rare exceptions like the films analyzed in Chapter One, Canadian Holocaust films tend not to represent the Holocaust

⁴⁴ Of course, one could argue that Holocaust survivors are often demarcated by precisely such an external mark – the iconic tattooed number on their arms. However, it is also important to note that many actual Holocaust survivors do not have such a tattoo – for instance, those that were never in a camp, but spent the war years in hiding while their families were killed. Moreover, in the films that I will be discussing, the question of whether survivors have one of these tattoos or not is virtually negligible. When the tattoo *is* mentioned, as it is in Batia Bettman's *Let Memory Speak*, which is discussed in Chapter Five, its visual ostentation is actually downplayed. In the case of Bettman's film, the voiceover of a young boy tells his grandfather not to be ashamed of showing his tattoo, implying of course that one is easily able to disguise this small, external manifestation of the Holocaust experience. This is very different from, for example, the dramatic close-up of the numbered tattoo on the arm of Sol Nazerman (Rod Steiger) in Sidney Lumet's *The Pawnbroker*, an American film from 1965 to which I return in Chapter Three.

itself, but rather focus on the spectral legacy of its aftermath.⁴⁵ As such, if a writer is concerned with the aesthetic and ethical questions of how to cinematically represent the *Holocaust* – that is, put forth images that explicitly represent the Nazis’ attempted extermination of the Jews during WWII, along with accompanying iconography like concentration camps, cramped ghettos, and emaciated corpses – the Holocaust’s *absence* in Canadian films would not hold much interest. A second reason that may explain why this corpus has been overlooked in Holocaust cinema scholarship is perhaps more pessimistic – the fact that most writing about Canadian *films* tends to focus on them in the context of Canadian *cinema*. In other words, if a scholar of Canadian cinema has not written about a specific Canadian film (or group of Canadian films), there is a good chance that it will not be picked up in any other academic discourse.

In this sense, it is far more surprising that Canada’s Holocaust films have been overlooked in scholarship on Canadian cinema. This neglect becomes all the more striking when one considers that the presence of a victimized Holocaust survivor who is emotionally and cognitively isolated from his or her surroundings by virtue of his or her traumatic past would seem, at first glance, to easily fit into a prominent, and one could even argue the most prolific tendency in Canadian film studies at present – a concerted focus on the representation of marginalized groups in Canadian cinema that reflect power dynamics at play in Canadian society.

⁴⁵ In this sense, my approach to these films admittedly requires a rather broad definition of what might consist under the rubric of “Holocaust film.” For my purposes, I begin with Judith Doneson’s definition that “Holocaust films” refer “to the period where Nazi-inspired anti-Semitism was growing increasingly worse, and reflecting the historical process that began with the Nazi laws in April 1933, and ended in 1945 with the conclusion of World War II and the liberation of the last concentration camps” (Doneson 8). While most of the film’s that comprise Canada’s Holocaust cinema corpus do not represent this history directly, I would argue that the centrality of this historical period to the spectral legacy that persists via the Holocaust’s absence in these films establishes that they can justifiably be referred to as “Holocaust films.”

While it is always assumptive to posit a single article or book as constituting the beginning of an epistemic shift, when one considers the trajectory of work that has come in its wake, it is not an overstatement to identify Christine Ramsay's 1993 article "Canadian Cinema from the Margins: 'The Nation' and Masculinity in *Goin' Down the Road*" as marking an important turning point in Canadian film scholarship towards a concerted focus on questions of marginality. In this article, published in a double issue of *The Canadian Journal of Film Studies* that was devoted to questions of (primarily Canadian) nationalism, Ramsay attempts to "rescue" Pete (Doug McGrath) and Joey (Paul Bradley) - the blue-collar, working-class, uncouth protagonists from Don Shebib's 1970 film who move from Cape Breton to try (and ultimately fail) to "make it" in Toronto - from metaphorical readings that posit their failure as psychoanalytically manifesting an inherently "Canadian" inefficacy.

The most influential articulation of this mode of criticism is Robert Fothergill's seminal essay "Coward, Bully or Clown: The Dream-life of a Younger Brother," originally published in *Take One* in 1973. In this piece, Fothergill argues that the predominant character-type of Canadian fiction films is the "radically inadequate" male protagonist that is antithetical to the goal-oriented (usually goal-achieving) protagonist of Hollywood cinema. The inadequacy of the Canadian male, according to Fothergill, often manifests itself through the three interrelated qualities of cowardice, clownishness, and bullshiness. Unlike his Hollywood counterpart, the Canadian protagonist lacks the confidence and maturity to find an appropriate female companion, and deals with this inferiority complex by acting out aggressively, or trying (and failing) to appropriate an

external personality (such as Rick Dillon's attempts to appropriate the Western cowboy visage of "the Marshall" in *Paperback Hero* [Peter Pearson, 1973]).⁴⁶

Of course, Pete and Joey seem to fit this paradigm perfectly, and Fothergill describes them as such: "Joey...has a good deal of the Coward in him. Bewildered by big-city life, and with a tendency to get maudlin drunk, he finally runs out on the whole mess, leaving a pregnant and newly-evicted wife to fend for herself...When times are good, Joey and his friend Pete...caper about with childish irresponsibility...in a fashion that is likeable enough but rather trying to the women who have to put up with it."⁴⁷

Fothergill argues that this tendency can be read as a psychoanalytic manifestation of a "younger-brother" complex rooted in the historical circumstance of Canada's paternal relationship to Great Britain, and its fraternal relationship to the United States, the "older brother" who successfully won his independence from the British father while the dutiful "younger brother" Canada stayed by his side.⁴⁸ As such, the inadequacy of male figures in Canadian films like Pete and Joey manifests a decidedly "Canadian" inadequacy.

What is essential about Ramsay's response to this reading is that she refuses to take Fothergill's framework for this film at face value. Criticizing his approach as "metaphorical" (reading the protagonists as metaphors for Canada's younger-brother relationship to the United States), Ramsay adopts a more literal approach (which she terms "metonymical") that sees Pete and Joey's failures in Toronto as enacting a class- and region-tension *within* Canada, between blue-collar and white-collar, between the

⁴⁶ Robert Fothergill, "Coward, Bully or Clown: The Dream-Life of a Younger Brother," in *Canadian Film Reader*, ed. Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson (Toronto: P. Martin Associates, 1977): 236-239.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 243.

Maritimes and Toronto, and between margins and centre, rather than reading them as psychoanalytically representing an inherently “Canadian” inadequacy.

The paradigmatic example of this regional marginality occurs when Pete goes to a job interview for an advertising position in Toronto for which he is vastly unqualified. When the interviewer points out that Pete lacks even a high school diploma, the Cape Bretonner replies, “What do you need a diploma for to work in a factory or on the docks?” This response thus highlights the regional economic disadvantage that is intimately bound to the question of whether or not Pete (and Joey) will be able to “make it” in Toronto. For Ramsay then, Pete and Joey are not just tragicomic buffoons who embody a good-natured “Canadian” inadequacy, but work to reveal a power disparity that places Pete and Joey on the margins in relation to Canada’s centre. There are material circumstances that are essential to Pete and Joey’s inability to move from the maritime-margins to the Toronto-centre that have nothing to do with personal flaws that Fothergill posits as inherent to their characters.⁴⁹

This move away from asking what is distinctly and “universally” *Canadian* about Canadian films (i.e. a trait that operates *across* Canadian cinema – like the radically inadequate male protagonist of Fothergill), towards reading relations in Canadian films along a binary of centres and margins has been taken up and expanded in a number of different capacities since the publication of Ramsay’s article. Christopher E. Gittings’ *Canadian National Cinema* is the most extensive consideration of Canadian films that follows in the centre-margin heuristic lineage, moving far beyond Ramsay’s emphasis on regional or classist marginalization to include discussion of groups marginalized by

⁴⁹ Christine Ramsay, “Canadian Narrative Cinema from the Margins: ‘The Nation’ and Masculinity in *Goin’ Down the Road*,” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 2.3-3 (1993): 38-41.

gender, ethnicity and sexuality. The postulation of this book-length study is that what consists under the rubric of “Canadian cinema” is dependent on who is included in the articulation of the Canadian nation, and the related problematic of whose voices are articulating a particular idea of nation.⁵⁰ In short, Gittings suggests that “Canadian national cinema” is a dynamic construct that has shifted over time as cinematic visualization and articulation of who constitutes the Canadian nation has changed. Gittings makes this case through a two-fold strategy. The first part of his book explores how in Canadian cinema until roughly the mid-late 1960s, the voices of marginalized groups were appropriated or rendered invisible by the “centre” of power that controlled the means of representation. For example, the heroic portrayal of industrious European immigrants surviving on and settling the rugged terrain of the Canadian prairies in the NFB drama *Drylanders* (Don Haldane, 1962) depends on the presentation of this land as uninhabited, simply waiting to be tamed by (European) settlers. As such, the fact of aboriginal displacement by such settlement is necessarily whitewashed from the film’s historical representation.⁵¹ The latter part of his study explores the more recent proliferation of previously marginalized voices in contemporary Canadian cinema – such as women filmmakers, aboriginal cinema, queer filmmaking, and films produced by (non-European) immigrant directors.

Other works have taken a more concerted look at the marginalization of individual groups in the context of Canadian cinema. For instance, in the introduction to the collection *Gendering the Nation*, the editors state that their aim in collecting a number of essays devoted to the diverse quality of women’s film in Canada is to “provide a

⁵⁰ Christopher E. Gittings, *Canadian National Cinema: Ideology, Difference and Representation* (London: Routledge, 2002), 1-5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 15-21.

crucial conceptual intervention” into the cultural nationalist framework whose assumptions of a unitary Canadian identity have marginalized the diverse voices of females working within Canada’s film culture.⁵² In her essay in this collection for example, Kay Armatage brings Nell Shipman, the writer of and lead actress in the canonized early Canadian film, *Back to God’s Country* (David Hartford, 1919) to the forefront of her analysis and argues that her character in the film embodies “heroic femininity.” Such emphasis on Shipman’s importance relative to the film reads *Back to God’s Country* with a previously marginalized voice re-framed at the centre. This counter-analysis exposes the limitations of a patriarchal view of history that overlooks or downplays female contributions, such as Peter Morris’ treatment of Nell Shipman in *Embattled Shadows*, his study of early film in Canada, as secondary to the influence of her husband, the grandiose film promoter Ernest “Ten Percent Ernie” Shipman.⁵³

With an emphasis that corresponds more closely to the “class marginalization” that informs Ramsay’s piece, the collection *Working on Screen*⁵⁴ takes as its focus the representation of the working class in Canadian cinema. Malek Khouri’s full-length study *Filming Politics*⁵⁵ covers similar questions, but with a tighter focus on the representations of the working class in the films of the NFB during and immediately following WWII.

⁵² Kay Armatage et al., “Gendering the Nation,” in *Gendering the Nation*, ed. Kay Armatage et al (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 10.

⁵³ For Armatage’s discussion of the “heroic femininity” of Nell Shipman in *Back to God’s Country*, see Kay Armatage, “Nell Shipman: A Case of Heroic Femininity,” in *Gendering the Nation*, ed. Kay Armatage et al (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 17-38. For Morris’ consideration of Shipman, with a greater influence on her husband Ernest, see Peter Morris, *Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema 1895-1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1978), 95-126.

⁵⁴ Malek Khouri and Darrell Varga, eds., *Working on Screen: Representations of the Working Class in Canadian Cinema* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

⁵⁵ Malek Khouri, *Filming Politics: Communism and the Portrayal of the Working Class at the National Film Board of Canada, 1939-1946* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007).

Questions of marginality based on ethnic difference have also informed many studies in Canadian film scholarship. For instance, essays by Zuzana Pick and Maria de Rosa have considered how aboriginal filmmakers have succeeded in re-appropriating indigenous voices rather than having aboriginality being subject to representation by non-aboriginal sources.⁵⁶ Ethnic marginalization also informs the 2007 collection *Reel Asian: Asian Canada On Screen*, which explores Asian-Canadian films and filmmaking in “a bid for recognition in a complex and contradictory cultural-political field, in which it is difficult, if not impossible, to see anything or anyone ‘as they are’”⁵⁷ – a recognition denied by “early collective imaginings (aided by film as a ‘technology of fantasy’) of a ‘right/white’ Canada...in dialectical opposition to the various ‘anti-nationals’ that would threaten its purity and cohesiveness” and resorted to crude stereotypes in efforts to “other” such “anti-nationals.”⁵⁸ Other writers, like Thomas Waugh, have explored the margin-centre dyad with a focus on questions of queerness and sexual difference.⁵⁹

Mary Alemany-Galway succinctly sums up (while still embodying) this emphasis on marginalization as a conceptual heuristic in her 2002 book, *A Postmodern Cinema: The Voice of the Other in Canadian Film*. In this study, Alemany-Galway uses a postmodernist framework to explore how “such postmodern techniques as illogical narrative structures and the juxtaposition of unresolved contradictions [speak to]

⁵⁶ See Zuzana Pick, “Storytelling and Resistance: The Documentary Practice of Alanis Obomsawin,” in *Gendering the Nation*, ed. Kay Armatage et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 76-93, and Maria de Rosa, “Studio One: Of Storytellers and Stories,” in *North of Everything: English-Canadian Cinema since 1980*, ed. William Beard and Jerry White (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2002), 328-341.

⁵⁷ Elaine Chang, “Introduction: Hyphe-Nation; or, Screening ‘Asian Canada’,” in *Reel Asian: Asian Canada On Screen*, ed. Elaine Chang (Toronto: Coach House Books and The Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival, 2007), 17.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁹ Thomas Waugh, “Cultivated Colonies: Notes on Queer Nationhood and the Erotic Image,” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 2.2-3 (1993): 145-178.

contradictions [that] are at the base of any life which is lived within the confines of a marginality...[This marginality] both defines one's identity and problematizes that identity, particularly in its relation to the dominant culture."⁶⁰ For Alemany-Galway, it is through such techniques that a significant number of Canadian films have given "voice to the positions/concerns/conflicts/ contradictions of the 'others' in our society...[and] illustrate a different aspect of the marginalized experience within Canada."⁶¹

Given this vibrant and extensive discourse on marginality in Canadian cinema, the portrayal of survivors in Canada's Holocaust films as emotionally and cognitively isolated within their own communities would certainly appear to lend itself easily to such a framework. In fact, my first strategy for planning this project was the "marginalization" of the Holocaust survivor in Canadian cinema.

Yet this corpus defies such a margin-centre analytical framework, and not simply because not *all* Canadian Holocaust films deal explicitly with the problematic of the barrier of experience via *survivors* (such as the films in Chapter One). Rather, such a discourse is inadequate for reading the survivor in these films precisely since the difference that informs the barrier of experience has two interrelated qualities that distinguish it from how the heuristic of marginality has been used in Canadian film studies.

The first such quality is that the barrier is not imposed as discrimination upon the survivors by sources of power. The marginality heuristic presumes a "centre" of power that creates the social conditions that engender the marginalization – i.e. the marginalization is *imposed* upon the marginalized via the centre – by virtue of an

⁶⁰ Mary Alemany-Galway, *A Postmodern Cinema: The Voice of the Other in Canadian Film* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002), xi.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, xii.

individual's inclusion within an essentially marginalized (and identifiable) group. In the case of the survivor in Canada's Holocaust films, there is no clear (white/European-Imperialist/ male/ heterosexual) centre of power that *externally* imposes the barrier of experience on them. Moreover, the absence of such external imposition of marginality in these films is particularly striking since the *original cause* of the barrier of experience – living through the Holocaust – was very much imposed externally by the *epitome* of white/European-Imperialist/male/heterosexual centre of marginalizing power - the Nazi.

Of course, one could argue that such overt and ethnically based discrimination was clearly behind the bureaucratic decisions to erect immigration barriers around Canada during and immediately following the war to keep Jewish refugees *out*, which Abella and Troper detail carefully in *None is Too Many*. And I am certainly not suggesting that such anti-Semitism has no historical or even contemporary manifestations in Canada.⁶² But as will become clear below, it would be erroneous to approach the barrier of experience that surrounds the survivors in these films by reading it as a manifestation of anti-Semitism, or ethnically-based marginalization.

As Franklin Bialystok takes pains to emphasize in *Delayed Impact*, after immigrating to Canada, an experiential barrier persisted around survivors even within the ethnic community in which one might assume that he/she would most logically find a place of acceptance – the established, domestic Jewish community in Canada. But such integration within this community did not occur, at least not immediately. Bialystok stresses that this was not necessarily because of conscious discrimination against the newly arrived Holocaust survivors from the established Jewish community that had been

⁶² See Alan Davies, ed., *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992).

instrumental in securing *entry* for these refugees, but because the Holocaust survivor carried with them a past that transcended that which ethnic/religious similarity could bridge.⁶³ In short, the Canadian Jewish community was not equipped to contend with the horrific past that Holocaust survivors brought with them, because the survivors' Holocaust experiences bore nothing in common with the lives of domestic Canadian Jewry during the war.⁶⁴

It is precisely the invisibility of this experiential – rather than essentially ethnic - difference that is manifest in Canada's Holocaust films' refusal to frame the barrier of experience with overt discrimination or anti-Semitism as its source. For example, as Chapter Two will discuss in more detail, in its first third, Kuper's *Children of the Storm* explores questions of bureaucratic/social anti-Semitism that informed policies designed to keep Jewish Holocaust survivors out of Canada, largely through clips of an interview with Irving Abella. Once the film shifts to the actual experiences of the survivors upon immigration to Canada however, the focus on anti-Semitism almost entirely disappears. While the survivors discuss the emotional and cognitive challenges of assimilating into a new community that lacked any experiential awareness of what they had just lived through, these challenges are not presented as having anything to do with their Judeo-specificity. Holocaust survivor Phillip Weiss, whose words in part lend this dissertation its title (see Note 39 above, as well as Chapter Two Note 1), makes this division from the Jewish community explicit. Upon arrival in Canada, Weiss notes, "We didn't have any

⁶³ Bialystok does acknowledge that there were some instances of Canadian Jews perceiving the newly arrived survivors as embarrassing reminders of the peasant roots of many Jewish immigrants who had long been striving for assimilation and acceptance within Canada. At the same time though, he stresses that this perception was also shaped by and intimately bound to the inexperience of the Holocaust by the Canadian Jewish community. See Bialystok, 80-83.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

relatives. We were strangers in a strange land. You were not fully accepted, *even in Jewish circles.*"⁶⁵

Even in cases where there *is* a centre of power that an individual within the barrier of experience comes up against, this resistance is not because of an *essential* difference, but because of a concrete *action*. For instance, in *Charlie Grant's War*, Charlie Grant (R.H. Thomson), a Canadian diamond broker living in Austria in the 1930s, tries to secure rescue for European Jews in Canada, but comes up against the bureaucratic barrier of the Mackenzie King government. Yet this barrier only emerges because Grant makes an *active attempt* to influence immigration policy. If he had *not* made these diplomatic maneuvers, his confrontation with a barrier constituted by a centre of power (the Canadian government) would not have occurred, nor would he have been captured and imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp for his efforts. Similarly, in *Two Men*, Holocaust survivor Alex Koves (John Vernon) tries to seek assistance in tracking down a war criminal hiding in Canada, but is rebuffed by institutions of power including a Jewish organization, the Toronto police, and a Canadian Member of Parliament. But again, their refusal to assist him, which puts him in a conflicting relationship with instruments of power, only happens because he is taking concrete action at this particular moment. His inability to gain access to the centre of power is not the result of systemic marginalization based on an essential quality identified (implicitly or explicitly) by the centre as undesirable (i.e. they are not *not* helping him because he is Jewish, but because of other

⁶⁵ Weiss, quoted in Bialystok, 68, my emphasis.

bureaucratic considerations that I will discuss in Chapter Two). Had Alex not tried to actively pursue this case he would never have come into conflict with centres of power.⁶⁶

This leads to the second reason why the survivor in Canadian Holocaust films defies a framework of marginality. The invisible quality of that which marks him/her as different departs from more overt markers of difference that the margin-centre discourse in Canadian cinema tends to depend on. The clearest articulation of this invisibility of the Holocaust experience which manifests in this corpus is a quote from *Children of the Storm* by Dr. Robert Krell, a child survivor⁶⁷ and psychiatrist interviewed for the film, to which I will return several times throughout this dissertation. Holocaust survivors in Canada, Krell asserts,

know how to compartmentalize tragedy. They know how to cry in silence, away from their families and away from their work... They were all deeply wounded. But they also know how to set the wounds aside and to carry on with the task of living life. And when they speak to audiences they speak as that little boy or girl that endured these horrendous experiences. And then they straighten out their tie and jacket, adjust their dress, and off they go and they're back into the world of the local Canadian, *and no one can tell*.

Such invisibility is in stark contrast with how the problematic of marginalization has been framed in Canadian film scholarship. When Chris Gittings, for instance, discusses the ethnic marginalization of Chinese-Canadians in *Double Happiness* (Mina

⁶⁶ Granted, one could argue that Pete and Joey are similarly marginalized by a concrete action in *Goin' Down the Road*, as they *traveled* to Toronto, and that they would *not* have been marginalized had they stayed in Cape Breton. But this assertion itself points to a central quality of marginalization – identifiable, but “undesirable” groups will be tolerated as long as they remain outside of the social “centre” (i.e. at the margins). My contention is that in Shebib’s film, marginality is *revealed* precisely because the to-be-marginalized characters move to a space where they are “out of place” based first and foremost on who they are, *not* what they do. Such exclusion based on an essential, marginalized identity is of course very different from Grant and Alex, who are not inherently “out of place” *where* they are because of *who* they are. Rather, they come into conflict with centres of power only because of their concerted *actions*.

⁶⁷ Krell is not actually identified as a survivor in *Children of the Storm*, but as a psychiatric expert providing commentary *on* Holocaust survivors. I will reflect on this distinction as a cognitive division between first-hand experience and witness memory more fully in Chapter Six, particularly in relation to trauma theorist Dori Laub, who is also a child survivor of the Holocaust (see Chapter Six Note 34 for my link between Laub and Krell specifically). For now it will suffice to point out that Krell is identified as a child survivor in Bialystok, 86.

Shum, 1994) or Indo-Canadians in *Masala* (Srivnas Krishna, 1991), or when Armatage interrogates power structures at play in the career of Nell Shipman, the ethnic or gender difference that engenders marginalization is so clear that it goes without saying. Nell Shipman was marginalized because of her female-ness, and the characters in *Double Happiness* and *Masala* are marginalized by the “white” centre of power because of ethnic difference that is inscribed in the colour of their skin. This sense of difference that implies a marginalization from a constructed and cohesive centre even applies to works that have focused on marginalization of less overtly visually demarcated groups. For instance, the working class background of the white Pete and Joey in *Goin’ Down the Road* is evident not only in their clothing, but also in their Maritime accents and boorish behaviour that places them at the margins of the “upper-middle-class” centre of economic power in Toronto.

This external visibility of difference even extends to the representation of queer marginality in Canadian cinema. Of course, sexual difference is not inherently visible in the same way that, for instance, ethnic or gender difference may be. However, in films like *Outrageous!* (Richard Brenner, 1977), *Zero Patience* (John Greyson, 1993) or *Leaving Metropolis* (Brad Fraser, 2002), queer characters enact sexual difference via ostentatious performance that *calls attention to it*. Such a device can be read of course as a political act *against* marginalization that declares the *presence* of queer sexualities in a manner that seeks to 1) counteract the purported desire of heteronormative society to render queer sexualities invisible in the public sphere, and 2) expose the social construction of the heteronormative centre itself. Donna Quince and José Sanchez note the importance of the external, surface-level quality of performance is the assertion of

queer identity in their Foreword to *Making Scenes*, a collection of essays on Queer Canadian films and filmmakers:

What ‘queer’ signals is a change which displaces the traditional notions of the Self as unique, abiding, and continuous while substituting instead a concept of the Self as performative, improvisational, discontinuous, and a process constituted by repetitive and stylized acts. Queer identity can be identified as a praxis response to the emergence of social constructionist models of identity, sex/gender as ideological interpolated, and its oppositional stance to essentialist models of sexual orientation as innate.⁶⁸

What is essential for my purposes though is that such an overt declaration of *presence* as a mode of turning marginalization on its head stands in stark contrast to the invisible difference of the survivor in Canada’s Holocaust films, which functions neither as an imposed mode of discriminatory marginality, nor as a hidden social problem that needs to be made visible.⁶⁹ Rather, the entrenchment of this invisibility is central to the films’

historiographic negotiations of the Holocaust’s absence as they enact this unseen

⁶⁸ Donna Quince and José Sanchez, “Foreword,” *Making Scenes*, ed. Donna Quince and José Sanchez (Ottawa: Making Scenes, 1999), 2.

⁶⁹ The importance of making sexual difference visibly *present* can of course be seen as part of a movement from queer invisibility in the 1960s – evident in a film like *Winter Kept Us Warm* (Joel Secter, 1965), whose queer subtext was so heavily veiled that even the actors playing characters in a same-sex relationship “didn’t perceive their characters as gay” – to a post-Stonewall assertion of undisguised visibility in the 1970s and beyond (hence the iconic protest slogan “We’re here, we’re queer, get used to it!”). As such, an argument could be made that the invisible difference of the closeted homosexual, who kept his/her sexual orientation *hidden*, was potentially as invisible as the experiential difference of the Holocaust survivor. Yet I would argue, and as Quince and Sanchez suggest, the interest in queer marginality in *Canadian film studies* cannot be isolated from a concern with externality and surface difference. This attention not only emerged in the aftermath of Canadian queer films like *Outrageous!* or *I’ve Heard the Mermaids Singing* (Patricia Rozema, 1987), both of which visibly display questions of sexual difference (albeit in different ways, with drag in the former and with “dream-like” formal devices in the latter), but it also appeared in the context of an increasing cultural interest (both within and beyond academia) in interrelated questions of difference, power, identity, and marginalization that are manifest in the scholarship described above. As such, while not *all* writing on queerness in Canadian film studies focuses on representations of externalized difference (for instance, Thomas Waugh – probably the most prolific scholar of queer cinema in Canada – has written on underground gay erotic graphics from before the Stonewall riots that marked the beginning of the gay rights movement and the centrality of queer visibility to this end), the timing of this attention to queer marginality lends credence to my contention that the interest of Canadian film scholarship is piqued, primarily, by questions of *visible* marginality, which the Holocaust survivor crying “in silence” lacks. For a discussion of Joel Secter and *Winter Kept Us Warm*, see Matthew Hays, “Queer Pioneer,” *Montreal Mirror* (January 3, 2002), <http://www.montrealmirror.com/ARCHIVES/2002/011001/film1.html> (accessed November 18, 2010). For Waugh’s consideration of pre-Stonewall gay graphics, see Thomas Waugh, *Out/Lines: Gay Underground Erotic Graphics From Before Stonewall* (Vancouver: Arsenal/Pulp Press, 2002).

difference via invisible barriers that consist between historical experience and inexperience.

If it is indeed the fact of their “Holocaust survivor-ness” that constitutes the barrier of experience for survivors in these films, this mark of difference lacks the overt quality that makes axiomatic the power dynamics at play in the process of marginalization in the examples above. There is nothing in their appearance *or* behaviour that immediately marks these figures *as* Holocaust survivors (save for perhaps the iconic tattoo borne by many – see Note 44 above). The non-specificity of survivor appearance in these films is evident even in the basic area of casting. In a manner that reinforces my earlier remarks about the barrier of experience *not* being informed by the survivors’ Jewish-ness, while Susan Sarandon plays a Jewish survivor in *Emotional Arithmetic* there is nothing about her immediate appearance that ostentatiously announces her as such. Not only are the physical scars of the Holocaust not visible on the body of her character, but also there is nothing overtly “Semitic” about Sarandon’s appearance. In fact, Sarandon actually played the daughter of Italian dictator and Hitler-ally Benito Mussolini in the televised biopic *Mussolini and I* (Alberto Negrin, 1985). Such ambiguity of appearance also exists in *Two Men*, in which the survivor and the war criminal that he recognizes in Toronto are *both* two older white men with non-descript Eastern European accents. Moreover, Jan Rubes, who plays a gentle Nazi collaborator in *Two Men* also plays Jacob, an Austrian Jew in *Charlie Grant’s War* who is brutalized and forced by Nazi goons to wash the sidewalk after they break into his house. Similarly, R.H. Thomson, the Canadian actor who in 1984 played the title character in *Charlie Grant’s War*, a non-Jewish Canadian who attempts to save Jews from the Holocaust by

trying to gain them entry to Canada, would later play a Jewish Holocaust survivor in 1991 in *The Quarrel*. These examples of mutable casting call attention to the fact that the visualization of Holocaust survivor-ness is largely nebulous and undefined.

Similarly, just as he/she is not overtly differentiated ethnically, nor is the survivor in Canadian Holocaust films presented as marginalized in terms of class. Melanie Winters, Sarandon's character in *Emotional Arithmetic*, lives with her history professor husband in a huge country house in Québec's Eastern Townships, and while Alex, the survivor in *Two Men* is not presented as "rich", the home he and his wife live in does not in any way call attention to this modesty as a mark of poverty. Even in documentaries that feature interviews with survivors, such as Kuper's *Children of the Storm* or *Voices of Survival*, which verbally refer to the horrors of the Holocaust, the interviewees themselves do not embody visually the experience that marks them as different. The interviews show them to be well-dressed, well-fed, healthy, and generally able-bodied. Their appearances in no way convey the archetypal images that the words "Holocaust survivor" may conjure up for us – those emaciated, skeletal individuals behind barbed wire fences waiting for rescue. In other words, the survivor in Canada's Holocaust cinema is not obviously "othered" in a visual way via his/her appearance. When we see these individuals, either portrayed by actors in fiction or by themselves in the present in documentaries, that which renders (or rendered) them isolated, disconnected, or "marginalized" in Canada is externally absent or invisible. It is precisely this quality that allows the Canadian survivor in these films to, in the words of Krell, "cry in silence."

With this notion of the survivor's silent weeping in mind, I must stress at this point that my comparison between survivors in these films and overt marginalization in

other Canadian films is in no way meant to deflect attention from the fact Holocaust survivors *were* obviously victims of extreme marginalization, oppression and attempted murder during their experiences in the Holocaust. But in spite of the horrific qualities of these experiences, the *representation* of survivors in these films invariably deflects attention *away* from this tangible, bodily victimization through the absence of the Holocaust's visibility *on* the survivors. While these films may include images of such visceral violence – such as archival material that shows those iconic Holocaust images referred to above – there is no immediate correlation between *those* emaciated bodies, for example, and *this* survivor speaking about the past in the present.

This division between visceral victimization and the internally wounded Holocaust survivor becomes especially clear when considered in relation to the violent twinning of marginalization and violent bodily destruction in Canadian films like *Mourir à tue-tête* (*A Scream from Silence*, Anne Claire Poirier, 1979), *Richard Cardinal: Cry from a Diary of a Métis Child* (Alanis Obomsawin, 1986) and *Leaving Metropolis*. While these three films are all very different, they hold in common a concern with the link between bodily violence and marginalization. In *Mourir*, a female director and editor (played by Monique Miller and Micheline Lanctôt respectively) attempt to make a film that graphically conveys the rape of a woman, Suzanne, (Julie Vincent) at the hands of a nameless truck driver (played by Germain Houde), as well as the traumatic aftermath for the assault's victim. In this case, marginalization is not merely relegated to the misogyny inherent in the *act* of the rape, but in the social/judicial misogyny that tends to “cast some guilt upon the victims. Women make the charge of rape, but the juries decide

what constitutes rape.”⁷⁰ *Richard Cardinal* is a documentary about a young Métis boy who was taken from his home by social services agents acting on behalf of the Alberta government. He was subsequently shuffled between foster homes, group homes and shelters, where he suffered abuse and neglect for the duration of his short life. In *Leaving Metropolis*, a character named Shannon (Thom Allison) is a pre-operative transsexual whose body has been ravaged by AIDS, which has made her doctor determine that she is ineligible to complete her gender re-assignment surgery.

In all of these cases, the marginalization experienced by these characters shares three essential qualities that exemplify how the trope of marginality cannot be applied so easily to the invisible barriers in Canada’s Holocaust cinema. First, the marginalization in the above cases is inextricably bound to sources of power (misogynist male/judicial power in *Mourir*, European-imperialist bureaucratic power in *Richard Cardinal* and the uncompassionate power of the medical establishment that holds Shannon’s fate in its hands in *Leaving Metropolis*). In the aforementioned cases of Canada’s Holocaust cinema, the power dynamics inherent in and necessary for the process of marginalization are either wholly absent, or secondary.

Second, the marginalization of Suzanne, Richard, and Shannon is intimately bound to their inclusion within a definable group that has been *historically* marginalized from these centres of power: Suzanne’s victimization as a victim of rape cannot be isolated from her identity as a female; the entrapment of Richard in the children’s aid system cannot be isolated from his aboriginality; and the marginalization that renders Shannon unable to determine her own medical fate cannot be read outside of her transexuality. In contrast, for the survivor in Canadian Holocaust films, his/her position

⁷⁰ Evans 1991, 260.

within the barrier of experience is not contextualized via inclusion in a historically marginalized group. As indicated above, while most of the survivors in these films are presented as Jewish, and their Judaism is of course intimately bound to their victimization *during* the Holocaust, the representations of them in these films that are set after the war do not root the barrier of experience to the Jewish faith, heritage, or putative physiognomy.

Third, the results of the marginalization in all of these cases are irrevocably violent, not only insofar as the rape of Suzanne, the abuse suffered by Richard, and the AIDS virus that has ravaged Shannon have violent physical effects on their bodies, but these characters are in effect marginalized *to death* as each commits suicide, purportedly trying to take back the control of their bodies that had been stolen through the process of marginalization. As Krell's assertion intimates, and as I stressed above, such violent markers of victimization are absent on the bodies of survivors in Canada's Holocaust films.

The cases of Suzanne, Richard, and Shannon are of course extreme examples of the trope of marginalization that has become prominent in Canadian cinema (and explored in Canadian film scholarship). Yet the wounded bodies of the raped female, abandoned aboriginal child, and AIDS-ravaged transsexual are especially useful to exemplify by contrast the unwounded body of the survivor in Canada's Holocaust films. Moreover, this distinction may in part explain why this corpus has not found an analytical home in Canadian film studies. The absence of visible difference in these films - which one could argue manifests the invisibility of the Holocaust's absence from Canada - does

not fit into the framework of discriminatory marginalization based on overt and axiomatic markers of difference that has dominated this area of scholarship since the early 1990s.

Given the interiority of the Holocaust experience that informs the invisible barriers between the survivors in these films and their surroundings, it is also important to explain at this point why I am not invoking *trauma* literature more extensively as a heuristic for reading this corpus (aside from the final chapter that focuses on the films of Jack Kuper that I will return to shortly). After all, if that which informs the barrier of experience consists in the invisibility of the experience whose traumatic mark is left *internally*, on the psyche rather than the body of the survivor,⁷¹ it would seem that the work on psychological trauma and traumatic memory by writers such as Ruth Leys, Dominick LaCapra, Dori Laub, and Cathy Caruth would be invaluable in considering how the survivors operate in these films as psychologically marked by their past. Moreover, in *Trauma: A Genealogy* Ruth Leys notes that delayed display of symptoms of traumatic stress in Holocaust survivors – which manifests itself in these films by the invisibility of the Holocaust experience that allows the survivor to “cry in silence” - has been of utmost importance in crafting the clinical definition of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁷² So why have I chosen to approach this corpus – containing as it does the documentation and representation of so many survivors carrying their traumatic memories internally - without using such trauma literature as a primary framework?

First, this dissertation is not meant as a case study of the Holocaust survivor in Canadian cinema. While many of the films that I discuss in the following pages feature

⁷¹ Julian Levinson discusses this distinction relative to cinematic representations of the Holocaust survivor as physically vs. psychologically wounded in “The Maimed Body and the Tortured Soul: Holocaust Survivors in American Film,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 17.1 (Spring 2004): 141-159. I will return to Levinson’s piece in more detail in Chapter Three.

⁷² Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 15.

survivors, my interest here is how the mobilization of these figures works to convey the overarching theme of absence that operates not only through the traumatized subjectivity of the survivors themselves, but via their interrelationships with surroundings from which the Holocaust experience is absent. In other words, in this study I am less concerned with the *psychology* of the characters than with their *role* as narrative and audiovisual incarnations that occupy specific positions within the diegetic worlds of the films. As such, a more concerted examination of how the invisibility of the barrier of experience may be a manifestation of psychological trauma in a medical sense is beyond the purview of this project's concern with Holocaust *representation*.

Second, since I am interested in what the figure of the survivor *represents*, I would argue that in these films the specifically *traumatic* quality of the Holocaust's internal manifestation within survivors is not only secondary, but in many cases even downplayed in order to emphasize the invisibility of the barrier of experience. As previously stated, the traumatic manifestations of the Holocaust in these films are not overt. Even in rare instances that I will return to in Chapter Three, where survivors *do* perform ostentatious actions (like a torrid affair between two survivors in *Emotional Arithmetic*, or a survivor's attempt to murder the man who betrayed his family to the Nazis in *Two Men*, both of which are actions that could be seen as external manifestations of their internal anguish), these moments are causally framed not in the context of Holocaust trauma, but rather in relation to the barrier of experience that is derived from it.

Accordingly, relying extensively on trauma literature would not only overstate the importance of psychological trauma in these films, but also would push the project

toward a diagnostic end that seeks to identify these survivors - representations or real people - as “traumatized.” I would argue that such an approach would not only be presumptuous - since the manifestation of the Holocaust experience is presented as invisible in these films – but irresponsible in a representation-focused analysis like this one. I am not interested in whether or not these films accurately convey psychological trauma as is suffered by *actual* survivors. Rather, I am interested in how the interiority of experience informs interpersonal barriers in a manner that offers a critical commentary on the Holocaust’s absence, and how Canadian films present and negotiate these barriers. I will thus defer (no pun intended) a more detailed discussion of trauma literature until it can function as a means to illuminate the barrier of experience specifically. There are two such instances where I will highlight trauma as a framework with this specific end in mind: first, in the second half of Chapter Three, I will use the internal subjectivity of traumatic memory as a means to read the invisible interpersonal barriers of experience between survivors and their surroundings in *Emotional Arithmetic* and *Fugitive Pieces*; second, in my consideration Jack Kuper’s work – productions *by* a survivor rather than representations *of* (a) survivor(s) - I will invoke trauma scholarship in order to argue that his films allude to a psychological barrier that places an individual as an external observer when looking back upon a traumatic experience in his or her past. This localization of the barrier in experience can thus be illuminated by trauma discourse, such as Dori Laub’s reflection on a subjective split between a survivor looking back upon his or her experiences in the Holocaust, and the self being looked back upon,⁷³ to which I will return in my discussion of Kuper.

⁷³ Dori Laub, “Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle,” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 61-62.

I want to conclude this Introduction with a final assertion that will be returned to again only in the Conclusion to this project. As mentioned above, the chapter progression of this dissertation functions as a funnel with the barrier of experience becoming increasingly narrow, while still remaining intact. At the same time, this movement inward carries with it an outward progression - one that moves from the specificity of the Canadian context of the films to a concern with how they can point to more universal questions of historical representation via the heuristic of experiential barriers. This movement is quite intentional on my part as I am purposely using the national context of these films as a way *into* analysis, rather than an endpoint. Certainly the Canadian context of this corpus provides an important and engaging entry point that can illuminate the unbridgeable barriers that operate across these films. I would argue however that approaching this corpus by making its national context a diagnostic *end* threatens to miss the analytical potential of Canada's Holocaust films that transcends a Canadian specificity. It is my hope that as this dissertation undertakes its introductory navigation of this invisible corpus, such potential will become increasingly clear.

Chapter One

“It has nothing to do with Canada”: Historical Barriers Between Canada and the Holocaust During World War II

As the Introduction discussed, most Canadian films about the Holocaust approach the event via its *ex post facto* legacy that is inscribed within individuals who lived through it, and carried by them in their post-Holocaust lives. In other words, these films do not aim to represent the historical period comprising the Holocaust itself – that is, the period *during* WWII in which the Nazis and their collaborators were actively rounding up, deporting and trying to execute the entirety of European Jewry. Rather, they consider how the ramifications of this history inform the lives of those who survived and their relations with those who did not experience the Holocaust. However, there are a number of Canadian films that do attempt to document, represent, and interrogate the historical period of the Holocaust itself. More specifically, these films delineate and examine the historical barriers between the Holocaust and Canada *during WWII*, and thus share a certain emphasis on the event’s *absence* with those films that focus on the Holocaust’s legacy in the years and decades after the war. As these historical barriers invariably provide a context to read this *post-war* legacy that manifests in the *interpersonal* barriers that persist in the majority of Canada’s Holocaust cinema, they are a useful place to begin an analysis of this corpus.

With this in mind, this chapter will begin by considering films that imply a qualitative distinction between the history of the Holocaust and that of Canada during WWII. This section starts by looking at the challenges that Canadian survivor Jack Kuper faced while attempting to have his autobiographical play *Sun in My Eyes* produced

for broadcast on the CBC. As I will demonstrate, this resistance is intimately bound to a conception that the Holocaust and Canada constitute two discrete entities that are wholly unrelated to each other. I will then shift attention to a number of “war documentaries” produced by the NFB that embody and thus serve to perpetuate this conceived relational division. Films like *The Valour and the Horror* (Brian McKenna, 1992), *Canada at War*, *The Lucky Ones: Allied Airmen and Buchenwald* (Michael Adler, 1994) and *Guilty Men* all explore Canada’s military involvement in WWII, but implicitly posit a distinction between this history and the Holocaust. My contention is that these films present this distinction as an axiomatic feature of Canada’s WWII history, thus deflecting any intrinsic reflection on it as the nation is positioned as a neutral and external agent in relation to the attempted destruction of European Jewry.

The second part of the chapter considers films that call into question the moral neutrality of Canada’s historical relation to the Holocaust. This section analyzes the made-for-TV drama *Charlie Grant’s War*, which was briefly discussed in the Introduction, and Harry Rasky’s documentary *The Spies Who Never Were* (1981), which emphasize respectively the anti-Semitic impetuses behind the bureaucratic barriers that were designed to keep Jewish refugees out of Canada, or interned upon their arrival on North American shores as potential enemies of the state. At the same time, while these films seek to expose the moral culpability of Canada’s relationship to the history of the Holocaust, they both posit an experiential barrier between the two as a problematic that challenges the event’s “assimilation” into a Canadian context.

The last section of the chapter focuses on films that explore historical *social* barriers between the Holocaust and Canada, which are enacted via the Canadian body

politic's putative ignorance regarding WWII and the Holocaust as they occurred, and the social dissemination of anti-Semitic attitudes that were essential in enshrining the bureaucratic barriers designed to *keep* the Holocaust absent from Canada. In a manner that echoes the axiomatic distinction between the Holocaust and Canada in a militaristic sense in the NFB war documentaries, Micheline Lanctôt's *La vie d'un héros (A Hero's Life)*, 1994) intimates the ignorance of everyday Canadians during WWII regarding the horrific realities of the battle being fought overseas. Lanctôt's film focuses on members of a rural Québécois family who become enamoured with a Nazi POW who is assigned to work on their farm in the closing days of WWII, and whose legend grows in the decades following until his eventual return as an elderly man. In this film, the family's fascination with the POW is not presented as the result of any anti-Semitic tendencies or sympathy with the Nazi war effort. Rather, what underlies this fascination is their ignorance (either willful or not) of what actions their "hero" may have committed prior to his capture, as the family is presented as experientially removed from the tangible realities of war. The chapter concludes by discussing Eric R. Scott's 2002 documentary *Je me souviens (I Remember)*, which calls into question the assertion implicit in *La vie d'un héros* that Canadians (in this case, Québécois citizens) were unaware of, and thus morally neutral in relation to the Holocaust. Scott's film does this by examining the widespread proliferation of anti-Semitism in the Québec press in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as a post-war reluctance to acknowledge this past in the province's intellectual history.

Canada's WWII Military History and the Holocaust

One of the earliest Canadian films to specifically and unambiguously approach the topic of the Holocaust was a 60-minute televised version of a play called *Sun in My Eyes* that was broadcast on the CBC's "GM Presents" series on Sunday, February 21, 1960. While this piece was adapted for television by noted director/producer Harvey Hart,¹ and turned into a fully edited program rather than simply a filmed version of a theatrical performance, the writer of the source play was a young man named Jack Kuper, a Holocaust survivor who had immigrated to Canada in 1947 and was employed by the CBC in the art department.² The title of *Sun in My Eyes* refers to the "Polish peasant fiction that Jews could not see the sun,"³ and the program's narrative is an autobiographical account of Kuper's interactions with such superstitions during his childhood in the small Polish town of Pulawy. The historical period covered in the film begins after the Nazi occupation of Poland - as anti-Semitic discrimination and persecution was worsening - up to and including the capture, deportation and implied murder of his family, which Kuper was able to avoid by working for a Gentile woman when the round-up occurred.

Although Kuper ultimately succeeded in bringing this Holocaust story to Canadians via a national broadcast in 1960, this achievement came only after facing significant resistance to the integration of his experiences in wartime Europe to the cultural context of his new home in Canada. Such resistance was evident to Kuper almost immediately upon arrival in his new hometown of Toronto, when he observed that not only were most Canadians largely unaware of the Nazis' attempted destruction of

¹ Dennis Braithwaite, "Dennis Braithwaite's View," *Toronto Star*, February 22, 1960, 18.

² Jack Kuper, *After the Smoke Cleared* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1994), 93-95.

³ Evans 2011.

Europe's Jews, but also were unwilling to *learn* about what had happened. He recalls that even people who *believed* the horrific stories of what had occurred in Europe during the war were averse to hearing about the details of his experiences: "[I]t was hush hush. It was like, 'Don't worry about what happened,' or 'Forget what happened, get on with your life. Here's a nice steak, why don't you eat it.' When I would say, 'My God, it's so big, you know, ten people could have eaten that in the Warsaw ghetto,' they said, 'Why do you have to mention that?'" Kuper also describes a similar trepidation while he was still in school at Toronto's Central Tech, when he wrote a play called *The Number* - a reference to the iconic numerical tattoo printed on the arm of Nazi prisoners: "I passed it on to one of my friends in class and he passed it on to someone else, and in live drawing a few weeks later, the instructor came over to me, and he had the copy. Someone had given it to him. And he took me aside and said, 'Kuperblum [Kuper's birth-name], look, this is all very interesting, but you should not be showing this to the other kids, they don't understand.'"⁴

Kuper is quick to stress that he does not believe that this reluctance to hear about the horrors of the Holocaust is unique to Canada. Rather, he sees such responses as indicative of human nature that disposes one to be more eager to hear about others' *positive* experiences – like a job promotion or a new child – than negative life events, like an illness (or one's experiences during the Holocaust).⁵ Yet as he would assimilate into Canadian culture, eventually finding gainful employment at the CBC, Kuper's attempts to inject his Holocaust past into the public discourse of Canada would continue to face resistance. But unlike the aforementioned trepidation of individuals that did not want to

⁴ Jack Kuper, Interview with author, Toronto, Canada, January 22, 2009.

⁵ Ibid.

hear about his Holocaust experiences because they were unpleasant, the rejections of *Sun in My Eyes* seemed to stem from more localized concerns.

In his autobiographical novel *After the Smoke Cleared* (1994), Kuper implies that his ability to disseminate the European experiences represented in *Sun in My Eyes* to a Canadian audience was stymied by a common conception that he encountered, which viewed the Holocaust and Canada as unrelated; two discrete entities historically *disconnected* from each other. For instance, Kuper recalls one “New York Stanislavsky method type [who] advised me to change the play’s setting to the frozen north and the characters to Eskimos.” More explicit was a sympathetic director who told Kuper that while his writing was “reminiscent of Chekhov,” *Sun in My Eyes* simply “*has nothing to do with Canada.*”⁶

Granted, not all of the rejections of *Sun in my Eyes* were so overt in implying a disconnection between the historical subject matter of the play and the national audience Kuper was striving for. For instance, one editor simply told Kuper, “This is 1954. It’s time to forget,”⁷ while others summarily dismissed the topic as one that had already been covered in [the play version of] *The Diary of Anne Frank*.⁸ Yet when these comments are considered along with Kuper’s early experiences in Canada – i.e. Canadians not knowing nor wanting to hear about the Holocaust - the resistance that he faced in bringing his autobiographical story to a Canadian audience can be understood as

⁶ Kuper 1994, 94-95, my emphasis.

⁷ Ibid., 94.

⁸ Ibid., 95. This notion that *Sun in My Eyes* was too similar to *The Diary of Anne Frank* actually seems rather prescient, although misguided, given that CBC finally produced a version of Kuper’s play in 1960 – one year after George Stevens’ filmed version of *The Diary of Anne Frank* was released. While it is speculative, I imagine that the CBC’s decision to go ahead with a Holocaust-themed program was probably informed in no small part by the critical acclaim that Stevens’ film received.

stemming from a conception that sees (implicitly or explicitly) the Holocaust and Canada as separate entities that are historically unrelated to each other.

The historical particularities underlying the lack of an “enduring bridge”⁹ to the Holocaust that Gary Evans finds in Canadian cinema are most clearly manifest in those films in which “Canada” comes *closest* in an experiential sense to the Holocaust – that is, films that explore Canada’s military involvement in WWII. Of course, such films do away with the problem of the spatial distance between the Holocaust’s European setting and the national space of Canada by focusing on the military history of Canadian forces that were face-to-face with WWII Europe, where the attempted annihilation of Europe’s Jews was undertaken. Yet even in these films that place “Canada” – via the Canadian military – in close propinquity to the Holocaust, the relationship between the two is still constituted by absence. What these films thus ultimately imply, either by omitting *any* reference to the Holocaust, or by positioning the Canadian WWII military experience as qualitatively external to it, is that the history of the Holocaust and that of WWII Canada are – simply - unrelated. In other words, these films – not unlike Kuper’s acquaintances – suggest that the Holocaust “has nothing to do with Canada.”

The question of the historical military relationship (or non-relationship) between the Holocaust and Canada is a useful point of entry for contextualizing the experiential barriers that are manifest throughout Canada’s Holocaust cinema. It is noteworthy for instance that the first example Evans uses in “Vision and Revision” to emphasize that Canadian films have largely failed to “incorporate” the Holocaust is the 3-part series *The Valour and the Horror* - a co-production between the NFB and the CBC that offers a documentation of Canada’s military endeavors during WWII - which Evans describes as

⁹ Evans 2002, 152.

a “mainstream Canadian production [that] abandon[s] any reference to the Holocaust.”

In this case Evans makes it quite clear that he sees this as a careless and regrettable omission that is evidence of the filmmaker’s failure to grasp “the revolutionary character of this unique genocide.”¹⁰

When he returns to *The Valour and the Horror* in more detail later in his article, Evans further explains what he perceives to be the shortfalls of the series, particularly in its second part, *Death by Moonlight: Bomber Command*.¹¹ Evans criticizes the film’s portrayal of “the Allied policy of saturation (mass) bombing of Germany as the equivalent of war crimes against the German civilian population; worse, the narration insisted that Canadian airmen were criminals if they survived and needless victims if they perished.” He more explicitly refers to the film’s omission of any reference to the Holocaust by describing how the filmmakers failed to establish “some connection between the Churchill War Cabinet decision to pursue mass bombing and a November 1942 parliamentary resolution to punish war crimes[, which] also coincided with [British] Parliament’s acknowledgement of the unprecedented destruction of the Jews by the Nazis.” He also notes that the film fails to mention that “[German] propaganda minister

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *The Valour and the Horror* is comprised of three films that CBC aired consecutively on January 12, 19, and 16, 1992. Each film explored a particular WWII battle that Canadian soldiers were not only involved in, but in which they suffered disproportionately large casualties, or witnessed/participated in extreme brutality. The first film, *Savage Christmas: Hong Kong 1941*, explores the arrival of Canadian soldiers in Hong Kong at the request of the British government to purportedly discourage an invasion of the colony by Japan. However, Britain eventually surrendered Hong Kong on Christmas Day, 1941. This surrender thus turned these soldiers into “sacrificial lambs” who subsequently became POWs of the Japanese military. The second film, *Death by Moonlight: Bomber Command*, is the most provocative of the three pieces in its exploration of the role of Canadian airmen who participated in the mass bombing of Germany (including civilian areas), and the psychological/emotional scars left on those that survived. The final film is *In Desperate Battle: Normandy 1944*, which covers the landing of Allied troops on the beaches of Normandy only to come face to face with “Germany’s elite troops and tank divisions,” against which they paid an enormous price, presented in the film as due to the “cold-blooded incompetence and stupidity of the military leadership.” For more information, see the TV review, John Haslett Cuff, “Debunking the official war line,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 11, 1992, C6.

Josef Goebbels responded to Allied bombardment by blaming the powerful Jews of the world for the fact that Germany was being targeted. In short, the chance to link Allied activity with the fact of the ongoing Holocaust was forsaken by the incompetent historical researchers.”¹²

As the debate between the merits and the problems with *The Valour and the Horror* that played out in the Canadian media suggests,¹³ the film’s failure to mention the Holocaust may in itself be far from its most controversial aspect. Yet since the focus both Evans’ piece and this dissertation is on the treatment of the Holocaust in Canadian films, rather than the treatment of Canada’s military involvement in WWII in Canadian films, it is this omission that I want to reflect on more carefully. My contention is that such an absence must be considered in the context of the Canadian military experience of WWII, and that the relationship between this experience and the Holocaust is at best nebulous, and at worst constituted by complete experiential disconnection. As such, the absence of the Holocaust from the Canadian military experience in WWII may explain in

¹² Evans 2002, 163.

¹³ The controversy over *The Valour and the Horror* that played out not only in Canadian media, but also in the Canadian Senate, could probably provide enough material to justify a dissertation in its own right. As such, I can only give a very brief snapshot of it here. The most vociferous critics of the film were veterans and their supporters who saw its portrayal of their actions as morally equivocal at best, and insultingly inaccurate at worst (see for example “CBC war program smeared veterans,” *Daily News*, April 6, 1992, 15, as well as these letters to the editor from WWII veterans: Stewart Thompson, “McKenna mini-series was heavily flawed,” *Toronto Star*, September 4, 1992, A20; and Gerald Potterton, “It was us or them – wasn’t it?” *The Gazette*, July 6, 1992, B3). Many defenders of the film emphasized its utility as a “revisionist” or thoughtfully interrogative history of Canada’s WWII involvement (see Cuff, C6 and Bob Blakely, “Veterans’ complaints unfounded,” *Calgary Herald*, June 24, 1992, B12). The film’s proponents also criticized the film’s detractors by framing the debate as a free speech issue, particularly in light of McKenna being summoned before the Canadian Senate’s subcommittee on veterans’ affairs to defend the series (see Pierre Berton, “Valour and horror: not politically correct?” *Toronto Star*, May 30, 1992, J3, and Mike Boone, “Film-maker under fire from Senate veterans’ committee for war expose,” *The Vancouver Sun*, June 11, 1992, C1). Critics countered *this* criticism by suggesting that the fact that public money financed the project via the NFB and CBC places certain constraints of responsible representation on the filmmakers (see Claire Hoy, “Media ‘Screaming’ the Real Horror: The Nonsense Continues,” *The Province*, December 1, 1992, A33.)

part why a film like *The Valour and the Horror* that is focused on Canada's WWII involvement may not touch on the Holocaust directly.

This experiential division between Canadian war efforts and the Holocaust that is left unmentioned in *The Valour and the Horror* assumes a slightly more overt manifestation in the NFB's 13-part 1962 series *Canada at War*, as well as Michael Adler's 1994 documentary *The Lucky Ones: Allied Airmen and Buchenwald*, although it is a central focus in neither. Again, to recognize the significance of the Holocaust in these films, one must be attuned to the subtle ways in which they *imply* both its absence from the WWII Canadian military efforts, and thus the experiential barriers between the two.

While Evans includes *Canada at War* in his annotated filmography, the fact that he does not mention it in the body of "Vision and Revision" points to the miniscule attention that the Holocaust commands in this series. The most overt reference to the Holocaust in *Canada at War* is made in its 12th part, entitled "V Was for Victory." This episode covers the Allies' discovery of the atrocities committed by the Nazis, which were unearthed by the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, Auschwitz and Buchenwald. Moreover, the film alludes to the ethnic social engineering that informed the Nazis' genocidal ambitions. For instance, over grotesque images of the freshly liberated Bergen-Belsen, the narrator states, "Untold millions had been gassed, starved, burned, and beaten to death. They had committed a crime. They were not of pure German stock." Yet despite these racial allusions, the film stops short of *explicitly* linking these atrocities to the Judeo-specificity of the Holocaust. The closest it comes to this is the narrator's final

statement that refers to Hitler's last will and testament, saying, "In it he blamed the Jews for everything."

What is important for my purposes here though is less how *Canada at War* presents the attempted extermination of European Jewry than how it constructs the relationship between the Holocaust and Canada's war efforts. In the context of this series that purports to document, as its title suggests, Canada at war, the small reference given to the Holocaust of course suggests that this event played a very small part in Canada's WWII history. Moreover, when the extermination of European Jewry is finally explored, it is framed as an *ex post facto* "discovery" – atrocities that were stumbled upon by the Allied forces *after they had already occurred*. The film's narration implies precisely this point as it states - over images of survivors in prison outfits staring blankly through barbed wire and being lifted onto stretchers, as well as skeletal bodies grasping barbed wire fences – that the Allied confrontation with these atrocities came only "too late," and that "all that could be given them [the still-living victims] was dignity at the end."

"V Was For Victory" also points to an experiential break between the Canadian WWII military and the Holocaust in two additional and equally important ways. First, in stark contrast to the moral relativism inherent in *The Valour and the Horror*'s critical take on Allied mass bombing attacks, the *Canada at War* episode takes pains to contextualize the perpetrators of the atrocities in the concentration camps as decidedly "other." Implicitly, the film does this by suggesting a collective sense of German guilt, briefly describing the demographics of the Germany's military from young children to "the ulcerated and the aging" in order to stress that there was "no sympathy for the German people" as "the Allied armies had reached their incredible concentration camps."

This sense of collective guilt is further implied as the film reports on the forced tours of the crematoria for “the ordinary people of Germany [who] were marched in to see and to smell the depravity that had been perpetrated in their name.” More explicitly, the atrocities of the Holocaust are “othered” from the Canadian military through a vocabulary that posits the agents behind them as not simply constituting an opposing military force, but a qualitative difference in humanity: “The camps were operated,” the narrator states, “by a sordid collection of sub-human creatures.”¹⁴

Second, in a manner that correlates with the examination of Allied POWs in *The Lucky Ones* that I will return to below, “V Was for Victory” formally distinguishes the Canadian military confrontation with the concentration camp universe from the experiences of those whose crime was that “they were not of pure German stock.” Immediately after showing images of emaciated survivors receiving medical attention after the liberation of their camp, the film cuts to the liberation of a POW camp. As the narrator proclaims, “The gates swung open for 9000 captured Canadians,” the film shows a gate to a camp opening as a crowd of POWs stand and cheer. These POWs, while prisoners, bear little in common to the starving survivors and skeletal corpses that the film has just shown. They are not in identifiable prison garb, and they are standing, cheering, and appear to be generally healthy. The narration actually alludes to this dichotomy briefly, yet does not contextualize this experience in relation to the emaciated prisoner-survivors, but those POWs of another Allied nation. Over the images of

¹⁴ In addition to how this treatment differs from the moral relativism of *The Valour and the Horror*, such a conceptualization is of course in stark contrast to the work of writers like Hannah Arendt or Christopher Browning that emphasize the “banality,” or the ordinary human-ness, of Holocaust perpetrators. See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1964) and Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998).

cheering Canadian POWs, the narrator stresses, “Life here had been hard, but it cannot match the agony suffered by the captured Russian.” This contrast is exemplified by juxtaposing the cheering Canadian POWs with images of wounded (Russian) soldiers with artificial or missing legs. Yet these soldiers are moving under their own strength, in contrast to the Bergen-Belsen survivor that the film visualizes being loaded onto a stretcher, his hands pressed together in gratitude for his rescuers. As such, the figures of the wounded Russian POWs act as a middle-ground between the broken survivor of Bergen-Belsen and the healthy, happy Canadian POWs, thus further emphasizing the experiential barriers between the two.

In contrast, Michael Adler’s *The Lucky Ones: Allied Airmen and Buchenwald* implies a more concurrent relationship between the Allied war effort and the Holocaust by documenting the imprisonment of Allied soldiers – including airmen from Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the United States, in addition to Canadian soldiers like Ed Carter Edwards who proudly dons a hat that reads “Ex-RCAF [Royal Canadian Air Force] POW” - in Buchenwald. Yet there are two important ways by which *The Lucky Ones*, co-produced like *The Valour and the Horror* by the NFB and the CBC, enacts the absence of the Holocaust from the Canadian military’s WWII history, despite the propinquity of the Allied soldiers to the concentration camp experience.

First, despite the imprisonment of these soldiers in Buchenwald, Adler’s film suggests an experiential barrier between the Allied POWs and the atrocities that surrounded them by positioning them as *witnesses* to, rather than overt victims *of* these atrocities. This is alluded to in a title card 3 minutes into the film that reads:

168 Allied airmen were captured by the Gestapo and eventually imprisoned in Buchenwald, a concentration camp notorious for its brutality and its barbaric

medical experiments. After the war they went home to their towns, to their farms, their families. But their stories were hard to tell, hard to hear, and for some, hard to believe. So they kept silent. Only now are the silent witnesses of Buchenwald talking, sharing with their families and with each other the memories they have spend 50 years trying to forget.

Of course, this title card's use of the term "witnesses" does not necessarily imply an experiential distinction between the airmen and the atrocities that they saw. Certainly within a concentration camp it was possible to be a witness to atrocity one moment, and the victim of it the next. Moreover, the title card's ambiguity in this regard implies a similar barrier between these airmen and their families upon their liberation and arrival home after the war to that which consists in the relationship between Canadian Holocaust survivors and their fellow Canadians, which the following chapters explore. It also intimates the communal quality of this imprisonment that the airmen share with each other, just like the shared Holocaust experience amongst survivors in the films that I will discuss in Chapter Four.

But once *The Lucky Ones* starts to focus on the arrival of the POWs at Buchenwald (at approximately the 33-minute mark, after first detailing their attempted missions and capture), a distinction between them and their fellow prisoners begins to appear as a plethora of implications delineate an experiential barrier that places these soldiers as external witnesses to the atrocities of the camp. This segment suggests almost immediately that these soldiers were somehow "out of place" in Buchenwald. The visuals feature a tracking shot that moves from outside of a barbed wire fence into the camp as one of the soldiers recalls in voiceover, "As we got close to the camp, and saw what was inside the camp, terrible, terrible fear and horror entered our hearts. We thought, 'What is this? Where are we going? Why are we here?' And as we got closer to

the camp and started to enter the camp and saw these human skeletons walking around...we thought, 'What are we getting into?'" This pattern of establishing the POWs as "out of place" and external *witnesses* continues for the next several minutes of the film. For instance, one soldier recalls the horror that he felt seeing the arrival of a boxcar full of Hungarian Gypsies, of whom over half were already dead. Dave High, a former soldier with the RCAF recalls that the worst thing that he witnessed at Buchenwald was a brutal hanging. Another soldier remembers seeing severed heads floating in formaldehyde, as well as shrunken heads from medical experiments that "brought home the horror of the place." Finally, over images of the crematoria, one POW describes witnessing 37 bodies lined up to be burned, with a "number on their leg in indelible pencil...for counting purposes." In other words, these examples highlight what the POWs *saw* rather than what happened *to* them.

This is not to at all downplay the legitimate and all-consuming fear that these soldiers may have *actually* felt while witnessing these things and being imprisoned in Buchenwald, or to suggest that the film pays *no* attention to the actual experiences that they faced while in the camp. For instance, immediately after the formal "arrival" at Buchenwald (via the tracking shot described above), the film cuts to Eric Johnston of the Royal Australian Air Force sitting with two other former POWs, who recalls the shock and fear of having his hair sheared off. The film then cuts to another soldier who remembers being herded into a shower room after their heads had been shaved, and describes that he fully expected to be gassed. However, even these instances imply that

such experiences did not correlate to the atrocities of the camp, as the latter soldier reveals the relief he felt when water instead of gas came out of the showers.¹⁵

Moreover, while all these examples may only *allude* to the delineation between these POWs and the victims of the atrocities that they witnessed, other moments in *The Lucky Ones* more overtly posit them as *external* witnesses. By this I mean that they are represented as separated from the atrocities that they see in a manner that is invariably different from a witness who lacks this experiential barrier between himself or herself and that which he/she is witnessing – that is, an individual who in the next hour, day, week, may be subject to those same atrocities. For example, in a manner that recalls the contrasting juxtaposition between the emaciated corpses and survivors of the concentration camp and the liberation of the jovial POWs in *Canada at War*, a number of the interviews in *The Lucky Ones* detail how the Allied prisoners tried to establish themselves as *POWs* specifically – a prisoner label that demanded certain treatment at the hands of the imprisoning forces. Over a crane shot of the site of Buchenwald as it exists today, one soldier’s voiceover stresses that in response to their imprisonment in a “concentration camp of the worst type,” the POWs strove to organize and establish themselves as a distinct class of prisoner - “military people, [who] won’t work and won’t do anything and just kick up a fuss.” The film then cuts to a close-up of a soldier, who further establishes this delineation of the POWs as a certain prisoner “type” that was able to evade becoming direct victims of the worst type of atrocities in Buchenwald: “On a

¹⁵ A similar strategy is employed in Steven Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List*, in which a group of Czechoslovakian Jews is rounded up into a shower room, where they fear they will be gassed but are not. In both this film and *The Lucky Ones*, this device may be meant simply to detail the fortuitous experiences of one *particular* group of prisoners, but ultimately deflects by omission the experiences of those whose trips to the showers were less fortunate. I will return to this elision of the Holocaust as a whole in *The Lucky Ones* below.

couple of occasions the SS did come and see me and told us we had to get to work, *but didn't reinforce it.*" Similarly, later when the ex-POWs are describing the impending liberation of Buchenwald, a number of them recall being singled out by the Nazis as Allied prisoners. While they expected that this meant their execution were imminent, they reveal that it turned out they were being called upon to help stop the spread of fire through the camp that stemmed from the attacks of the arriving Allied armies.

These barriers that separated the POWs from those atrocities that they witnessed leads to the second way in which *The Lucky Ones* leaves an experiential distance between the Holocaust and these imprisoned soldiers. Aside from the brief mention of the arrival of the Hungarian Gypsies, the film never identifies who the victims suffering the atrocities witnessed by the POWs actually *are*. Moreover, as Evans notes in "Vision and Revision," *The Lucky Ones'* emphasis on the experiences of these specific Allied airmen overlooks (perhaps necessarily) the "concentration camp world as a whole and the Holocaust in particular." Given the film's focus on the "harsh treatment meted out to the captured airmen...the all-encompassing nature of the Nazi genocide" is not trivialized, but not mentioned at all.¹⁶ As such, despite the fact that *The Lucky Ones* brings this particular military experience *close* to the Holocaust, it leaves implicit an experiential barrier between the two by neglecting to contextualize the former in relation to the latter. As such, in addition to *The Valour and the Horror*, Evans sees *The Lucky Ones* as an example that "should have, but failed, to include the Holocaust."¹⁷

This conception of an experiential division between the Holocaust and wartime Canada, which is implicit in the brief treatment (or non-treatment) of the Holocaust in

¹⁶ Evans 2002, 163.

¹⁷ Ibid.

these films produced well after the conclusion of WWII, becomes more obvious when they are considered relative to the propaganda film *Guilty Men*, produced in 1945 by the NFB as part of the wartime theatrical series “The World in Action.” Of the propaganda films produced by the NFB during WWII, *Guilty Men* comes closest to addressing the Holocaust specifically, even if its emphasis is on the war crimes tribunals set up by the Allies, and there is no mention of the Judeo-specificity of the Nazi genocide. Yet like *The Valour and the Horror*, *Canada at War* and *The Lucky Ones*, the allusions to the war crimes committed during the Holocaust in *Guilty Men* imply that there is no (or at least no noteworthy) relation between these crimes and Canada’s WWII history.

While Canada was fighting in WWII between 1939 and 1945, the NFB produced two series of theatrical newsreels that were meant to bolster support for the Allied war effort – “Canada Carries On” (which began in 1940, and continued as a series until 1959) and “The World in Action” (which began in 1942 and ended after the war’s conclusion in 1945, and which included *Guilty Men*). In terms of content, the films produced in the “Canada Carries On” series were directed more towards a decidedly Canadian audience, and stressed the importance of national unity and individual contribution to the war effort. The series sought to accomplish these goals by focusing on topics that were germane to Canada and thus held an interest specifically for Canadians. *Proudly She Marches* (Jane Marsh, 1943) for instance follows a group of women who joined the Canadian Women’s Army Corps where they would become essential to the war effort, thus undermining the notion (articulated in the film’s opening by a female narrator) of “man’s traditional prejudice about women either belonging in the home or serving as

ornaments.”¹⁸ *Soldiers All* (Stuart Legg, 1941) similarly explored the experiences of specific groups of Canadian soldiers by describing “how Canadians in London were living through the Blitz, how soldiers were becoming accustomed to their rural English billets, how Canadian cadets at the Royal Military College at Sandhurst fared, and how the Commonwealth Air Training Programme was training Australian pilots.”¹⁹ This latter training role also embodies another goal of “Canada Carries On” – to emphasize Canada’s expanding “geo-political role” as an active agent in WWII,²⁰ and to “place Canada in relation to world events and the global struggle of war.”²¹ For instance, *The Strategy of Metals* (Raymond Spottiswoode, 1941) explored Canada’s role in producing metals such as aluminum for the Allied war effort, while *Thought for Food* (Stanley Jackson, 1943) emphasized how Canadian scientists were experimenting with vitamins in order to help address wartime food shortages for armed forces and civilians.²²

In contrast and as its name suggests, “The World in Action” series took a less Canada-centric focus. It adopted a more “internationalist orientation” in the hopes of achieving wider distribution, as well as attempting to “influence and direct the political attitudes of international audiences toward an *internationally* oriented post-war ethic.”²³ As such, in “The World in Action” the centrality of Canadian-specific topics that was essential to “Canada Carries On” was adjusted in order to appeal to broader issues that transcended national specificity. For instance, *The War for Men’s Minds* (Stuart Legg, 1943) stressed, “that the strength of the Allied cause was its commitment to human

¹⁸ Evans 1984, 138.

¹⁹ Ibid., 142.

²⁰ Ibid., 117.

²¹ Ibid., 145.

²² Ibid., 126.

²³ Ibid., 167, my emphasis.

brotherhood. In the new [post-war] world order the people would come first, before all.” The film contrasted this laudable, universal cooperation with the “poisonous lesson” taught by Nazi propaganda that “might is right.”²⁴

Accordingly, *Guilty Men*’s inclusion within the internationalist “World in Action” series implies that both the establishment of the war crimes tribunals that the film documents, as well as the war crimes themselves, are of an international significance rather than related to Canadian specifically. In this sense, the film shares *The War for Men’s Minds*’ assertion of the importance of international cooperation as it emphasizes the multi-national interests that established the tribunals for the Nuremberg trials. *Guilty Men* also implies a sense of international idealism as it stresses that one of the purposes of these tribunals was to “preserve the authority of law” in order to prevent the barbarism of vigilante retribution (which the narrator describes immediately after the film shows images of Italian partisans stringing up Mussolini and his wife’s bodies upon their capture).

What *Guilty Men* does *not* offer is any semblance of a connection between Canada and the crimes that Nazi war criminals would be tried for by an international tribunal. In fact, Canada is not even mentioned in the film, and in the sequence that discusses the establishment of these tribunals, three flags are shown on the middle of the large meeting table, but only the British Union Jack and the American flag are visible (the third flag is hidden). In other words, while this film refers to the Holocaust through images like piles of dead bodies and skeletons in the crematoria, its focus on the establishment of the war crimes tribunals and the significance of these trials as transcending national borders (by emphasizing “the Allies” as responsible for this appeal

²⁴ Ibid., 191, 193.

to the rule of law), excludes Canada visually from this *collective* relation to the Holocaust by not including the Canadian flag alongside Britain's and America's.²⁵

Yet this exclusion makes perfect sense given that Canada's role in the establishment of these trials was negligible. As Anne-Marie de Brouwer spells out in her study *Supranational Criminal Prosecution of Sexual Violence*, "the Nuremburg Tribunal was set up by the joint effort of the US, France, England and the USSR, and was subsequently accepted by nineteen other nations" – a list that does not include Canada.²⁶ As such, does the blatant omission of the Holocaust in films like *The Valour and the Horror* or the *Lucky Ones* constitute callous or careless historiography as Evans suggests? While both of these films "fail" to make any reference to the Holocaust – that is, the Nazis' state-sanctioned plan to exterminate European Jewry - it is perhaps more useful to consider this conspicuous absence as stemming from the fact that the wartime relationship between Canada's military and the Holocaust is not one of clear historical correlation. This approach becomes even more logical when considering a film like *Canada at War* that alludes to the Holocaust, but structures Canada's military relationship to its atrocities only after the fact, which corresponds to the goal that is

²⁵ Granted, one could argue that since, during the war, the flag used domestically in Canada was the Union Jack – a sign of the nation's status within the British Commonwealth – Canada is implicitly "present" at this meeting under the rubric of the British flag. However, it is important to note that by the time the tribunals were being established, the Canadian military was regularly employing a red-ensign flag – with the Union Jack in only the top left-hand corner, with the shield of the Coat of Arms of Canada on the right side – which sought to acknowledge Canadian Forces "for their part in the war rather than as a part of Britain's effort." Moreover, given that Canada did not actually have any significant role in establishing the Nuremberg tribunals (see the next footnote), nor is Canada mentioned in *Guilty Men*, any attempt to include "Canada" under the film's signification of the Union Jack is tenuous at best. For a brief discussion of the relation of the Union Jack and the Canadian flag used during the latter years of WWII, see "The Canadian Flag," *Canadiana Connection*, <http://www.canadianaconnection.com/cca/canflag.htm> (accessed October 29, 2010).

²⁶ See Note 12 in Anne-Marie de Brouwer, *Supranational Criminal Prosecution of Sexual Violence: The ICC and the Practice of the ICTY and the ICTR* (Groenstraat, Belgium: Intersentia, 2005), 6.

articulated on the back of the *Canada at War* DVD collection, which states that the series is meant to show “WWII as Canadians encountered it” (my emphasis).

With these “Canadian encounters” in mind, it is worth looking to a controversy that emerged in the late 1990s that can shed light on the extent to which the Holocaust can/should be incorporated in historical treatments of Canada’s WWII military involvement. As Reesa Greenberg details in her essay “Constructing the Canadian War Museum/Constructing the Landscape of a Canadian Identity,” in the later part of 1997 a plan was underway to expand the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa. Part of this intended was to be devoted to a permanent exhibit on the Holocaust. This plan was met with resistance when it became public knowledge before the specifically Holocaust-related exhibit had “received a government mandate, or broad endorsement from Canadian Jewish communities, and most importantly, from Canadian war veterans, who believed that all of the War Museum should be devoted to Canadian military history.” The uproar against the proposed exhibit gained enough traction that by February 1998, the plan for its inclusion at the War Museum had been vetoed in a senate committee meeting in favour of “devoting all of the space of the proposed addition to Canada’s war history.”²⁷

²⁷ Reesa Greenberg, “Constructing the Canadian War Museum/Constructing the Landscape of a Canadian Identity,” in *(Re)Visualizing National History: Museums and National Identities in Europe in the New Millennium*, ed. Robin Ostow (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 185-186. As an important aside, Dan Lett suggests that the ultimate failure of a Holocaust exhibit at the Canadian War Museum was an important catalyst for the planning and development of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR), to be opened in Winnipeg in 2013. The CMHR was spearheaded by the late Winnipeg media mogul and philanthropist Israel Harold “Izzy” Asper (who died in 2003) who was “very disappointed” at the “tenor of the debate” surrounding the “War Museum controversy.” While the CMHR is to be “dedicated to the broader concepts of human rights and tolerance,” Asper “wanted to the Holocaust to play a central role in the museum’s content, but not so much so that it would become just another memorial to the world’s greatest crime against humanity.” See Dan Lett, “Conflict is a certainty,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 27, 2010, <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/fyi/conflict-is-a-certainty-110900599.html> (accessed December 2, 2010).

In an article in *New York Times* that was written as this controversy was unfolding, Stuart Elliot describes that this change in plans was made “[u]nder pressure from angry veterans groups...[that] did not feel the exhibit would be appropriate in a museum dedicated to World War I and World War II troops whose missions were not related to the Holocaust.”²⁸ In this case the issue was thus not that the Holocaust should not be commemorated *anywhere*, which Cliff Chadderton, head of the National Council of Veteran Associations (NCVA) stressed by stating, “It wasn’t a question that the Holocaust gallery was wrong.”²⁹ The problem was that these groups perceived the Holocaust as having nothing do with that which the war museum is to commemorate - the experiences and missions of the Canadian military in times of war. This is spelled out explicitly in the recommendations of the NCVA that were included in a May 1998 report called *Guarding History* by the Canadian senate’s subcommittee on veterans affairs. In this report were the NCVA recommendations that

[t]he Canadian government recognize that in respect of both a museum dedicated to commemorate war and one dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust, the two objectives remain separate and apart, based on the principles that: A) Canada had no direct connection to the Holocaust; and B) There is no direct relationship between the feats of arms carried out by the Canadian Military and the horrendous suffering of Holocaust victims.³⁰

Such a response, while perhaps understandable, invariably carries with it echoes of that which Kuper faced when he sought to bring his experiences to the CBC through *Sun in My Eyes* - “it [the Holocaust] has nothing to do with Canada.” Accordingly, the

²⁸ Stuart Elliot, “Setback for Holocaust Museum in Canada,” *The New York Times*, February 19, 1998, A6.

²⁹ Cliff Chadderton, quoted in Elliot, A6.

³⁰ Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs. “Annex 2: Recommendations of the National Council of Veteran Associations, the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans of Canada, and the Royal Canadian Legion,” *Guarding History: A Study into the Future, Funding, and Independence of the Canadian War Museum: Report of the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology*, May 1998, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/36/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/vete-e/rep-e/annex-for-war.htm> (accessed October 7, 2010).

disjuncture between the Holocaust and wartime Canada that persists in the absence of simultaneous discussion of the Holocaust *and* Canada in *The Valour and the Horror*, *Canada at War*, *The Lucky Ones* and *Guilty Men* can perhaps be understood in a context that is localized in the historical circumstances of the war.

While the implication of the Holocaust's absence from Canada that is manifest in these particular films may be *explained* by appealing to the particularities of Canada's WWII history, this explanation does not negate the fact that the films do not offer any critical reflection of what factors actually constituted this absence, and consequently, how such factors call into question the moral neutrality of Canada's inexperiential relation to the Holocaust during the war. With this in mind, I now want to shift focus to films that not only confront the Holocaust more explicitly than those discussed above, but suggest that the relationship between the Holocaust and Canada is not simply rooted in an objective historical absence, but by anti-Semitic bureaucratic policies and social attitudes within the wartime Canadian body politic that sought to *constitute* the Holocaust as absent from Canada.

Bureaucratic Barriers

In *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948*, which the Introduction discussed, Irving Abella and Harold Troper carefully interrogate the immigration barriers that were put up by the Canadian government – under Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King and Director of Immigration F.C. Blair - in the years preceding, during and immediately following WWII that sought to keep Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution out of Canada. Moreover, Abella and Troper stress

that these decisions were not only informed by anti-Semitic impulses *within* the Canadian government, but were bolstered by the social anti-Semitism that consisted within the Canadian public, especially in Québec, that made governmental resistance to Jewish immigration a populist political strategy.³¹ After all, as the authors explain in their Preface, the title for their project is taken from the response of a “Canadian official, who, in the midst of a rambling, off-the-record discussion with journalists in early 1945, was asked how many Jews would be allowed into Canada after the war. His response seems to reflect the prevailing view of a substantial number of his fellow citizens. ‘None,’ he said, ‘is too many.’”³²

According to Franklin Bialystok in *Delayed Impact*, the publication of *None is Too Many* in 1982, and its “revelations of [Canada’s] shameful immigration policies created a national response...[as it] questioned the Canadian myth of tolerance and acceptance.”³³ Equally important I would argue is that Abella and Troper’s study called attention to the ethical implications of Canadian bureaucracy’s *inaction* in terms of immigration during WWII. In other words, their profound indictment of Canada’s WWII response to the Holocaust served to expose as fallacy the notion implicitly or explicitly put forth by the films analyzed above – that the Holocaust has “nothing to do with Canada.” The films discussed below assume a similar interrogative stance to *None is Too Many* by calling into question the putative historical distance between the Holocaust and Canada in order to expose troubling relations between the two, and ascribing to the latter a charge of complicity in its failure to act with an adequate response to the former.

³¹ See for instance Abella and Troper, 7-9, which describes the anti-Jewish sentiments of Immigration Director F.C. Blair. See Abella and Troper, 21 for a discussion of link between restricting Jewish immigration and anti-Semitic sentiments within the Canadian body politic, and in Québec in particular.

³² *Ibid.*, xxi.

³³ Bialystok, 179-180.

The film that most explicitly and critically approaches the moral shortcomings of Canada's historical relation to the Holocaust does so, like Abella and Troper's work, via the anti-Semitism and bureaucracy of the nation's wartime immigration policy. Martin Lavut's *Charlie Grant's War* was produced by the CBC in 1984, and broadcast nationally in early 1985. While Gary Evans is probably accurate that the success of the American miniseries *Holocaust* (Marvin Chomsky, 1978) may have "influenced the CBC to produce its own two hour Holocaust fiction piece,"³⁴ the film's emphasis on the indifference of the Canadian government to the plight of Jewish refugees during the war is more likely indebted to the widespread success of *None is Too Many* two years earlier.³⁵

Although Evans refers to *Charlie Grant's War* as a "fiction piece," it was marketed as "based on a true story," which I will return to below. Its narrative follows the experiences of Charles Aubrey Grant (played by R.H. Thomson), a young, Gentile Canadian who leaves his privileged home in Vancouver in the early 1930s to travel around Europe. After he is scammed out of his finances by an unscrupulous chance encounter, he eventually finds employment as a diamond merchant in Vienna, Austria, after meeting broker Paul Trefius (Peter Boretski) at a party held by his elderly Jewish friends, Jacob and Elisabeth Goldman (Jan Rubes and Joan Orenstein). Following Hitler's assumption of power in January 1933, and the eventual annexation of Austria in 1938, Grant begins to try using his connections as a respected businessman and "British

³⁴ Evans 2002, 157.

³⁵ For an "academic book," the popular success of *None is Too Many* is almost unprecedented. Bialystok notes that upon its publication, Abella and Troper "appeared on national news programs and spoke at universities, commemoration services and book fairs across the country" (Bialystok 179-180). The book also inspired a play of the same title, which I actually recall seeing at the Prairie Theatre Exchange in Winnipeg while I was in high school.

subject” to secure entry for his Jewish friends to Canada, where he is “sure” his government will let them in.

In order to acquire the necessary permission for his acquaintances to be guaranteed admission into Canada, Grant writes to his wealthy mother (played by Marigold Charlesworth), and simply asks her to arrange a meeting with an “elected official” to explain “the most severe oppression of anyone who is of the Jewish faith” that is occurring in Europe. It is at this point that Grant, via his mother, comes up against the anti-Semitic bureaucracy of the wartime Canadian government.

When she does not receive a response from an elected official, Mrs. Grant travels from Vancouver to Ottawa, and uses her “status” to meet with politicians in order to set her son’s plan in motion (the film never actually explains the status that allows her such an audience, other than her wealth). As she meets with a series of politicians in Canada’s capital – including the Minister in charge of immigration Thomas Crerar (Michael Tate), Director of Immigration F.C. Blair (Michael J. Reynolds), and Prime Minister Mackenzie King (Larry Reynolds) – they condescendingly dismiss her (and Charlie’s) concerns. For instance, when she sits down with King he gently tells her, “Mrs. Grant, I realize that a lovely woman such as yourself cannot possibly be familiar with the complex intricacies of politics.” More importantly, each politician reveals to varying degrees the anti-Semitism that lay behind the government’s decision to erect immigration barriers to keep Jewish refugees out of Canada. This anti-Semitism at play in the Canadian government is most overt in her meeting with Blair, who begins his explanation as to why Jacob and Elisabeth Goldman are ineligible for immigration by stressing that at present Canada is only allowing in farmers. When Mrs. Grant replies that Jacob’s application indicates that

he worked on a farm when he was younger, Blair's anti-Semitism begins to creep in as he tells her "all" Jewish refugee applicants claim to be farmers, which usually means that they have "tended a flowerpot or two." He goes on, telling her, "Jews are not like you and I. They do not...assimilate." Moreover, when Mrs. Grant tells Blair that Charlie feels that these refugees will face certain death if they are not granted entry to Canada, he tells her that her son has probably acted "hysterically." Blair then implicitly positions Canada on a ground of moral neutrality in relation to the issue, and alludes to the social anti-Semitism within the Canadian population as he states, "I don't believe it's up to Canada to resolve the domestic problems of the Nazi government there by taking these people off their hands. If we were to open our doors to Jewish immigration, it would only serve to inflame any anti-Semitic sentiments that already exist in this country."

While Mrs. Grant is increasingly incensed throughout her meetings with these politicians, it is important to note that she also embodies the social dissemination of popular anti-Semitism that underlined the populist decision of the government to erect such immigration barriers. As she is speaking to the first public official in Ottawa, Thomas Crerar, the minister of mines and resources who was ostensibly responsible for immigration (although as Abella and Troper notes, it was Blair, Crerar's subordinate officially, who "made [immigration] policy and implemented it"³⁶), Mrs. Grant expresses a clear undercurrent of anti-Semitism, despite her distaste for the "revolting" treatment of the Jews by Hitler. "It's one thing to keep them out of clubs, I can understand that," she acknowledges. "But it's a totally different thing to steal their property and beat them up in the streets."

³⁶ Abella and Troper, 7.

Of course, the film eventually reveals Charlie's prescience about the fate of his friends to have been accurate, as both Elisabeth and Jacob perish in the Holocaust, thus positing the inaction of the Canadian government as complicit in their deaths. In this sense, through its treatment of the anti-Semitic bureaucracy of Canada's WWII immigration policies, *Charlie Grant's War* strives to interconnect Canada's history during the war and the Holocaust by emphasizing the moral culpability of inaction that is ironically rooted in the barriers erected by the government designed to keep the Holocaust and Canada separate. In addition however, Lavut's film documents the effacement of the historical distance between Canada and the Holocaust in a more experientially microcosmic sense through the figure of Charlie Grant himself, and his "conversion" from a neutral observer of Jewish persecution to an active participant in rescue, until he finally becomes experientially immersed in the Holocaust universe.³⁷ This conversion unfolds in the film's narrative via a process that gradually closes the experiential gap between the Canadian Grant and the increasingly ominous setting of pre-war and wartime Vienna.

Even before Grant begins his European sojourn, his character is constructed in a manner that emphasizes a privileged, care-free quality that informs his initial reluctance to directly engage with the increasingly rabid anti-Semitism that he will eventually

³⁷ While Grant is a Protestant, my use of the term "conversion" does not imply any religious change that compels Grant towards action. Rather, it borrows from the term used to describe the narrative arcs of American wartime films, such as Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca*, in which an individual initially tries to paint himself as not involved on either side of the war effort, before eventually undergoing an *ideological* conversion that compels him to assist the "right" side of the conflict. In *Casablanca* of course, this "right" side is the Free French, fighting against the Nazi occupation of French lands, which "crystallized the American conversion from neutrality to selfless sacrifice" (which is precisely how the conversion of Grant in *Charlie Grant's War* unfolds). For a discussion of *Casablanca* as a conversion narrative, see Thomas Schatz, "World War II and the 'War Film,'" in *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 108. For a discussion of the "World War II Conversion Narrative" more broadly, see Lary White, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 139-173.

witness in Vienna (in his review for the film, Rick Groen describes Charlie as “[b]orn into the modestly privileged sanctuary of a Presbyterian clan”³⁸). The film’s opening sequence – set in 1930 Vancouver - features Grant examining his stamp collection before running out the door to a Protestant church service, for which he arrives just as the final hymn is ending. His financial status is intimated as the collection plate is passed to him as he puts several bills in initially, before sheepishly adding several more and then (even more sheepishly) taking a couple of bills back. Since Grant’s religion is not explicitly dwelt upon in the remainder of the film, this introduction serves to set him up as both financially privileged and – importantly – not Jewish. In the sequence following the church service, Grant’s laissez-faire attitude is further exemplified as he plays pool in the opulent library of the huge home where he lives with his Uncle Manlus (Douglas Campbell) and his mother. As he and Manlus chat across the pool table, Grant uses a cue stick to push a piece of paper towards his uncle – a ticket for the Canadian Pacific Steamship that he wants to use to “see a bit of Europe,” which means to his uncle’s dismay that he will be turning down a job offer that “most young men would give their right arm for,” and which further indicates Charlie’s financial privilege.

Once Grant arrives in Vienna and assumes a position in Mr. Trefius’ diamond brokerage – first as a junior clerk, then as a broker – this sense of aloofness remains, but begins to be contextualized in relation to the increasingly ominous threats of Nazism in pre-war Europe. Of course, the film emphasizes that Grant harbors none of his mother’s casual anti-Semitic feelings as he counts many Jews amongst his friends in Vienna, most notably Trefius, Jacob and Elisabeth Goldman, and Peter Klein (Nicholas Rice), one of

³⁸ Rick Groen, “Thomson scores a dramatic hit in Charlie’s war,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 26, 1985, E1.

Trefius' other employees. Back home on a visit to Vancouver, a disgusted Grant leaves the room when his uncle and mother make disparaging remarks about Mr. Trefius' Jewish-ness. Yet despite his philo-Semitism, Grant's initial reaction to the increasing Nazi threat is to try and position himself as neutrally external to the issue.

This attempted aloofness is first evident when Klein comes to Grant to ask for his signature on a public declaration against "this maniac Hitler and his followers." Klein tells Grant that his signature will carry significant weight as "a respected businessman and a British subject," which Grant awkwardly dismisses by mumbling to his co-worker, "I'm not the sort of person to get involved in anything political." When Klein persists, insisting that "If we don't speak up now it will be too late," Grant responds by emphasizing a division between himself and the Nazi issue by stating, "I'm not a citizen of your country, so I can't put myself in a position that...", as he trails off. After this point, the film formally alludes to this barrier between Grant as a Canadian and the political situation in Austria by juxtaposing shots of him and his girlfriend Christina (Belinda Metz), a stage singer, in a movie theatre kissing and playing around in their seats, completely oblivious to what is on the screen - a newsreel on Hitler's assumption of the role of Chancellor in Germany and his increasing popular support.

This is not to say that at this point Grant is completely and callously ignorant of the realities surrounding him. For instance, prior to the movie theatre sequence, after he discovers that Mr. Trefius has had a heart attack, he goes to visit him in the hospital. While there, he asks his employer about his thoughts on Hitler. In response, Trefius calls Hitler a "crackpot" and states that he does not want to talk about him because crackpots are only dangerous if people pay attention to them. As such, Grant displays at this point

a vague curiosity about the rising tide of Nazism. But his interest is still that of an external and passive observer who does not grasp the severity of what is to come. This continuing naiveté becomes even more obvious shortly thereafter when Grant meets with a Jewish client who wishes to convert all of his currency to diamonds, which are easier to move “when things become difficult.” In a manner that ironically anticipates Blair’s later dismissal of Grant’s fear as “hysterical,” Grant tries to downplay his client’s fears by telling him that he is “forgetting this isn’t Germany, and I think you’re panicking.”

Once the film’s narrative gets to the 1938 German annexation of Austria, the distance between Grant and the tangible reality of Nazi persecution begins to close. The film introduces this section with archival footage of the Austrian masses’ warm and enthusiastic greeting of Hitler upon his arrival in the nation, which lends prescience to Trefius’ assertion that Hitler will only become dangerous if people listen to him. It then cuts to Grant walking on the street towards his business, with spray painted swastikas and other anti-Semitic graffiti on the wall behind him, providing via the *mise-en-scène* not only evidence of the recent Nazi occupation of Austria, but also positioning Grant himself against the backdrop of Austria’s new political landscape. When he arrives at work, Grant experiences his first personal confrontation with the ramifications of Nazi legislation when Klein tries to resign, because it is now illegal for a Gentile to employ a Jew. Grant refuses to accept his resignation and tells Klein to get to work. But despite this momentary act of resistance, the film suggests this refusal may still be an attempt at evading political circumstance rather than a bold attempt at subverting the Nazi regime by proceeding from this interaction to a sequence with no diegetic sound that features Grant and Christina walking, dancing and kissing in an idyllic park setting surrounded by

yellowing trees. The persistence of his desire to retain a distance from politics is further evident when Klein invites Grant over for a *Seder* dinner, and asks for his assistance in procuring forged documents for his sister Klara (Annie Azamosi) and her two children before it is too late. While sympathetic to this request, Grant leaves Klein's home without making any commitment to help.

Grant's movement from a neutral observer to an active participant in Nazi-occupied Austria is ignited when he witnesses the brutal beating of his friend Jacob Goldman at the hands of Nazi thugs who break into his home, drag the elderly man into the street, and force him to scrub the sidewalk before dumping water on his head. As Grant struggles to assist his friend, he is held back and rendered helpless as he is forced to watch the depraved scene unfold. It is after this that Grant begins to make a concerted effort to assist his Jewish friends by procuring false passports and trying secure their admission into Canada, which is when he (and his mother) run into the bureaucratic barriers of the Canadian immigration system.

Of course, Grant is only able to partially succeed in these goals (he is able, for instance, to get Klara and her children passports, which they use to escape to Panama) because he is still – as a non-Jewish British subject – able to navigate *outside* of anti-Semitic legislation that made such efforts impossible for Jews. But as Grant continues on his quest to help his friends, he is soon captured by the Vienna Gestapo, and is imprisoned for assisting and associating with Jews. As the Gestapo is unable to find any evidence of his acquisition of forged documents, the official charges laid against him have to do with currency fraud. However, at Grant's trial, the Nazi judge wryly suggests that perhaps Grant could have understood the complicated currency law "if it had been

written in Hebrew.” His cynical pronouncement from a bench flanked with Nazi banners and a portrait of Hitler, leaves little doubt the reason for Grant’s incarceration.

After the Allied declaration of war on Nazi Germany in 1939, Grant is interned in a POW camp, bringing this Canadian perilously close to the concentration camp universe of the Holocaust. Yet in this setting, not unlike the POW camp in *Canada at War*, Grant is still removed from full absorption in the Holocaust experience. The prisoners in this camp are healthy, not dressed in prison garb, and are even shown joking around while having “chicken fights” outside. Moreover, the barracks where they are held appear to be quite comfortable, with Charlie sharing with a French POW a 2-bed room that also boasts a writing desk.

Yet after a failed attempt to escape in which the French POW is killed, Grant is transferred to a concentration camp that places him in direct experiential contact with the iconic Holocaust experience. He is transferred to the camp in a crowded train car, and upon arrival, the yellow Star of David on his fellow prisoners’ striped uniforms clearly identify them as Jewish. In stark contrast to the 2-person room of the POW camp, the barracks in the concentration camp are packed full, where Grant recognizes Jacob in one of the bunks. It is at this point that Grant begins to posit Canada as an idyllic “other” space, from which he himself is finally, fully separate. As he is imprisoned amongst the doomed Jews of Europe, Jacob introduces Grant to a young boy named David (Chris Bark) in the barracks. In a manner that is similar to the opening sentences of *None is Too Many* (see Introduction Note 34), Grant describes Canada to David as a distant haven where “all you have to worry about is finding a boy to shovel the snow off your front walk.”

Grant's incorporation within the Holocaust experience is further exemplified shortly thereafter. One day while he and Jacob are working in the rock quarry – where the prisoners are forced to perform manual labour – the elderly man tearfully tells Grant that he heard from a “new arrival” that Elisabeth was killed in Auschwitz. Now stripped of the only reason he had to live, Jacob tells Grant that when a Jewish father dies, his son is supposed to say the *Kaddish*, or the prayer for the dead. Since Jacob and Elisabeth had no children, Jacob then asks Grant if *he* will say the *Kaddish* upon his death. As Jacob recites the prayer and Grant repeats it after him, learning and rehearsing it phonetically in Hebrew, this moment marks the younger man's envelopment in the Holocaust's legacy of specifically *Jewish* annihilation. This Judaic immersion becomes even more obvious when Jacob dies and Grant begins to recite the prayer over his body in the barracks, and the other (Jewish) prisoners eventually join him in the intonations. As such, in addition to the overt critique of Canada's immigration policies, the narrative of *Charlie Grant's War* progresses in a manner that effaces the historical barrier between Canada and the Holocaust through the figure of a Canadian who is experientially enveloped in it

That being said, the film nevertheless strictly maintains a barrier between the Holocaust and Canada that persists, despite Grant's individual experience. This persistence manifests the continuing problem of actually “assimilating” the Holocaust into the Canadian WWII experience, and vice versa, in two ways – one within the film itself, and the other extra-filmically. First, after the conclusion of the war and Grant's liberation, he arrives home in Vancouver to be greeted by an ostentatious and joyous “welcome home” party. As Grant greets his nervous mother and uncle, a band plays the Canadian national anthem. His demeanor is understandably far different from the cocky

young man who brazenly declined his uncle's job offer in favour of European travel. Grant is now clearly "out of place," and this becomes more obvious when he is greeted enthusiastically by his local MP (Brendan McKane), who displays a clear lack of empathy in regards to both Grant's recent experiences and the wanton dismissal of his requests for the assistance of the Canadian government. As the politician approaches Grant, he offers his hand and says. "Mr. Grant, as your member of Parliament, I'd like to welcome you home to Canada, in the name of Prime Minister Mackenzie King." Grant gazes at the MP, gingerly touches his shoulder, and replies, "Thank you very much for the welcome, but I'm afraid I can't shake your hand." The MP then laughs awkwardly and looks to the press cameras surrounding them and says, "I don't understand." The politician's incredulity is further exposed as Grant tries (but fails) to explain, "If things were different, if the Goldmans were...I..." The MP then asks with feigned interest, "And who are the Goldmans?" to which Grant responds, "I wish Mr. King would have taken the time to find out."

The MP's responses in this interaction clearly indicate that while Grant – as a Canadian – was experientially drawn into the Holocaust, the event is still absent and beyond the scope of understanding for the Canadian body politic represented by the MP (and the surrounding party-goers). As such, the barrier between Canada and the Holocaust is resolved only in terms of the *individual experience* of Grant; a barrier between the two remains in place via the interpersonal delineation between the "experienced" Grant and those "inexperienced" Canadians surrounding him at the party. This barrier inscribed in the non-Jewish Grant thus calls attention to the *experiential*

quality of that which marks Holocaust survivors as “different” rather than a distinction of identity based on race or religion, as I discussed at length in the Introduction.

The second way in which *Charlie Grant's War* enacts the challenge of integrating the Holocaust and Canada's WWII history is extra-filmically. As I quoted above, Gary Evans describes Lavut's film as CBC's “own two hour Holocaust fiction piece.”³⁹ Contradictorily, I also noted that the film was marketed as “based on a true story,” which is indicated in an opening title card, and driven home in the closing title card that reads, “Charlie Grant's efforts helped more than six hundred Jews escape the Nazi regime. This film is dedicated to him. An ordinary man who made a difference.” Ultimately, the line between fact and fiction that the film walks invariably calls into question the extent to which “Canada” can be incorporated into the Holocaust's history or vice versa.

That the Charlie Grant story was purportedly based on “harrowing fact”⁴⁰ was an important factor in how Lavut's film was received by the Canadian public. On the same day that Rick Groen's review of the film was published in *The Globe and Mail*, Donald Martin published a piece called “A Canadian hero finally gets his due,” which he opens by establishing Grant as a historical figure (i.e. that the filmic character of Charlie Grant is based on a real person) and framing *Charlie Grant's War* as a historiographic work that brings to light a lost piece of the historical record: “The Second World War brought forth a great many Canadian heroes, but history has tended to overlook Charles Aubrey Grant.”⁴¹ After the film's broadcast, letters to the editor also demonstrated that Canadian viewers were excited to see this insertion of a Canadian contribution into the history of the Holocaust. For instance, Jonathan Amitay declared that if the film were “to be

³⁹ Evans 2002, 157.

⁴⁰ Groen, E1.

⁴¹ Donald Martin, “A Canadian hero finally gets his due,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 26, 1985, 9.

released theatrically it could do for Canadian film what *Breaker Morant* or *Gallipoli* did for the Australians. I am proud of the CBC.”⁴² Four days later, Aaron Black’s letter further emphasized the facticity of the film’s story: “It was most enlightening to be presented with a true story of a Christian Canadian’s personal experience during a time when so many were being persecuted and killed. It was not a fantasy, but the living experience of an individual who was tortured for his attempts to assist the victims of persecution and oppression.”⁴³

Yet despite this almost unanimous praise that greeted the film upon its broadcast, soon questions began emerging about the truthfulness of its claims to historical veracity. Essential to this inquiry was a two-part story written in *The Globe and Mail* by Ross McLean, which was published on July 6 and July 13, 1985. In the first piece, entitled “Now is the time to speak of Charlie Grant,” McLean reveals that “for two months in the summer of [his] first year as a CBC radio producer, [he] came to know Charles Grant very well” when they worked on a series of pieces that dealt with “evidence of racial discrimination he [Grant] had found in post-war Canada upon his release from seven years in Nazi concentration camps and prisons.” Moreover, McLean reveals a discussion with Marjorie McEnaney, the writer who had helped craft Grant’s story for these pieces, which raised certain questions about the film’s narrative of an altruistic Canadian hero who was successful in saving 600 Jews, as the film’s closing title card suggests. “I spoke to McEnaney just a few days ago,” McLean writes.

I wondered how Grant had come to her attention. She didn’t remember. ‘Somebody must have brought him to me,’ she guessed. How did I find that guy? She asked herself. ‘Did you know at the time that he had saved more than 600 Jews [which the film claims]?’ I asked. ‘It didn’t come up in my dealings

⁴² Jonathan Amitay, “Charlie Grant’s War,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 5, 1985, 7.

⁴³ Aaron Black, “A word of thanks for Charlie Grant,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1985, 7.

with him. There was just his reference to “some” Jewish friends.’ ‘No,’ McEnaney replied. “I didn’t hear that number until last January [when the film was broadcast]. Why wasn’t I listening? I brooded about that after I watched the program.’⁴⁴

The second part of McLean’s article, “Hard questions about *Charlie Grant’s War*,” was more explicit in its interrogation of Lavut’s film. The reservations about the film that McLean reveals in this piece are two-fold. First (and more simply), he says that he “found too many moments of thudding falsity in it which not even the superb acting could mask completely,” such as the centrality of the sequence in which Mrs. Grant meets with Mackenzie King, when – according to Abella and Troper, authors of *None is Too Many* – “neither Grant nor his mother had any dealings with King.” More troubling for McLean is the fact that “[i]f Grant saved more than 600 lives, why has no one stepped forward to express belated gratitude in the more than 40 years that have passed?” McLean then goes on to suggest, “The Charlie Grant story... fed our hunger for heroes and produced a rush of feeling for an ordinary Canadian who was moved to so much so courageously. One regrets the need to feel uncertain about [the film’s] factual base.”⁴⁵

Implicit in McLean’s critique of the film’s presentation of Grant’s story is that the film feigned an *imaginary* connection between Canada and the Holocaust that may not hold up to historical scrutiny. Even the critical response to McLean’s “repugnant conclusion, that Charlie Grant did not do what he said he did” by Bill Gough – the producer of *Charlie Grant’s War* - does not actually defend the film’s historicity. Rather, Gough responds to McLean’s question about why no one had previously come forward about the “600” number by framing this silence in the context of a vague statistical unlikelihood. Gough suggests that because most of those that Grant saved went to

⁴⁴ Ross McLean, “Now is the time to speak of Charlie Grant,” *The Globe and Mail*, July 6, 1985, 12.

⁴⁵ Ross McLean, “Hard questions about *Charlie Grant’s War*,” *The Globe and Mail*, July 13, 1985, 12.

counties other than Canada (such as Klara and her children who are presented as having fled to Panama), the film's broadcast on the CBC to a Canadian audience made it unlikely that any of those rescued by Grant would have seen the film, and thus be compelled to speak out: "Given that Mr. Grant worked in secret, for the most part anonymously, using intermediaries to deliver his passports, and that hardly any Jews were allowed into this country, it is statistically almost impossible that we should have heard from anyone because of a Canadian showing of the film, or because of the Canadian articles written about Mr. Grant."⁴⁶

This response of course accuses McLean of calling into question the veracity of Grant's personal history, rather than the presentation of this history with perhaps inflated numbers in the CBC film. While the extent of Grant's actual heroism – at least numerically – may be unverifiable, the fact is that the CBC's marketing of this film as a "true story" that features the actions of a Canadian working towards a heroic and successful end within the midst of the Holocaust was problematized by McLean's piece. And with this in mind, it is noteworthy that despite the very positive response when the film was first released, after Gough's defence (which I would argue fails to adequately resolve the problems raised by McLean), the debate about *Charlie Grant's War* seems to have disappeared.

My speculation is that this discursive disappearance can be explained in part by the fact that the film's initial appeal was due to the "truth" value of its Canadian hero. This assertion is of course supported by the laudatory articles/letters to the editor that were published upon its broadcast, and can in turn be illuminated by considering the film in the context of the recently published *None is Too Many*. As Abella and Troper's study

⁴⁶ Bill Gough, "Charlie Grant film based on heroism," *The Globe and Mail*, July 31, 1985, 7.

exposed Canada's *failure* to act in the face of the Holocaust, the story of a Canadian hero – who *actively* seeks to rescue European Jews – provided a mollifying counterbalance. Accordingly, the film's initial success perhaps can be seen as indicative not so much of a collective desire to learn about the Holocaust in Canada, but a desire for national absolution - which the film purports, but fails, to offer. When the facticity of this heroism – or at least the extent of it – began to be called into question, the central historicity left in *Charlie Grant's War* is a *negative* correlation between Canada and the Holocaust; that is, the bureaucratic inaction/anti-Semitism revealed through the conversations between Mrs. Grant and Canadian politicians, which simply re-affirmed (even if the conversations themselves were fictionalized) the shameful history that *None is Too Many* had already exposed. *Charlie Grant's War* thus ultimately lacks the same historical *revelatory* power that has kept *None is Too Many* as the central historical text on Holocaust from a Canadian perspective for almost three decades after its publication. In contrast, I had to purchase Lavut's film as a used VHS tape from a private seller on Amazon.

A similar critique of Canada's relationship to the Holocaust that functions by appealing to a largely unknown history is also manifest in Harry Rasky's *The Spies Who Never Were* and Wendy Oberlander's *Nothing to be Written Here*. Both of these films document the domestic internment of those rare Jewish refugees that *did* make it to Canada during WWII, on suspicion that they may be enemies of the state. Since Oberlander's film treats this history through her father's experiences, and details her own confrontation with his personal history, I will for now deal only with Rasky's film and

defer consideration of *Nothing to be Written Here* until the discussion of “cross-generational documentaries” in Chapter Five.

The Spies Who Never Were documents the story of refugees from Germany, Austria and Hungary who succeeded in escaping the Nazi threat by fleeing to England, only to be once again rounded up, “not by pistol-waving brownshirts but by polite English bobbies,”⁴⁷ and held in internment camps as these victims came to be regarded as potentially treasonous enemy aliens. Yet this two-part film, broadcast on CBC in 1981, also serves to forge a historical connection between Canada and the Holocaust. As Rick Groen notes in his review, as the British camps began to fill with refugees, some were transported to Canada to be held and as such, the film’s “war-time story... hits distressingly close to home.”⁴⁸ The film thus documents not only the conditions of this internment, but also the emotional devastation of securing rescue before being re-victimized within what the refugees were expecting to be safe havens.

Unlike the incorporation of Canada within the *Holocaust* that Lavut’s film forges through the increasingly narrowing division between Grant as a “British subject” and Nazi persecution in occupied Austria, *The Spies Who Never Were* brings the two together by emphasizing the imprisonment of Holocaust victims inside *Canada*. Yet like the concluding moments of *Charlie Grant’s War*, when Grant is back in Canada but “out of place” at his own welcome home party amongst other Canadians, the experiential disconnect between the refugees’ prison camp reality and the surrounding Canadian nation is central in Rasky’s film. The existence of this disconnection *within* Canada is implied in the opening moments of *The Spies Who Never Were*, as voices singing “Oh

⁴⁷ Rick Groen, “Though imprisoned, perhaps they were the lucky ones. War-time story hits home,” *The Globe and Mail*, October 10, 1981, E1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Canada” are played over archival images of war, before the film cuts to images of those refugees who will comprise the film’s focus *not* singing. This introduction immediately establishes Rasky’s film as a counterpoint to the assumption implicit in the military documentaries discussed in the first part of this chapter – that Canada’s relation to WWII was militaristic in nature only, and this relation had “nothing to do” with the Holocaust. Through formal juxtaposition, this opening sequence suggests that despite Canada’s military involvement in WWII (symbolized by the archival images of war with the audio of the Canadian national anthem played over it), the nation’s obstinate refusal to open its doors to the victims of Nazism (symbolized by shots of the victims *not* singing the anthem, and thus not fully incorporated as part of “Canada”) necessitates that a certain charge of moral culpability be leveled against the Canadian nation for the internment of these “spies who never were.”

It is important to note that Rasky is less didactic in his criticism of Canada’s bureaucracy for the imprisonment of these Holocaust victims than the incriminating conversations between Mrs. Grant and Canadian politicians in *Charlie Grant’s War*. For the most part, Rasky places the responsibility for this imprisonment on British Prime Minister Churchill, with the Canadian internment camps presented as the result of the nation’s subservient Commonwealth status. For instance, the film stresses that the Canadian authorities that interned these refugees had been *instructed* to expect a “boatload of dangerous enemy prisoners of war,” and as such the innocent were grouped and imprisoned with the guilty. Moreover, while the film includes the shocking revelation that upon their arrival in Canada, Jewish refugees were initially held *alongside* Nazi POWs, it also emphasizes that “the [Canadian] Government was quick to place the

‘civilian internees’ into separate camps where, by the testimony of all, they were relatively well-clothed, amply fed and humanely treated.”⁴⁹ And finally, while a number of the refugees in their recollections refer to their initial treatment in Canada as manifesting a continuance of the anti-Semitism that they faced in Europe, Rasky’s film (perhaps intentionally) leaves ambiguous the extent to which this anti-Semitism came from their Nazi fellow prisoners, or from the Canadian officials that they were dealing with. This is not to say that the film presents the incarceration of these refugees as justifiable, but stresses that it occurred in a “confused and inflammatory [wartime] climate.”⁵⁰

At the same time, while *The Spies Who Never Were* may somewhat downplay Canadian responsibility for the refugees’ internment, it nonetheless emphasizes the experiential division between the prisoners and the Canadian authorities holding them captive, and the emotional devastation of being “ensconced in a cruel but safe haven.”⁵¹ This experiential break is evidenced most clearly in the ignorance that the film ascribes to the Canadians that was perceived by the refugee internees. For instance, one of the putative “spies” recalls the shock that he felt when he realized that they were to be interned alongside Nazis, who greeted the refugees with the same virulent anti-Semitism that they believed they had escaped upon their arrival in Great Britain. As they were put into these camps, the former prisoner recalls that he thought either he had gone out of his mind, or the authorities placing them alongside their former tormenters had.

Even after the film details the movement of the refugees to a different camp from the POWs, the division between them and Canada is still stressed as one former internee

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

describes that their imprisonment felt like they were “on public exhibit, as though we were in a zoo,” as civilians from the surrounding communities gazed upon them. Emil Fackenheim, one of the refugees who would go on to become a noted Holocaust philosopher, emphasizes the confusion between different bureaucratic levels of Canadian authority as indicative of the fact that those responsible for their imprisonment lacked any comprehension of what the refugees had gone through. In response to a hunger strike that the prisoners had organized, Fackenheim recalls being called before a military officer to explain, and telling him that

‘We understand there’s a war, and there is necessities that go with wartime. But we resent being treated like prisoners and like enemies. Many of us have been in a Nazi concentration camp, and we fled from there, from our common enemies to this country. And all we want is the recognition of our status as bona fide refugees.’ He [the officer] said, ‘Oh, you’ve been in a camp before! Then...do you know how to behave in the presence of an officer? Can you stand at attention?’ As stupid an ass as I’ve ever seen. And that’s the one they sent to us from Ottawa! Not the slightest comprehension!

That the camp in which these refugees were held operated as a barrier between the Holocaust experience and Canada becomes even more explicit in the film’s final moments. As described above, for the most part, *The Spies Who Never Were* tends to resist imposing a harsh moral judgment on Canada’s role in this imprisonment (even if the individual officer that Fackenheim refers to displays overt callousness and a gross lack of empathy). By emphasizing the confusing circumstances of the war, that the orders to hold these “spies” in Canada upon their arrival came from British rather than Canadian, and the comparatively benign condition of the camp itself, the film implies that this imprisonment was, if not morally justifiable, at least pragmatically understandable. That being said, towards the film’s conclusion, the film does situate the imprisonment of these Jewish victims *within* Canada in relation to the Canadian government’s blatantly

anti-Semitic immigration policies, whose goal was precisely what these camps provided – keeping Jewish refugees away from the Canadian body politic. As such, if there is a moral indictment of Canada in the film, it is most clearly reserved for the Mackenzie King government (echoing *Charlie Grant's War*). Rasky considers Ottawa indirectly culpable for the incarceration of these individuals for having kept the doors to Canada sealed in the 1930s when escape was still possible. Through these barriers, Groen suggests, the nation acquired a stain of complicity “not during the awful paranoia of war but in the smug complacency of peace.”⁵² While Rasky stops short of offering his own commentary on the extent to which the actual treatment of the prisoners within the camp by the Canadian authorities stemmed from anti-Semitism, by placing this imprisonment within the narrative of Canada's WWII immigration record, the excuse of wartime confusion pales. More importantly, the bureaucracy of the barriers separating the Holocaust experience from the Canadian space is stressed towards the end of the film, as the “painfully slow” process of actually releasing these 975 prisoners, *not* POWs, is detailed as taking 2 ½ years. As the film eventually documents the release of these prisoners, the emphasis in its conclusion is not on their entry into the Canadian space beyond the walls of the camp, but on the entrenchment of the barriers designed to obstruct this entry.

Accordingly, the end of *The Spies Who Never Were* corresponds with the concluding moments of *Charlie Grant's War* insofar as both films leave entrenched an experiential barrier between the Holocaust and Canada. Just as Grant is presented as feeling socially isolated at his “welcome home” party – which may have been well-intentioned, but manifests a complete lack of empathy about what he is being welcomed

⁵² Ibid.

home *from* - so too are the Holocaust refugees in Rasky's film bureaucratically isolated *within* Canada upon their arrival in what they expected would be a safe haven.

This positioning of the Holocaust experience as isolated even within Canada is further exemplified when these two films are considered in relation to the two-part televised miniseries *Haven* (John Gray, 2001). *Haven* is a co-production between Canada and the United States, but unlike a film like *Fugitive Pieces* that is a Canada/Greece co-production (which I discuss in Chapter Two), it lacks certain qualities that make its commentary especially relevant to a Canadian context. For instance, while *Fugitive Pieces* is directed by a Canadian, based on a book by noted Canadian author Anne Michaels, is partly set in Canada, and received a significant portion of its production funding from Telefilm Canada, Gray's film is directed by an American, is based on an autobiographical book by Ruth Gruber - an American Jew who worked to secure entry for Jewish refugees into the United States during WWII⁵³ - did not receive Telefilm Canada funding, and is set in large part in the United States.

While these complexities of international co-production trouble a categorical assertion of *Haven* as a "Canadian" product, it is precisely this liminality between two national contexts that makes the film a particularly useful counterpoint to *Charlie Grant's War* and *The Spies Who Never Were*. *Haven's* treatment of the isolation of Holocaust refugees within a North American context actually straddles the line between the Canadian treatment of the Holocaust via experiential barriers and the American/Hollywood "assimilationist" approach that was discussed in the Introduction. In other words, *Haven's* content manifests its status as a co-production between Canada

⁵³ See Ruth Gruber, *Haven: The Dramatic Story of 1,000 World War II Refugees and How They Came to America* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000). Originally published as *Haven: The Unknown Story of 1000 World War II Refugees* (New York: Putnam Publishing Group, 1983).

and the United States. However, I would argue that in its conclusion, the film ultimately adopts the “assimilationist” stance, which serves to illuminate the *lack* of this effacement of the experiential barrier between Canada and the Holocaust in *Charlie Grant’s War* and *The Spies Who Never Were*.

The similarities between *Haven* and Lavut’s and Rasky’s films are several. Most notably, the Canadian/American miniseries emphasizes a “disconnection,” to use Peter Novick’s term, between the Holocaust and a North American space that is perceived to be, as the title implies (as do Abella and Troper in *None is Too Many*), a “haven” by the Jewish victims striving to reach it. This disconnection is even more explicit in the film’s French title, *D’une terre à l’autre*, which implies that North America is “of another world” than the Holocaust. Moreover, the film’s narrative takes similar focuses as both *Charlie Grant’s War* and *The Spies Who Never Were*.

In the first part of the miniseries, Ruth Gruber (Natasha Richardson) aims to secure a position with the American War Refugee Board (WRB) that will allow her to travel with a group of Holocaust survivors from Italy to the United States in order to ensure that they are “handled properly” on their journey, as well as to gather the stories of the refugees to disseminate to the American public to garner sympathy, which will in turn press the government to admit more Jewish refugees. Like Charlie and his mother in *Charlie Grant’s War*, while striving to achieve this end, Gruber faces resistance and bureaucratic government hurdles. That these immigrants are to be received with a less than warm welcome in the United States is made clear in the film’s opening moments, as some of Gruber’s friends tell her that President Roosevelt will not appoint her to the WRB because she is a Jew. Moreover, after Gruber is granted permission to travel with

the refugees, one American official echoes that Canadian official who lent Abella and Troper's book its title as he bemoans to another, "One thousand Jews is one thousand too many."⁵⁴ The remainder of *Haven*'s first part details the journey of these refugees to America with Gruber, cut with flashbacks that reveal the horror they are fleeing.

At the end of this first half, the refugees arrive in the safety of America, only to be greeted by a camp awaiting them, which visually bears a strong resemblance to a Nazi concentration camp, where they will be held as potential "subversives." In this sense, if the first part of *Haven* echoes the anti-Semitic immigration policies of *Charlie Grant's War*, its second part re-visits the history of the internment of Jewish refugees in North America covered by *The Spies Who Never Were*. Like Rasky's film, *Haven* details the absurd and troubling history of Jews being held alongside Nazi POWs in North American prison camps, but also places more overt emphasis on the anti-Semitic attitudes that these refugees faced from the surrounding community. For instance, when the refugees receive "day-pass" permission to go into the community, a number enter a shop in which the owner (played by Bruce Greenwood) mutters, "I hope they don't have sticky fingers." Shortly thereafter a woman from the town enters and confides to the owner in a none-so-subtle manner, "I can't believe they're out here walking the streets."

Where Gray's film differs in an absolutely essential way from Lavut's and Rasky's is in its conclusion. Whereas Lavut's final moments leave the recently released Charlie Grant as experientially isolated within his own family's surroundings, and *The*

⁵⁴ This response embodies the largely superficial quality of the American War Refugee Board, which President Roosevelt established in 1942 after "[a]uthenticated information that the Nazis were systematically exterminating European Jewry was made public in the United States." As David Wyman notes in *The Abandonment of the Jews*, despite the establishment of the WRB, and its limited success, its potential was never reached as it "received little power, almost no cooperation from Roosevelt or his administration, and grossly inadequate government funding." See David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: American and the Holocaust 1941-1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), x.

Spies Who Never Were holds as its emphasis the incarceration of Holocaust survivors as potential spies in Canada, by the latter portion of *Haven*'s second half, the Jews being held in the camp have begun to be accepted by the surrounding community that had initially treated them with suspicion and animosity. This acceptance is implied as the film progresses, as, for instance, the daughter of the same woman who is aghast that the refugees are "walking the streets" befriends some of the prisoners, much to the chagrin of her mother and boyfriend. In *Haven*'s concluding moments, this acceptance is presented as more ubiquitous throughout the community, even if the American governmental bureaucracy is still reluctant in this regard. As the prisoners wait in queues to speak to officials in order to apply for permission to remain in the United States legally, they are told repeatedly that they will have to apply within the countries from which they are citizens. As the refugees stand in dejection, Americans from the surrounding community push to the front of the line to declare to be "immigrants," standing in Spartacus-like solidarity with the previously despised prisoners, demanding that the officials deport them if they are going to deport the European Jews. Most notable in this regard is the same shop owner who worried about the refugees' "sticky fingers" who tells the American official, "My name is Billingsley. Myles Billingsley. That's an English name, as in the old country, so I guess you'll have to send me back...If you don't want them, you don't want me. Everybody in this country comes from someplace, including you. So if you send them back, you've got to send us all back."

Given the similarities between *Haven* and *Charlie Grant's War* and *The Spies Who Never Were*, one can speculate – as I did in the Introduction – that Canada and the

United States share a quality of historical disconnection⁵⁵ that poses a challenge to the integration of the Holocaust into a Canadian or American context respectively. However, while these relationships may *begin* the same way (with historical disconnection), the ways in which this disconnection plays out have different *conclusions* in the respective national cinemas. Canadian films like *Charlie Grant's War* and *The Spies Who Never Were* leave the barriers between Canada and the Holocaust intact, while in the American case such historical barriers are “resolved” through the absorption of the event into an American context. The narrative arc of *Haven*, while initially emphasizing similar experiential barriers between the Holocaust and a North American context, ultimately concludes with the assimilation of the Holocaust, via the absorption of the refugees into the surrounding community, into the United States. This conclusion thus corresponds *exactly* with Doneson’s discussion of the Holocaust in American film, by which the Holocaust experience enters the United States, and becomes assimilated in a manner that can be understood by Americans as, quite literally, a “‘refugee’ event.”⁵⁶ In contrast, Charlie Grant and the “spies” of Rasky’s film remain (in the films’ respective conclusions) as isolated from their surroundings in Canada.

The films discussed in this chapter thus far have emphasized the experiential barriers between the Holocaust and Canada from a “top-down” perspective so to speak, framing them in the context of militaristic or governmental history. To conclude this chapter, I want to explore two films that take as their focus the extensive dissemination of

⁵⁵ It is useful to emphasize at this point that, like the bureaucratic barriers that Grant ran up against in *Charlie Grant's War*, the historical disconnection between the United States and the Holocaust was not simply geographic but also in part constituted by similar anti-Jewish immigration restrictions, which are explored in *Haven*. In fact, in his study of the American “abandonment” of European Jews during WWII, David Wyman refers specifically to domestic “barriers” that made the US government reluctant to admit these refugees, namely American anti-Semitism. See Wyman, 5-15.

⁵⁶ Doneson, 4-5.

social barriers within the broader spectrum of the Canadian public that separates the Holocaust experience from Canada. In *La vie d'un héros*, these social barriers are presented as the result of blatant ignorance about the tangible horrors of WWII that were geographically distant from Canada. *Je me souviens* undermines the legitimacy of such cognitive distance by exposing the proliferation of popular anti-Semitism in wartime Québec that, in a large part, informed the Canadian government's restrictive immigration policies.

The (Deliberate) Ignorance of Inexperience and Anti-Semitism in Wartime Canada

The epistemological consequence of the Holocaust's occurrence in Europe - whose distance from North America prevents the general public in wartime Canada from grasping the reality of WWII - is addressed in Micheline Lanctôt's *La vie d'un héros*. In this film, such social ignorance is presented in a relatively benign manner, lacking the overt callousness of the Canadian officer's response to Fackenheim in *The Spies Who Never Were*.

La vie d'un héros explores the cross-generational romantic mythologization in the collective memory of a rural Québécois family (the Chevaliers) of a German soldier named Hanibal Warburg Heck (Christopher B. MacCabe), who was interned in Canada as a POW during WWII, and assigned to work on their farm for a brief period immediately afterwards. The film's narrative consists largely of the family's reminiscences of their time with Hanibal as they look forward to his return for a visit in the 1990s, although this is presented in a decidedly non-linear manner. *La vie d'un héros* jumps between a number of different temporal periods that make both description and

analysis of the film challenging. For my purposes, it is useful to view this piece as comprising three periods of time: 1) the period in which Hanibal is actually living with the family, charming them (especially the mother Agathe [Veronique La Flaguais] with his handsome and chivalrous demeanour, and his romantic stories of experiences during the war; 2) an “in-between” period that covers many years after Hanibal’s post-war departure back to Europe, within which his mythological status in the family grows; and 3) the “present” time, which covers the family awaiting his return in the 1990s, and their eventual reunion with Hanibal.

These three different periods are interconnected in the film in a number of different ways that suggest that the past and the present are intertwined for this family through the figure of Hanibal. For instance, many times in *La vie d’un héros*, a voiceover from Period 2, in which a member of the Chevalier family will be remembering something about Hanibal, is played over images of Period 1, or that which is being remembered. At other times, this temporal blurring is actually portrayed visually. In one scene early in Period 2 for example, the Chevalier family is sitting around the dining room table, including their youngest daughter Evelyne, who looks to be approximately 7 years old (played at this age by Kathleen McWilliam), and was only an infant during Hanibal’s stay with them. As the camera pans right from Evelyne, with no discernible cut, Hanibal comes into the shot as the film’s diegesis shifts back to a discussion around the table that included the German soldier in Period One. Similarly, in Period Three, as Evelyne – now a middle-aged adult (played by Marie Cantin) – is driving back to her family home for the reunion with Hanibal, her young daughter Amélie (Marie-Ève Champagne) is shown in a medium-shot in the backseat holding a

hand that is attached to an arm in military uniform. Although this arm is portrayed as imaginary (although it is unclear whether Evelyne imagined it or Amélie dreamt it), and Hanibal's face is not shown in this case, the visual presence of this arm in military garb serves to exemplify that the spectral nature of the soldier's *mythos* transcends time.

Lanctôt's film emphasizes the trans-temporal power that Hanibal holds over the family by framing it primarily through the perspective of Evelyne, whose only actual exposure to Hanibal (at least prior to the reunion) was as an infant. The strength of the "Hanibal myth" for Evelyne is established in the film's opening shot, which features her as a young girl staring up at a photograph of the handsome Hanibal in the family's living room. The cross-generational longevity of Hanibal's mythology is pushed even further as Amélie is incorporated into it, as she accompanies her mother to the reunion with a man she knows only as a "prisoner," and is visualized holding an imaginary hand that presumably belongs to an imaginary Hanibal.

At this point I must acknowledge that *La vie d'un héros* is thematically more concerned with the dynamics between Evelyne and the rest of her family – especially Agathe - than about WWII and the Holocaust. Yet I would argue that the film's relative negation of these topics amounts to a structured absence, which is emphasized by the ignorance of the Chevaliers in regards to the tangible horrors of the war that are romantically glossed over in Hanibal's stories, as well as by Evelyne's shifting perspective towards the mythical status that he holds in the family's collective memory.

Early in the film, any moral qualms about taking a German soldier into their home as a worker are explained away in Period 1 as Bertin (Gilbert Sicotte), the patriarch of the Chevaliers, delineates a distinction between Hanibal as an "enlisted soldier" and the

Nazis. In period 2, that in which Hanibal's mythology grows, Bertin tells his family that "like all well-bred Prussians, Hanibal hated Hitler," and that the soldier "hardly saw any real fighting." Later in Period 3, Evelyne's mother stresses to her that Hitler was "Austrian not German," thus implicitly deflecting attention away from any sense of collective guilt for the Nazi war efforts that may be placed upon Hanibal. While the film leaves ambiguous what Hanibal's involvement in either the war or the Holocaust may have consisted of, these instances demonstrate that the Chevaliers' awareness of the war is wholly filtered through Hanibal's personage, and his stories.

There are also numerous instances that indicate that the family's fascination with the soldier is rooted in a psychological division that places the war, and thus the Holocaust, outside the realm of both their experience and interest. For example, in a voiceover, Evelyne explains (presumably to Amélie in Period 3 although the visuals accompanying the voiceover show the family around the table in Period 2) why people in the community were so keen to get autographs from the interned German POWs: "I mean, farmers in backwoods Québec hadn't been touched by war." Agathe more explicitly implies this experiential division as she recalls telling "Hanibal [that] if relatives or friends of ours had died in the war, we wouldn't have been so friendly." Later on in Period 2, when Evelyne is a young adult, the family is again sitting around the dining room table as her mother implies not simply a lack of experiential knowledge about the war, but a concerted effort to *not acquire* such knowledge as she declares that she "never dared" to ask Hanibal about the "camps."

At this point Evelyne gets up and angrily walks away from the table, as she is the only family member that the film suggests is perturbed by the actions that Hanibal's

status as a WWII German soldier may represent. The film establishes her critical perspective in this regard via a visual confrontation with the reality of the “camps” that her mother seeks to avoid. As she and Amélie are driving, Evelyne explains that despite the fact that she never actually knew Hanibal, she inherited her family’s obsession with him and became a “Germanophile.” Over this explanation the film cuts to images of Evelyne’s room as a teenager, in which German books, a Beethoven bust, and Bavarian trinkets are prominently displayed, as well as shots of her taking German lessons. “I listened to German songs,” she continues in voiceover to Amélie, as Evelyne is shown as a teenager dancing, swinging a beer stein to German music with German posters behind her, “until the day, when, attracted by a film with a German title, I walked in.” At this point, the image cuts to the teenage Evelyne sitting in a movie theatre, watching with increasing horror images of emaciated bodies being bulldozed into mass graves in Alain Resnais’ *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et Brouillard*, France, 1955). As she views this footage, Evelyne brings her hand to her mouth and quickly leaves the theatre (the marquee shows the German title of the film, *Nacht und Nebel*, which implies a certain collective fascination with Germany that extends beyond both Evelyne and her family) and hunches over on the sidewalk to vomit.

This sequence mimics almost exactly a similar scene in Margarethe von Trotta’s *Marianne and Juliane* (West Germany, 1981), in which Marianne (Barbara Sukowa), a young German girl who sees Resnais’ film in school (around the late 1950s or early 1960s, which is approximately the same temporal period in which Evelyne has her viewing experience – that is, before the attempted annihilation of the Jews was regularly a topic in public discourse) and has a similar visceral reaction. And like Evelyne, this

confrontation with the images of the Holocaust in *Marianne and Juliane* is not simply a physiological reaction to disturbing footage, but serves to break an idealized conception of the historical past. In the case of Evelyne, these images undermine her romanticization of Germany that was rooted in the Chevaliers' familial myth of Hanibal, while in von Trotta's film, Marianne's viewing of Resnais' film exposes to her the crimes that had been committed by the previous German generation.

Despite this blatant similarity though, the consequences of this demythologization in *La vie d'un héros* have a far less obvious impact on Evelyne than on Marianne. In von Trotta's film, Marianne's experience of viewing of *Night and Fog* marks a drastic turning point that shifts her from a content immersion within a "liberal Lutheran family and the cultural traditions it maintains,"⁵⁷ to a path that leads to her joining a violent revolutionary group that seeks to undermine the established bourgeois capitalistic status quo in post-war West Germany. Evelyne's experience of viewing the film on the other hand, while it makes her physically ill, does not undermine her fascination with Hanibal specifically or lead to any overt questioning of his involvement in the war as a German soldier. For instance, at the beginning of Period 3, when Amélie asks why they are going to visit a "prisoner" since prisoners are "bad people," Evelyne smiles and tells her that Hanibal was "enthusiastic about everything" and "made friends easily." In other words, while Amélie is nervous about meeting Hanibal at the reunion, Evelyne is clearly excited by it. As such, her violent reaction at Resnais' film does not constitute any lasting alternation of her perception towards the historical past that is manifest in her family's mythologization of Hanibal.

⁵⁷ Susan E. Linville, "Retrieving History: Margarethe von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane*," *PMLA* 106.3 (May 1991): 453.

In other words, while *La vie d'un héros* affords Evelyne a sense of confrontation with the reality of the war through the images of *Night and Fog*, she maintains a clear division between this knowledge and the figure of Hanibal himself. A similar division between the figure of Hanibal and the brutal reality of WWII is further stressed towards the end of the film, which features the reunion between the former POW and the Chevaliers that concludes Period 3. When Hanibal arrives at the Chevalier household as an elderly man (played by Erwin Pottit) with a cane, the disappointed facial reactions of the family (shown in a close-up tracking shot) indicate the distorting quality of mythologized memory. Amélie articulates this most clearly as she tells Evelyne “He’s not the way I pictured him,” and recoils in none-so-subtle disgusts as Hanibal leans in to her. But like the erasure of Evelyne’s Germanophilia after viewing *Night and Fog*, this de-mythologization of Hanibal has nothing to do with the Chevaliers garnering any critical awareness of, or even questioning his role as a German soldier. Rather, their disappointment stems only from his decrepit appearance, which bears nothing in common with the strong, handsome man that the family remembers.

That being said, the film does not present the ignorance of the Chevalier family as a moral shortcoming. Given that the most explicit confrontation with the war that any member of the family experiences is Evelyne’s viewing of *Night and Fog* as a teenager, *La vie d'un héros* implicitly suggests that *during* the war, the family’s lack of awareness is explainable by virtue of the experiential distance between wartime Québec and the war in Europe. This is quite unlike the revelation of *Night and Fog* in *Marianne and Juliane* which carries with it not only the exposure of German guilt for the Holocaust, but an active attempt to *hide* or distort this history for the younger generation. As Susan E.

Linville observes, while Marianne watches *Night and Fog* in her school class, the school principal “Father Klein is shown standing beside the projector in two separate shots, controlling the cinematic apparatus and taking charge of the students’ moral education.”⁵⁸ In this sense, Marianne’s movement towards radicalism whose incipience is rooted in this moment also marks a break from a passive acceptance of a moral version of Germany’s historical past that is shaped, distorted and disseminated by the bourgeois patriarchy of the war generation that has an active interest in controlling this history (the link between morality and historical education is of course manifest in the priest/principal figure of Father Klein). In Lanctôt’s film on the other hand, the fact that Evelyne never learned about the war from her family is simply because they themselves were ignorant about it, not because they were actively trying to hide it from or distort it for her. As such, the family’s ignorance does not carry with it an implicit moral charge. If their mythologization of Hanibal fooled Evelyne, it is only because they were also fooled. But this “fooling” is presented as inevitable due to the experiential disjuncture between rural Québec and the war, which the film articulates at a number of moments, *but does not problematize*.

Granted, Lanctôt concludes her film with a series of black-and-white archival images and film clips, which lay bare the potential visceral results of being a soldier in war – dead bodies of soldiers being swarmed with flies, or bloodied, beaten corpses in military uniform with limbs missing. These images serve to expose the “glossing over” of history that was inherent in Hanibal’s stories of war glory, and the family’s consequent mythologization of him. Yet this archival footage merely constitutes an *extra-diegetic* revelation that serves to double the consequence of Evelyne’s viewing of *Night and Fog*

⁵⁸ Ibid.

– they show the reality of WWII’s horrors that the family is missing, but offers no sense of an authorial commentary on the *fact that they are missing it*. In other words, in *La vie d’un héros* this collective ignorance is presented as axiomatic, with the ugly realities of WWII and the Holocaust only cognitively accessible in a Québécois context long after the fact (like when teenaged Evelyne sees it documented in Resnais’ film).

It is precisely this sort of “understandable” and “excusable” wartime ignorance that affords the Canadian public sphere a sense of moral absolution that Eric R. Scott’s documentary *Je me souviens* calls into question by looking at the pervasive anti-Semitism and flirtations with Nazism in pre-war and wartime Québec culture.⁵⁹ Now, this is not to say that Scott’s film implies that a family like the Chevaliers *would* have had anti-Semitic tendencies or *should* have had a better understanding of fascism or the anti-Semitic currents leading towards WWII and the Holocaust. *Je me souviens* is *not* anti-Québec,

⁵⁹ It should be noted that anti-Semitism before and during WWII was evident across Canada, as was a certain degree of sympathy with Nazi ideology. See for instance Davies, 1992 and Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975). A more contemporary piece that suggests a widespread embrace of fascism and Nazism in Canada outside of Québec is Andrew Wall’s recent documentary *The Paper Nazis* (2011), a project that stemmed from Wall’s discovery that Jews weren’t allowed at Victoria Beach (approximately 2 hours from Winnipeg) during the 1930s, and “documents the rise of Nazism and fascism in Winnipeg during the Great Depression”. See Matt Preprost, “Documentary explores Winnipeg’s dark past,” *The Metro*, February 9, 2011, 1-2. However, such sentiments were particularly strong and entrenched in Québec - so much so in fact that, as Abella and Troper suggest in *None is Too Many*, the level of anti-Semitism in the province was an important factor in Prime Minister Mackenzie King’s reluctance to increase Jewish immigration, lest he sacrifice votes in Québec. In fact, in an interview in *Je me souviens*, Irving Abella notes that while there was anti-Semitism across Canada at this time, the Catholic church in Québec and the Québécois-nationalist *Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste* were particularly vociferous in the anti-immigration “crusade” that sought to keep Jewish refugees out of Canada. See Abella and Troper, 18-19, as well as Jacques Langlais and David Rome, *Juifs et Québécois français – 200 ans d’histoire commune* (Montreal: Fides, 1986). Moreover, a clear distinction between attitudes towards Jews and the Holocaust in Québec and the rest of Canada persists to this day. In a recent article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* for instance, Elizabeth Thompson explores a recent survey that correlated a strong awareness of the Holocaust with more positive attitudes towards Jews, and revealed that of the Canadian provinces, Québec had the lowest rate of Holocaust awareness. See Elizabeth Thompson, “Attitudes on Holocaust differ among English-, French-Canadians: poll,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 8, 2010, A9. It is also useful to note that while Wall’s documentary explores historical anti-Semitism in Winnipeg as Scott’s does in Québec, *The Paper Nazis* does not imply an accusatory stance towards a reluctance in the *present* to confront this past, which – as I will discuss below – is essential in *Je me souviens* (possibly even more important than the wartime anti-Semitism in Québec that the film explores).

nor does it suggest that Québécois were ubiquitously anti-Semitic in the 1930s or during the war. In fact, the film opens with a title card “dedicated to the French-Canadians who sacrificed their lives in the struggle against fascism.” That being said, Scott’s film seeks to establish an explicit connection between anti-Semitism and fascist/Nazi sympathies in pre-war, wartime, and post-war Québec, and French-Canadian nationalism, particularly in Québec’s nationalist-intellectual class.

The opening sequence of *Je me souviens* quickly posits a link between virulent anti-Semitism and Québec nationalism. After the dedicatory title card, the film cuts to an image of a subway station, as a male voiceover states, “A miracle may come our way... Within six months or a year, the Jewish problem could be solved, not only in Montreal, but also from one end of Quebec to the other. There would be no more Jews left here, other than those who could survive by living off one another. The rest would clear out or would be forced to disperse and seek their livelihood in something other than business.” As this narration unfolds, the visuals fade from a series of long shots showing the general chaos of the subway to a sign that identifies the setting as the “Lionel-Groulx” station of Montreal’s Metro. The narrator then identifies as the source of these troubling words a 1933 article in the nationalist monthly *L’Action Nationale* by Fr. Lionel Groulx, a Catholic priest, leading intellectual and the “father of Quebec nationalism.” A more overt admiration for Nazi ideology by a Québec nationalist is intimated later in the film through a quote from a 1935 piece – also from *L’Action Nationale* – by Groulx’s colleague and future director of the University of Montreal’s business school (from 1938-1962), Esdras Minville, which is narrated over images of the highly disciplined marching of Nazi soldiers. In this article, Minville professes a staunch admiration for the National

Socialists, who “wish to return Germany’s dignity, its pride and joy in living a German way of life, they are doing healthy, intelligent and good work. They are setting an example for many other countries.”

In addition to the sentiments of Groulx, which intertwine anti-Semitism and Québec nationalism, and the Nazi sympathies of Minville, *Je me souviens* stresses the proliferation of anti-Semitism and fascist sympathies within pre-war and wartime Québec society, particularly by pointing to examples in the newspaper *Le Devoir*, which ran blatantly anti-Semitic material throughout the 1930s and 1940s. For instance, the film points to a piece in April 1937 by Georges Pelletier, managing editor of *Le Devoir*, that quoted a French professor that Pelletier identifies as “unbiased,” who explained “The most intelligent Jews, the ones without any racial feelings, will always remain Jews. Their minds don’t grasp things, don’t see things, don’t understand things the way a French mind does – a Christian-educated mind.” Another example that indicates the commonality of such sentiments is an article from February 1930, in which the writer claims that jazz is a “nigger and Semitic cocktail, and I don’t like that kind of cooking.”

Scott’s film also emphasizes the diffusion of these anti-Semitic sentiments in Québec society in other ways. For instance, in an interview, former Senator and writer Jacques Hébert suggests that such feelings were not aberrant in the culture of the time, and that he recalls his family admiring Mussolini around the table before the war, and that Salazar and Franco were “praised to the sky, almost put on an altar.” The film also identifies a blatantly anti-Semitic release by the League of Independent Merchants, which is read over images of the bustling backroom of a bakery: “If you ever buy bread that was made by a Jew, don’t eat it before you’ve carefully examined every slice. If you find

little black spots, don't put it in your mouth. Those little black spots are crushed cockroaches. The Jewish bakeries raise these small bugs. They weigh more than flour and they don't cost anything." Similarly, *Je me souviens* points to a speech by economist Alfred Rouleau that was printed in *Action Catholique* in 1943, which spoke out vociferously against the building of a synagogue, and told the "city authorities that before they concern themselves with minority rights, they ought to take care of the interests of the majority who has been living here for more than 300 years."

It is also important to note that *Je me souviens* stresses that these sentiments did not abate as the Nazis' ambitions of imperial domination and Judeocide became increasingly clear as WWII progressed. Quite the opposite, the film points to the extent of sympathy in Québec for the French collaboration with the Nazis upon the fall of France in 1940, and an admiration of Marcel Pétain, the leader of the Nazi-occupied regime of Vichy in France, that bordered on deific (in this section of the film for instance, over archival images of Pétain a hymn is sung that was written specifically for him in Québec in 1942). Moreover, Hébert stresses that the link between Québec nationalists and French collaborators extended to the post-war years. "Even after the war," Hébert states over footage of the 1944 liberation of Besançon, France, "when people knew what the Germans did: the extermination camps and what the Pétain regime did to the Jews in France, especially towards the end. It didn't stop notorious collaborators from coming here [to Québec] as refugees with help from Québec's nationalist elite."

Accordingly, *Je me souviens* offers a plethora of examples that suggest the extent of anti-Semitic sentiments in wartime Québec that clearly undermines the absolution of ignorance afforded in *La vie d'un héros*. Yet Scott's film does not simply assume the

function of an exposé of anti-Semitism in Quebec in the *historical* context of WWII, but also seeks to reveal reluctance in *contemporary* Québec culture to confront this history. Scott accomplishes this critique of contemporary collective memory by framing the revelations of historical anti-Semitism in 1930s and 1940s Québec through the experiences of Esther Delisle, a Québécois historian who aimed to explore these sentiments in a Political Science PhD dissertation at Laval University in the mid-late 1980s and early 1990s, primarily via an examination of 1007 articles that she deemed “anti-Semitic” in *Le Devoir* between 1929 and 1939.⁶⁰ As Delisle undertook this project, she faced significant resistance and animosity, which is as important to the interrogative impulse of *Je me souviens* as the evidence of historical anti-Semitism in *Le Devoir* and in the writings of Groulx and Minras.

The controversy over Delisle’s work is most evident in the conflicting views of Delisle herself, which are echoed by her doctoral supervisor Jacques Zylberberg, and Guy Antoine LaFleur, one of the members of Delisle’s defense jury who did not believe her project withstood intellectual scrutiny. LaFleur’s contention, at least to the extent that it is articulated in the film, is that Delisle’s thesis was primarily based on an unsigned column called the “Grinch’s notebook,” and given that there is no “solid source” for these pieces, Delisle’s use of them as a basis for her project’s framework was suspect.

Delisle and Zylberberg on the other hand paint the picture that such resistance to her project was due to its controversial subject matter rather than its methodology. Early in *Je me souviens*, Delisle reveals that when she first proposed this project, one of her professors told her that she was “committing professional suicide,” and a number of other

⁶⁰ Delisle also published a book based on her dissertation in 1993 book entitled *The Traitor and the Jew: Anti-Semitism and the Delirium of Extremist Right-Wing Nationalism in French Canada from 1929-1939* (Montreal: Robert Davies Publishing, 1993).

individuals told her that she “shouldn’t be talking about things like that.” For her part, Delisle suggests the real controversy of her dissertation was not about the *revelation* of such virulent anti-Semitism in 1930s Québec. Rather, she feels her project stated something that everyone already knew, but which was taboo to actually state – in other words, “Everyone knows, but no one should say.”⁶¹ Her supervisor Zylberberg supports this view as he suggests that Delisle’s cardinal sin was “to contradict an official historical myth. It states that a certain portion of the intellectual elite was pro-Franco and pro-Pétain, as if it were OK to be pro-Franco and pro-Pétain but not be pro-Hitler. That isn’t true! The people around Lionel Groulx were pro-Adolph [sic] Hitler!” To emphasize the veracity of this statement, it is at this point that the film cuts to Esdras Minville’s quote in *L’Action Nationale* that not only professes admiration for Hitler’s goals of returning national dignity to Germany, but also situates this in the context of his admiration for Groulx (Minville suggests that what Hitler wants for Germany is “what our great master Lionel Groulx wants” for Québec).

While Scott stops short of *explicitly* taking Delisle’s side in the academic debate regarding the historical merits of her project, by framing the history of anti-Semitism in 1930s and 1940s Québec through her contemporary experiences writing about it, *Je me souviens* invariably positions her critics as reluctant to face an uncomfortable historical past. Most notably this is done by implicitly linking the sources of this wartime anti-Semitism to contemporary sources that are reluctant to confront it. Take for instance a sequence that covers a 1933 meeting of the group *Jeune Canada* (Young Canada) that was focused on the domestic threat of Jewish power. At this point, the film cuts to an interview with Pierre Dansereau, an ecology professor at the University of Québec in

⁶¹ Evans 2011.

Montreal who was present at this gathering. Dansereau describes the meeting as an “error of our youth,” but also stresses that that they (the young Canadians) were “supported in our anti-Semitic declaration.” Moreover, he deflects the responsibility for these sentiments onto an older generation who taught them that the only political options were “Rome or Moscow,” and at the time communism (signified by “Moscow”) was perceived as the most significant threat, with fascism (“Rome”) the only logical defense against it.

More overtly evasive is an interview with Guy Bouthillier, the President of *La Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste*, an organization devoted to the protection of French culture in Québec, as well as Québec sovereignty, which thus has a vested interest in presenting a utopian portrait of Québécois nationalism.⁶² The history of anti-Semitism in Québec, Bouthillier says, should “be thrown away, except from our memory. We should reject it, with the understanding that it really happened. We shouldn’t try to make excuses. Everything goes to the garbage... We start again at zero.” Of course, while the contradictions of this statement seem ambiguously evasive, it only implicitly deflects attention away from the link between Québec nationalism and Québec anti-Semitism. Bouthillier’s desire to evade this link becomes more obvious as he acknowledges that this troubling history makes his “hair stand on end,” and then goes on to joke about his baldness (“despite the current condition of my scalp”). Another less overt example of such deflection is evident in an interview with Antoine Baby, a professor at Laval whose

⁶² The nationalist impetus of *La Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste* is made explicit on the organization’s website, which describes the Society as devoted to the protection and promotion of the French language and Québec’s national history, as well as to the independence of Québec as a sovereign nation (“*Fondée en 1834 sous le vocable «Aide-toi et le ciel t’aidera», la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal oeuvre à la protection et à la promotion de la langue française, de notre histoire nationale et de l’indépendance du Québec*”). See *Société Saint-Jean Baptiste de Montréal*, “*La Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal*,” <http://www.ssjb.com/contenu/la-societe-saint-jean-baptiste-de-montreal> (accessed October 26, 2010).

connection to Delisle is never clarified, who emphasizes that while he recalls the presence of anti-Semitism as a child, it was from his *neighbours*, *not* his parents, that he would hear, “No, you’re not going into that [Jewish] store.”

The link between Québec nationalism and anti-Semitism that is established in the article by Groulx that opens the film, and implicit in the figure of the President of *La Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste*, is also alluded to in an interview with Fr. Benoît Lacroix. Like Dansereau and Bouthillier, this section also contains an evasion of historical culpability. First, Lacroix stresses that anti-Semitism existed in Québec *prior* to Fr. Lionel Groulx, and that anti-Semitism is not *unique* to Québec. Second, he goes on to explain (albeit not justify) anti-Semitism in relation to Québec’s “most important problem [of] whether we’ll survive as French Canadians” – a concern that engenders an almost inevitable fear of the “other,” thus contextualizing the sentiment as *understandable*, if not morally justified. Third, Lacroix – a Catholic priest – does not reflect on either the essential role that the Catholic Church played in Québec politics and nationalism under the premiership of Maurice Duplessis’ conservative-nationalist *Union Nationale* party from 1936-1939 and 1944-1959, nor the overt examples of anti-Semitism that existed within the Catholic Church in Québec itself during the 1930s and 1940s.⁶³ Of course, there is nothing *inherently* incriminating about any of these examples. If anything, these interviewees are positioned in the film as guilty of omission. But given

⁶³ Such sentiments are of course evident in the quotations attributed to Groulx, the (Catholic) father of Québec nationalism referred to above, as well as Rouleau’s piece in *Action Catholique*. For a discussion of the link between Catholicism and Québec national identity in the interwar period, and the Church’s role in protecting the French language and culture, whose precariousness is alluded to by Lacroix, see Pierre Anctil, “Interlude of Hostility: Judeo-Christian Relations in Quebec in the Interwar Period, 1919-1939,” in *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation*, ed. Alan Davies (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), 135-137.

their situation in the film's framework of Delisle's research, they all serve as implicitly exemplary of the resistance that she faced while trying to illuminate this history

The most critical connection in Scott's film between the anti-Semitism of 1930s and wartime Québec and the reluctance of contemporary Québec society to face this history is reserved for the intellectual class.⁶⁴ This connection is most explicitly evident in the manner by which LaFleur's resistance to Delisle's dissertation is presented. Aside from his comments about the "unsigned" source of the "Grinch's notebook" column, LaFleur articulates his disdain for Delisle's project in viscerally emotional terms. Even LaFleur himself confirms the accuracy of comments by Delisle and Zylberberg, admitting that that in her defense he went so far in a rhetorical flourish as to raise questions about her "sanity," while the specifics of why he was so adamantly resistant to her thesis that he "bowed [his] head in mourning and in protest" when her successful verdict was announced are never explained.

Again, Scott's film does not overtly state that either LaFleur is *wrong* or Delisle is *right*. However, in this instance it implies that the question is not one of historical accuracy, but of a willingness to interrogate the past. After the question of Delisle's

⁶⁴ While Fr. Lacroix's interview carries with it a certain reluctance of the Catholic Church to acknowledge its role in the historical anti-Semitism that *Je me souviens* illuminates, the integral connection between the Church and Québec nationalism / Québec politics vastly diminished over the course of the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s that ushered in the secularization of Québec society. As such, in terms of the film's interrogation of a *contemporary* reluctance to hear what Delisle was trying to say, its central focus is on the link between the anti-Semitism of the nationalist-intelligentsia during the 1930s and the war years and the intelligentsia that is presented as reluctant to confront this complicity in their derisive stance towards Delisle's project, rather than the role of the contemporary Church in this regard. This is not to say the Church is let off the hook in the film, but the critique of the Church is intimately bound to its *historical* connections to the anti-Semitism brewed by Québec nationalism. As such, while Fr. Lacroix – the manifestation of "the Church" in the present – does not reflect on Catholic complicity in this regard, his interview is less overtly evasive than that of Baby (one of the contemporary intellectuals) or Bouthillier (the contemporary nationalist). For a description of the Quiet Revolution, see, René Durocher, "Quiet Revolution," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/indeed.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0006619> (accessed October 26, 2010).

sanity is raised, the film cuts to an interview with Robert O. Paxton, an Emeritus Professor at Columbia University, who states unequivocally that not only is Delisle “not insane,” but that it is an entirely valid project to explore the manifestation and influence of fascism in Québec in the 1930s because at the time its influence was being felt worldwide. Moreover, Paxton concludes his reflection by implicitly calling into question the “intellectual” basis of resistance to such an interrogation by stressing that “an educated citizen must recognize the truth even if it isn’t always beautiful.” By delineating a link between the intellectual-nationalist tradition of wartime anti-Semitism in Québec and the evasion of this history within intellectual-nationalist segments in contemporary Québec culture, *Je me souviens* thus implies an *active* attempt by vested interests to gloss over history in a manner that bears more similarity to the German case in *Marianne and Juliane*, or even more explicitly to Michael Verhoeven’s *The Nasty Girl* (West Germany, 1990),⁶⁵ than the moral neutrality of the Chevalier’s post-war credulity in *La vie d’un héros*.

The overtly critical quality of Scotts’ film is also manifest in its choice of title. Of course, in the context of the film’s content, the title, translated as “I remember” clearly suggests that Delisle (and indeed Scott’s film itself) is promising to remember what a segment of Québec society would long to forget. Yet “Je me souviens” is also the official motto of Québec, carrying with it implications of cultural pride for the Québécois nation, and appearing on both the provincial coat of arms and (since 1978) provincial

⁶⁵ *The Nasty Girl*’s narrative is strikingly similar to the story of Delisle that is documented in *Je me souviens*. In Verhoeven’s film, based on the true story of Anna Rosmus, a German high school student named Sonja (Lena Stolze) decides to write a history of her German hometown during the Third Reich. What she uncovers is a shameful history of complicity in the deportation of the town’s Jews, and a high level of local involvement in the Nazi party. Her discoveries result in resistance from the town as she is prevented from accessing the local archives, and eventually faces open hostility and physical threats from her fellow townspeople.

license plates.⁶⁶ Accordingly, Scott's use of this phrase as the title of his film inverts a statement of collective pride into an accusatory finger to reveal a cultural shame, indicating that "I (Scott via his film or Delisle via her dissertation) vow to remember what you (the Québec's nationalist-intellectual class that are both complicit in the province's historical anti-Semitism and marked by a contemporary refusal to face this complicity) refuse to remember. In *Je me souviens* then, the anti-Semitism in pre-war and wartime Québec, and a contemporary reluctance to face this past, renders any defense of collective ignorance of the Nazis' intentions of a *Jüdenrein* culture – as is implied in Lanctot's film - as suspect; one which paints a skewed picture of the historical relation between the province and the tangible realities of WWII-era anti-Semitism, as well as its horrific consequence – the Holocaust.

This chapter has explored Canadian films that address, either explicitly or implicitly, the historical absence of the Holocaust from Canada as it was occurring. The military documentaries featuring wartime footage that were discussed in the first part do so by delineating Canada and the Holocaust as two discrete entities, while *Charlie Grant's War*, *The Spies Who Never Were*, and *Je me souviens* interrogate the moral implications that are intertwined in the historical distance between the two through bureaucratic and social anti-Semitism. In *La vie d'un héros*, the Chevalier's ignorance

⁶⁶ What the motto "Je me souviens" actually refers to (i.e. what it is Quebeckers are to remember) is a source of debate even within contemporary Québec, although a general consensus is that it refers to the defeat of New France by the British. The history of the phrase as a motto specifically for province dates back to 1883, when architect Eugene-Étienne Taché ordered its carving below the province's coat of arms, without leaving any explanation of its intended meaning. Despite this ambiguity, there is little doubt that this phrase carries with it a sense of cultural pride is almost axiomatic in contemporary Québec society, as the "most widespread interpretation of the motto is as follows: 'francophone Quebeckers cherish their French roots.'" See ProvinceQuebec.com, "Je me souviens: I remember: but what exactly?" http://www.provincequebec.com/info_quebec/motto-license-plate/ (accessed October 26, 2010).

about the horrors of WWII is presented as derived from its absence from the family's experiences in rural Québec. This is of course not to say that these films *resolve* the historical barriers between Canada and the Holocaust, but rather that they make the absence of the Holocaust a central problematic in their approach to it from a Canadian context.

At this point, I want to move on to films that, following the temporal progression of both *La vie d'un héros* and *Je me souviens*, forge links between the past and the present, and begin more explicitly to deal with the *legacy* of the Holocaust's historical absence in Canadian cinema. As such, my focus will now shift to films that delineate interpersonal barriers between those who experienced the Holocaust, and brought this experience internally with them upon immigration to Canada, and those Canadians who for reasons of space or time, lack such an experiential relation to it, and thus also lack the emotional or cognitive capacity to grasp that which so indelibly, but invisibly, marked its victims.

Chapter Two

Experiential Barriers with Canadian Sociopolitical Specificity: *Children of the Storm* and *Two Men*

The previous chapter explored films that deal explicitly with the relationship between Canada and the Holocaust during WWII. Films like *The Valour and the Horror*, *Canada at War*, *The Lucky Ones*, and *Guilty Men* all intimate the same assertion made by Jack Kuper's acquaintance regarding *Sun in My Eyes* - that the Holocaust had "nothing to do with Canada." In contrast, films such as *Charlie Grant's War*, *The Spies Who Never Were*, *La vie d'un héros*, and *Je me souviens* trouble this assertion by raising important questions regarding the *moral* implications of Canada's wartime and post-war relation to the Holocaust – such as the anti-Semitic passivity of the Mackenzie King government in terms of immigration, or the treatment of refugees in Canadian "camps" (which is expanded beyond the Canadian case in *Haven*). They also establish the historical *absence* of the Holocaust from Canada as an essential feature of their historiographic inquiries and representations, and frame it implicitly or explicitly as a problematic that demands consideration in its own right, rather than treating this absence as axiomatic.

The following chapter extends this focus by examining films that contend with the *ramifications* of this historical absence by delineating cognitive and/or emotional divisions between those who experienced the Holocaust (i.e. survivors who have immigrated to Canada) and those who did not (domestic Canadians for whom WWII and the Holocaust were and are beyond the purview of their immediate experience). To consider such divisions I will use the term "barrier of experience." As was discussed above, this term not only manifests the "unbridgeable" quality between experience and inexperience, but also borrows from Phillip Weiss, a Holocaust survivor who immigrated

to Winnipeg in 1949. Weiss refers to this sense of a separation upon his arrival in Canada between survivors and their Canadian brethren as follows: “We were strangers in a strange land. You were not fully accepted, even in Jewish circles. *There were barriers between Canadian citizens and those who survived...*For a certain period of time everything was dark; you could not be as happy as the Canadian who didn’t go through the experiences of the Second World War.”¹

Such interpersonal barriers of experience will be central to my analyses in both the present and the following chapter. I will begin by first looking at films that situate this barrier in a context where a *Canadian* specificity is of explicit sociopolitical importance. The two films that this chapter will focus on with this end in mind are Jack Kuper’s *Children of the Storm* and the CBC drama, *Two Men*. The former film is a documentary that features interviews with survivors – including Kuper himself - who came to Canada in the post-war period as part of the Canadian Jewish Congress’ (CJC) “War Orphans Project,” and articulates the challenges they faced. Corresponding to Weiss’ above comments, upon arrival in Canada, these young refugees were trying to assimilate into a foreign society that had no experience of the events that they had so narrowly escaped. The film lends further sociopolitical specificity to these stories by including the context of the bureaucratic and unwelcoming conditions of Canada’s wartime immigration policies that the CJC had to navigate in order to secure entry for the war orphans. The latter film, *Two Men*, considers the contentious issue of Nazi war criminals hiding in Canada via the narrative of a Hungarian survivor living in Toronto, who recognizes the man that betrayed his family to the Nazis and is now residing in the same city. The 1988 broadcast of this film - directed by the renowned Canadian actor

¹ Weiss, quoted in Bialystok, 68, my emphasis.

Gordon Pinsent and penned by Anna Sandor, who also wrote *Charlie Grant's War* – is a clear product of its contemporaneous social context, in which the active pursuit and eventual trials of such Nazi war criminals that had been hiding in Canada were underway. These efforts marked a notable change from Canada's reluctance to pursue such charges for such "distant" crimes in the previous decades (a tendency that is also considered in the film). Given that these two films situate the survivors' barrier of experience relative to their surrounding environment, family, community, etc., in a decidedly Canadian context, they follow rather linearly from those discussed in the previous chapter that focused on the historical relationship between Canada and the Holocaust. They are thus particularly appropriate texts through which to resume consideration of the Holocaust's treatment in Canadian cinema.

Challenges of Immigration and Assimilation in *Children of the Storm*

As the Introduction briefly discussed, when he immigrated to Canada in 1947 at the age of 15, Polish Holocaust survivor and future author/filmmaker Jack Kuper noticed immediately that the citizens of his adoptive country were largely oblivious to the horrific realities of the attempted genocide of European Jewry that had just occurred across the Atlantic Ocean. Upon arriving by boat and boarding a train in Halifax, Kuper recalls,

[S]ome extremely well-dressed, overly dressed ladies came from some Jewish organization to greet us and to hand out apples, and oranges and magazines. And looking at them in their makeup and dresses on, I found it quite startling that they would have done that to come and greet us that way. But what was even more horrifying to me was when I was handed a magazine, I think it was *Life* magazine, and I started looking through it and I didn't understand that these were ads, but that's what they were I realized later. And they would show a man shaving with a big smile on his face and a tube of shaving cream beside it, and some lady pouring ketchup and some kids sitting at a table all laughing, and then there would be an ad for a Walt Disney movie showing people or characters dancing, happy,

articles about music. I thought, how is this possible that these people don't know what had happened there?²

This ignorance that Kuper attributes to the society of his new home is a recollection of an early manifestation of the “barrier of experience” that Phillip Weiss alludes to between Holocaust survivors and those who did not experience the Holocaust.

While Kuper has made a number of films about the Holocaust, the majority of them lack the overtly autobiographical quality of his novels, *Child of the Holocaust* which details his experiences during WWII as he continually ran and hid across the Polish countryside, and *After the Smoke Cleared*, which focuses on Kuper's immigration to and assimilation within Canada, as well as the eventual reunion with his father whom he assumed had been killed during the war. In contrast, Kuper's *filmic* reflections opt instead to approach the Holocaust through mediated perspectives that place Kuper (and his cinematic representations) as external to the event itself. *Shtetl* (1995) and *The Fear of Felix Nussbaum* (2000) focus on paintings by two individuals who experienced life under the threat of the Nazi regime – one who survived the Holocaust, and one who did not. In a similar vein, Kuper's Gemini award-winning film *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto: A Birthday Trip in Hell* (1991) takes as its focus a collection of photographs of the infamous ghetto that were in the collection of a former Nazi officer who made them public while on his death-bed. Even *Who Was Jerzy Kosinski?* (1996), Kuper's reflection on his friendship with the infamous and controversial author Jerzy Kosinski, focuses more on the enigma of the *Painted Bird* author than on the relationship between the two survivors.

² Kuper, Interview with author.

Children of the Storm is somewhat an exception to this tendency away from autobiographical reflection. The film is comprised almost entirely of interviews with survivors who were orphaned by the Holocaust (or presumed to be orphaned, such as Kuper who only discovered well after WWII that his father had survived the war years in a Soviet work camp) and brought over to Canada through the Canadian Jewish Congress' "War Orphans Project" – an initiative that ran from 1947 to 1949 which brought approximately 1100 Jewish refugee children to Canada. It was the culmination of fourteen years of pressure from the Canadian Jewish community on the Canadian government to ease immigration restrictions on European Jews (especially children) who were being threatened by Hitler's increasingly anti-Semitic policies.³ Kuper himself was one of these children, and as such, the film's emphasis on the challenges that they faced upon arrival in Canada covers some of the same ground as the first half of *After the Smoke Cleared*, which begins with him in a displaced persons camp after the war, prior to his acceptance in the CJC initiative. At the same time, *Children of the Storm* is more of a sociological study⁴ than the autobiographical reflection of *After the Smoke Cleared*. Although Kuper is featured as one of the survivors providing testimony in the film, he places himself amongst all of the other interviewees, not setting himself apart in any way that identifies *this* "talking head" as the film's director (a distinction returned to in Chapter Six). Its focus is on the "children of the storm" as a group comprised of individuals that share a number of profound experiences – surviving the war, having all

³ For more details on the Canadian Jewish Congress' War Orphans' Project, see Bialystok, 48-50.

⁴ The survivors featured in *Children of the Storm* are somewhat of a random sampling as Kuper located them by placing ads in Canadian newspapers that invited war orphans to contact him for the purposes of appearing in the film. For instance, see "Classifieds," *Canadian Jewish News*, August 5, 1999 (accessed from the Jack Kuper collection at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University). This cross-Canada search is also mentioned in Alex Strachan, "Europe's orphaned generation," *Vancouver Sun*, April 17, 2001, D8.

or most of their families annihilated, and moving to a new life where their experiences were unshared by those in their adoptive nation. The specificity of this group – that it is not meant to be representative of any tendency beyond itself – is intimated by the film’s opening title card, “In memory of the children who didn’t survive,” which calls attention to the fact that the fortunate fate of the children of the storm was one that eluded the nearly one million young victims of the Holocaust.

In terms of its subject matter as a historical documentary, *Children of the Storm* is situated firmly between the historiographic emphases of Irving Abella and Harold Troper’s *None is Too Many* (about the anti-Semitic undercurrents informing Canada’s wartime and post-war reluctance to accept Jewish refugees) and Franklin Bialystok’s *Delayed Impact* (about the immigration and assimilation of Holocaust survivors in Canada in the years and decades following the war). The film’s style is a “talking head” documentary, consisting primarily of reflections by war orphan survivors on their experiences during the war, and on coming to Canada. These individual histories work to personalize the history covered in *Delayed Impact*, as many of the interviewees emphasize the challenges that they faced while trying to assimilate into their new Canadian home. In addition, the film strives to situate these individual stories in relation to the context of Canada’s WWII-era immigration policy, thus simultaneously linking the film to *None is Too Many*, even though this work of historiography deals with Canadian history *prior* to the arrival of those survivors whose personal testimonies constitute the majority of the film. For this background, the film supplements the survivors’ recollections with an interview with Irving Abella himself, who offers details from his book that provide a more “objective” historical context for the subjective microhistories

offered by the war orphans, as well as with interviews with a small number of other historians/authors and former social workers who helped the children with the challenges of assimilation after their immigration to Canada.

Abella's role in the film is primarily to emphasize the extent and depth of wartime anti-Semitism in Canadian society that kept Jewish victims, refugees and survivors out of Canada before, during and immediately following WWII. He emphasizes that although the domestic Jewish community was applying pressure on the Canadian government to relax immigration restrictions, this community was "small, politically impotent, frightened [sic]," and while it wanted to lobby for this cause it was concerned that if it made too much of a public spectacle, individuals may risk being deported, as during this time the Jewish community was considered the "pariah of Canadian society." Such anti-Semitic sentiments at the popular level were especially prominent in Québec, as *Je me souviens* spells out quite clearly – sentiments that made the vote-savvy Prime Minister Mackenzie King wary of opening the nation's doors to such an unpopular ethnic group.

More importantly in terms of the film's focus on the War Orphans' Project, Abella stresses that while the Canadian Jewish Congress was finally successful in gaining admission for a small number of Jewish orphans, this did not mark an abrupt philo-Semitic shift away from the cultural anti-Semitism that, if not informed, at least corresponded with the government's "None is Too Many" policy. Abella emphasizes that anti-Semitism was so deeply ingrained that even once the heart-wrenching photographs of the liberated Nazi concentration camps were widely printed in the Canadian press, there was little sympathy for the plight of the Jewish refugees, and that anti-Semitism actually rose after the war. Moreover, the film suggests that the decision

to finally allow a small number of orphans into Canada was made only when France had announced that it would grant residency to some war orphans. Georges Vanier, the Canadian ambassador to France, expressed concern that Canada would suffer embarrassment if the country accepted *no* refugees, and appealed to Ottawa to loosen its immigration restrictions. But this shift in Canadian policy was largely platitudinous. Even once permission was granted for the war orphans' immigration to Canada, strict age limits on those who could apply under this initiative and exclusionary measures for questionable medical "problems" worked to constitute a bureaucracy that made the process of actually *getting* the refugee children to Canada extremely onerous. Alluding to the eventual contentious problem of Nazi war criminals hiding in Canada, Abella wryly notes that it was easier being a Nazi than a Jew in Canada during these first post-war years. All this to say that while the film opens with an optimistic voiceover that briefly summarizes that these young survivors of the Holocaust in Europe were able to immigrate to Canada after the war, recited over images of crashing waves (the proverbial "storm" that these children escaped), the film's first third undermines any attempt to view Canada's "welcoming" of these children as an act of national altruism. It makes clear that the "storm" did not simply dissipate upon their arrival on Canadian shores.

At this point it is important to emphasize that despite the film's careful articulation of the anti-Semitism and political history that informed the War Orphans' Project, this information is used to provide context and is not the film's primary object of focus. In fact, once the documentary's concern moves from the politics of Canada's immigration bureaucracy towards the experiences and perceptions of the survivors upon arrival in Canada, the emphasis on anti-Semitism – which, according to Abella's

interview was almost ubiquitous in Canada – falls by the wayside. Of over a dozen survivors who provide testimony for the film, only one, Suzanne Agasse, specifically refers to anti-Semitism that she experienced while working in Vancouver. Moreover, Agasse also indicates that in Europe she grew up Catholic, and was only adopted by a Jewish family upon her immigration to Canada. The main tendency that the war orphans' testimonies share is an emphasis on the emotional challenges that they faced trying to assimilate into a new culture while trying to contend with the devastating loss of their past lives in Europe. In this sense, the survivor interviews in *Children of the Storm* very much correspond to Bialystok's argument in *Delayed Impact* – the barrier between Canadian Holocaust survivors and their adoptive society stemmed as much, if not more so, from the internalized experience of the Holocaust carried within them as from discriminatory attitudes towards them.

Children begins with survivors verbally recalling some of their past experiences during the Holocaust. These recollections of course take place in the present where the survivors are well-dressed, safe, and generally healthy, but are juxtaposed with archival images of WWII and the camps – those past spaces from which the survivors escaped. Such juxtaposition immediately calls attention to the incongruity of “here” vs. “there” or “now” vs. “then”, visually positing the images of the Holocaust as “another world” (to paraphrase the French title of *Haven*), even as its ramifications are clearly evident in the words, emotions, and gestures of the survivors through their testimonies. In other words, although the legacy of the Holocaust is carried within those survivors addressing the camera, their past that is manifest in the archival footage is formally set apart from the space of their present.

The explicitness of this formal *division* between the interview footage – shot in Canada, presumably at the survivors’ homes – and the archival footage of wartime Europe is very different from how the past and the present are *blurred* in more well-known Holocaust documentaries like Alain Resnais’ *Night and Fog* or Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (France, 1985). In these two films, the relationship between the past and the present is one in which the two overlap as the legacy of the past is formally *connected* to the present. Joshua Hirsch usefully employs a psychoanalytic framework for considering the complexities of such temporal conflation that persists in many cinematic treatments of the Holocaust, referring to this tendency as “post-traumatic cinema,” thus linking the various ways in which films blur the boundaries between past and present with how an individual’s experiences of traumatic past events may contaminate and overlap with his/her psychological present. Hirsch sees *Night and Fog* as the first such example of a film that invokes a “post-traumatic” style through a number of formal strategies that call attention to an overlapping of the past and the present. For example, Resnais begins his film by panning across a seemingly harmless image of a field in 1955 before revealing a barbed wire fence that alludes to the past atrocities that once occurred on this present site. Moreover, the movement of a backward (right to left) tracking shot in this scene mimics the juxtaposition of past and present as the coloured shot of the contemporary concentration camp fence “tracks” back in time to a black and white scene from Leni Riefenstahl’s Nazi propaganda film *The Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*, Germany, 1935).⁵

Hirsch also points to *Shoah*, Claude Lanzmann’s seminal nine-and-a-half hour documentary, which focuses almost exclusively on the practicalities of how the Nazi

⁵ Joshua Hirsch, *Film, Trauma and the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004). 47-50.

regime was able to decimate Europe's Jewish population on such a massive scale, as an alternative mode of post-traumatic Holocaust documentary, in spite of Lanzmann's obstinate refusal to include actual archival footage of the past.⁶ As opposed to *Night and Fog*'s integration of past and present through a variety of formal techniques, and somewhat in common with Kuper's film, Hirsch sees Lanzmann's emphasis on interviews with survivors, bystanders and perpetrators in the present as "creating a cinematic time in which the present and the past are collapsed into one another. The past in the film exists not as a separate time frame literally imaged in black and white, but as a dimension that pervades the present like a fog."⁷

But despite the use of interviews that Kuper's film shares with Lanzmann's, the mixture of the past and present in *Shoah* extends beyond the interviews themselves. As Lanzmann appears on camera along with survivors, perpetrators and bystanders, the interviews often occur in the actual spaces of the past, like Treblinka, whose reconstructed memorials call attention to the void of what was *once there*, as opposed to the space of Canada where the historicity of the Holocaust *never was*. And as the next chapter will demonstrate, even in films like *Emotional Arithmetic* or *Fugitive Pieces* that do adopt a more explicitly "post-traumatic" formal stance to articulate the relationship between the past and the present, this conflation is localized entirely within the figure of the survivor him or herself, rather than being framed as a legacy that persists across the films' diegetic (or pro-filmic) spaces.

At the same time as *Children of the Storm* emphasizes the division between the survivors' Canadian presents and their Holocaust pasts, the film's testimonies continually

⁶ Ibid., 71-72.

⁷ Ibid., 72.

call attention to another division – that experienced wholly by the war orphans themselves as they discuss the isolation that they felt as survivors of an annihilation that in many cases destroyed their entire families, as well as when they became immersed in a new space (Canada) so far removed both spatially and experientially from what they had just lived through. It is via the repeated articulations of this emotional division felt by survivors in their Canadian lives that the film most explicitly addresses the barrier of experience.

Arriving in Canada, these orphans were of course already carrying with them a profound sense of isolation, as most of their families and homes had been devastated during the war and the Holocaust. When the film covers the liberation of the camps, the narrator emphasizes that many young people initially returned to the cities where they had come from only to find their homes in ruins and questions regarding their families' whereabouts unanswerable from city officials. Here the film juxtaposes archival images of ruined buildings with survivor testimonies that articulate just how alone these young survivors found themselves upon their liberation. One survivor (Michael Kutz) notes that of the 8000 Jews from his town, there were only 14 survivors. Similarly, Marta Collins recalls that only 900 of 10,000 Jews survived the Holocaust from her community. These moments are complemented by a sad, lamenting song that asks, "Where should I go?", leaving little doubt that even in their former hometowns, the comforting space of home no longer existed. The film's narrator suggests that these devastating discoveries, coupled with suspicions that any person on the street may have been complicit in the murder of their families, compelled many survivors to seek out displaced persons camps in the American zone of occupied Germany in hope of finding a place to start over in a

nation that would grant them entry.⁸ The desire of these child survivors to separate themselves from the destruction of their former lives is clearly articulated by Robbie Waisman, one such survivor whose story is also featured in the NFB documentary *The Boys of Buchenwald*, who emphasizes, “We wanted to distance ourselves from Europe. I think it was the pain that was all around us that we wanted to leave behind.”

Yet when the “children of the storm” arrived in Canada, a warm welcoming and comfortable immersion into a new home was far from a certainty. As evidence that the government’s agreement to admit these children was somewhat begrudging rather than altruistic, the film clarifies that the entry of these refugees was on the condition that the Canadian Jewish community was to assume full financial responsibility for their well-being (primarily via financial contributions given to and distributed by the CJC). As such, many Canadian Jewish families opened their doors for a child due in part to the promise of a weekly stipend. Moreover, the film repeatedly emphasizes, both by narration and survivor testimony, that the integration of these children into their new Canadian homes was complicated by the unique and tragic circumstances that brought them to Canada and had left an indelible mark on their personalities. On a surface level, many of the families that volunteered to take in these orphans assumed that they would be “children” – that is, very young children that would be able to be reared by the family to flourish. Of course, the *realpolitick* of post-Holocaust demographics proved these assumptions to be somewhat naïve since by far the majority of Jewish children who were

⁸ It must be noted that this desire to flee Europe did of course not apply to survivors monolithically. For instance, at the first International Graduate Students’ Conference for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University (Worcester, MA) in April 2009, there was a compelling paper delivered by Elizabeth Anthony called “Rückkehrer: Holocaust Survivors and Refugees’ Repatriation to Austria” which focused on survivors who had decided to return to their homes in Vienna after the war. But of course, my concern here is with how the Holocaust is treated by *Children of the Storm*, i.e., through the stories of survivors who decided to leave Europe behind.

too young to “prove” their worth by labour in the Nazi camps were quickly killed. As such, most of the “war orphans” were older teenagers rather than young children.

Because of this, according to the documentary, a number of potential families withdrew from the War Orphans’ Project, thus contributing to a further sense of isolation for the survivors.

Even once the orphans found homes in Canada, the experiences that they carried with them in many cases posed challenges to their integration into their adoptive families. The weight of these experiences is stressed in the film’s opening moments as the narrator states, “Many of the children about to come ashore had witnessed these unspeakable events with their own eyes.” The potential for a barrier between the orphans and their adoptive families is also discussed by Dr. Robert Krell, a psychiatrist who is himself a child survivor (see Introduction Note 67) and who is acquainted with a number of others (the film does not specify whether he is the psychiatrist for any of the interviewees, but he does indicate that he counts a number of survivors as close friends). “They weren’t getting a 15-year old child,” reflects Krell about the Canadian families,

[T]hey were getting a 15-year old child who had seen more of life and death than any adult in existence in the world to that time. These were kids who had to grow up over night, who had to take responsibility for their survival, often for siblings. So these children who assumed an aura of adulthood in order to survive were suddenly thrown into a family where they had to take orders, even benevolent orders for their good, their own good, they could not understand that they had to obey as if they were children again. So the transition from that one world to this one was enormous.

From the orphans’ perspectives, this sense of a barrier was even stronger. Kitty Salzberg recalls that her adoptive mother was jealous of having a young woman in her and her husband’s home, and perceived the woman’s resentment. A number of the

survivors indicate that they did not have a good experience initially with their families as they were treated as interlopers, especially by other children in the family, while simultaneously struggling with the “culture shock” of a new nation, new traditions, new weather, new food, etc. Sigmund Soudack admits that he perpetually saw himself as an “outsider,” while Agasse painfully spells out the emotional isolation derived from losing one’s entire past only to move into a social dynamic where “no one wanted me, no one loved me.”

As Bialystok discusses at great length in *Delayed Impact*, this sense of a barrier surrounding survivors often extended beyond their immediate adoptive families to the domestic Jewish community at large⁹ - the community that had assumed financial responsibility for these orphans, and into which one might imagine they would most logically be able to assimilate. A number of the interviewees suggest that the CJC had promised them the opportunity to pursue their education, and this promise was by and large either not delivered at all, or delivered only after repeated requests. One survivor recalls with bitterness the sense that after being promised wonderful opportunities by the CJC, there was a sense of abandonment upon his arrival. “Things got better,” he recalls, “but no thanks to having been brought *here*.”¹⁰

Perhaps surprisingly, this sense of isolation is articulated, somewhat, in a positive light by some of the war orphans. Sally Zimmerman suggests that this isolation made it

⁹ For Bialystok’s book, this barrier between survivors and the Canadian Jewish community is one of the defining qualities of the Holocaust’s intellectual history in Canada. As such, it would be redundant here to cite every time he addresses instances of tension between these two groups. It is prudent though to specify that by “domestic Jewish community” Bialystok is referring primarily to Jewish *organizations* such as the Canadian Jewish Congress and B’nai Brith that seek to be voices on behalf of the Canadian Jewish community (Bialystok, 4).

¹⁰ I have added this emphasis to clarify that he seems to be referring specifically to Canada and the process by which he came here. He is not suggesting that he wishes he had stayed in Europe, but that things would have probably gotten better wherever he would have gone.

quite clear that success depended wholly on individual initiative to achieve independence: “[W]e didn’t have anybody to help us out, as far as...parents who could help us out moneywise, or give us advice. So we did it ourselves.” Repeatedly (although not without exception), the testimonies that comprise *Children of the Storm* tend to emphasize that the desire to “forget” or “escape” the past manifested itself in attempts to establish “normal” lives in Canada through independent professional success that would transcend and hide the dire circumstances by which the orphans came to Canada. For instance, Michael Kutz emphasizes that even when his adoptive family offered to buy him clothing or other items, he wanted to establish his independence by purchasing them himself. As alluded to above, of the few moments where the survivors actually do indicate overt resentment that either their adoptive families or the CJC were not generous enough, it is primarily related to their desire to pursue higher education that they could not afford on their own. In this vein, Achilles Byck lightheartedly reminisces that he demanded funding from the CJC to return to school when he realized that the “millions” were not simply waiting for him in Canada. While discussing one survivor who achieved great success as a track star in Vancouver just a few years after his arrival, Dr. Krell also links this desire for success/normality with the desire for anonymity in terms of their past experiences: “Who would think that you are an immigrant who has been persecuted when you run faster than anyone in the city?...You cannot imagine the determination of these kids to achieve, to be recognized and to be so normal that they spoke the language better, played the sports better, did the theatre better, made more money than anybody. They were driven.”

If a common desire amongst many of these survivors was, in the words of Waisman, to “escape” Europe, then the untouched (by the Holocaust) space of Canada was ideal. Mariette Rozen Doduck recalls a certain sense of relief that no one could tell she was a survivor, while a number of other interviewees indicate that their primary desire, at least initially upon their arrival in Canada, was to leave their past behind and not talk about it, and that Canadians by and large were uninterested in pressing them for their stories – a tacit arrangement that would ultimately encourage the conception of the Holocaust and Canada as constituting two discrete entities. Suzanne Agasse – who is probably the most overtly somber of the interviewees – offers a more candid perspective on this desire to purge one’s past by framing it overtly as a coping mechanism: “I try keeping myself busy. I try to keep the ghosts away, because they’re always there.”

Following Agasse, despite these desires to be a “normal Canadian” and escape the memories of the tragic past in Europe, the testimonies in the film evoke a contradictory tension between a desire to forget the horrific events that constitute the past of these survivors – made all the more possible by being in a space where most of those that surround you did not experience it – and the indelible mark left by it. This tension is especially evident in testimonies that articulate a *present* desire to forget the past (as opposed to the desire to “escape” the past that Waisman frames as one that he had while still in Europe) while appearing in a documentary whose focus is that past specifically.¹¹ Marta Collins admits that she is “quite willing to forget the past,” while Brian Gluck indicates that his 70th birthday is approaching, and he feels the time is coming to live a life “away from all that.”

¹¹ Although *Children of the Storm* uses most of the interviews to illuminate experiences *after* the children came to Canada, there is little doubt that these experiences are intimately bound to those events during the Holocaust that informed their emigration from Europe.

This tension is evoked in a more formally commentative fashion by placing Harry Greenhut's assertion that "[B]y the same token you can't dwell on it. I mean, it's a new world, a new life, new everything," almost in response to Waisman's immediately prior contemplation, "A smell, a song, you're driving your car and you stop at an intersection and there's a train going by at a railroad crossing. It brings back memories. You can't run away from it." Waisman also reveals this tension within his own perspective as he states that for decades he was quite willing to keep the past to himself as his own "private agony," not sharing it with anyone until the Keegstra affair¹² in Alberta compelled him to return to his experiences for the purpose of educating high school students about the Holocaust. Such contradictory sentiments serve as a reminder that while these survivors shared many experiences, their perceptions are not monolithic – an important distinction that the film emphasizes early on by almost playfully by cutting between one survivor that was surprised that Canada was so hot upon arrival and another that was surprised it was so cold.¹³

On a surface level, the film's conclusion is optimistic. In stark contrast to the image of the Canadian immigration system painted by Abella in the film's first third, survivor Regina Feldman's final sentiment for the camera is one of emotional gratitude, stating that she thinks it is important that she "thank the Canadian government" for granting her entry. Another survivor indicates that Canada gives the opportunity to make a wonderful living. Karl Lansberger states that he feels fortunate he was able to bring up

¹² James Keegstra was a high school teacher in Alberta who in the 1970s and early 1980s taught his students that the Holocaust was a fabrication, coupled with other anti-Semitic myths. He was eventually stripped of his teaching post as well as brought to trial for "willfully promoting hatred against the Jews," for which he was found guilty and fined \$5000. See David Bercuson and Douglas Wertheimer, *A Trust Betrayed: The Keegstra Affair* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1985), ix-x, 187.

¹³ As the War Orphans' Project ran from 1947 to 1949, there are of course logical reasons for a discrepancy like this. But the film's juxtaposition of these different perceptions calls attention to the individuality of the survivors that constituted the "children of the storm" as a group.

his family, and proudly mentions that his daughter is the number one dentist in Vancouver. Even Suzanne Agasse ends with the bittersweet assertion that when she sees her grandchildren, she remembers that Hitler did not win. Lastly, as discussed earlier, in one of Dr. Krell's final comments he emphasizes that these survivors "know how to cry in silence, away from their families and away from their work," and lauds their resilience and ability to "compartmentalize their suffering" in a way that "no one can tell." During these moments, the visuals cut to a still-photo of a crowd at what appears to be a Canada Day celebration (in the centre of the frame a young person is holding up one of the small paper Canadian flags that are prominent at such occasions), thus visually suggesting that the process of assimilation in Canada, and escape from Europe that so many of the interviewees verbalized, has been successful.

Yet these largely positive final reflections carry with them the continual weight of the Holocaust that the survivors have been unable to wholly relegate to the realm of abstract memory, and thus evoke the persistence of the barrier of experience. Byck cautions against his story being read as a tragic tale that ultimately ends in success most succinctly: "I must hesitate. I did very well financially. I brought up a family, I have three children. I'm well-married. But I still cannot get Europe out of me." Similarly, in spite of his stated desire to "escape Europe," Waisman stresses in his final comments that "It was a long process for me to be able to live in Canada as a Jew without any hang-ups, because I brought the luggage with me, and I had it with me all along. I might not have consciously thought about it, but it was there."

In these moments Waisman also offers a very clear sense of the barrier of experience that surrounds him and posits a cognitive division between him and his wife.

After referring to the “luggage” of his Holocaust experience, Waisman recalls his daughter preparing for “Show & Tell” at her school, for which she wanted to bring in some materials to talk about the Jewish High Holidays. Her father was horrified at this, and felt certain she would be inviting trouble from her classmates if she so boldly displayed her heritage:

I was very concerned about the safety of my daughter. I said, “My God, they’re all going to find out that you’re Jewish! What’s going to happen?” So, I didn’t want her to do this. And of course, my wife who was born here and didn’t have these kind of hang-ups says, “It’s okay Robbie, don’t worry.” And I wanted to stay home and go to school with her, and I was so anxious. And I was waiting for her to get back, and she says, “Oh, I was a hit. It was just absolutely wonderful. The kids just loved what I had to say.”

Waisman’s recollection of this quarrel between he and his wife about his daughter’s “Show & Tell” presentation embodies the common legacy evoked by the *Children of the Storm*’s diverse collection of survivors. In the context of the film, the past - the experience of the Holocaust in Europe – is localized within the figures of the survivors themselves, and is absent outside of them (like in the figure of Waisman’s wife). They can be considered loci of an experience that is wholly absent from their surroundings. This experience carries with it a sense of isolation that is always there - even if it is, in the words of Waisman, out of the realm of consciousness, and even if in terms of family, friends, and professional achievements, their integration into Canadian society has succeeded in some ways of transcending the past. If there is a specter of the Holocaust in this film, it is one that haunts only those that have experienced it, rather than the nebulous spaces that surround them – the chillingly quiet camp settings of Treblinka in *Shoah* or the “voids” of Berlin.¹⁴

¹⁴ See Introduction Note 41.

“Canadian Apathy” Towards War Criminals in *Two Men*

The barrier between a Holocaust survivor and those individuals that surround him in Canada is narrativized in the CBC drama *Two Men*, and is shared with the later theatrically released films *Emotional Arithmetic* and *Fugitive Pieces* which are discussed in Chapter Three. Yet only the former film situates this barrier in a sociopolitical context explicitly relevant to Canada. In this sense *Two Men* shares a certain specificity with *Children of the Storm*, yet takes it one step further in its overt engagement with the issue of war criminals hiding in Canada that was of particular relevance to the film’s contemporary social context, rather than a critical examination of the past as in *Children*, or even *Charlie Grant’s War* or *La vie d’un héros*. The protagonist of *Two Men* is Alex Koves, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor living in Canada, around whom is an emotional barrier derived from his experiences during the war that informs his relationship with his family and others in Canada (not unlike the survivors interviewed in *Children of the Storm*). Set decades after WWII, the barrier of experience that *Two Men* intimates is not rooted in the practical challenges of immigration or assimilation, but in an increasing sense that those around Alex simply are unable to understand how his past informs his present. As was the case with *Children of the Storm*, as well as the majority of the rest of the films that comprise this dissertation, physical reminders of Alex’s “survivor-ness” are largely invisible. His Toronto house is modest yet comfortable – the fruits of his career as the proprietor of a clock/watch repair shop. The film’s opening also reveals that he has raised a successful family in Canada, as he and his wife Margaret (Martha Gibson) are on the way to a birthday party for him. Yet during this drive, when Margaret lovingly refers to Alex as “birthday boy,” her comment pulls his attention reluctantly away from a

daydream of his past (a family picnic), thus positing his family as almost an “obstacle” to his memories. Alex’s demeanor is quickly contrasted with the putative joy of a family celebration as he remarks that he “hates birthdays.”

This first introduction to Alex’s relationship with his wife is important for a number of reasons. Most obviously it establishes his character as one that is brooding, reluctant to be light-hearted. More importantly though, it indicates that this quality is an inherent part of his character even prior to the discovery that constitutes the dramatic crux of the film – that Mikal Barna (Jan Rubes), a former friend who betrayed his family to the Nazis, is currently living in Toronto. The film also alludes to a barrier between Alex and his family that pre-dates this discovery via the abandonment of his Jewish faith that is a source of contention between him and his elderly Aunt Rose (Lila Kedrova), a surrogate mother-figure who adopted him as a teenager after he survived the war. Prior to the film’s quasi-cathartic conclusion in which Alex putatively re-embraces his heritage, which is discussed the next chapter, the only time that Alex evokes Judaism as a reason for his decision to go public with the information regarding Barna’s past is when his daughter Heather (Patrusha Sarakula) confronts him to ask what she is supposed to tell her son when he sees his grandfather airing his grievances on television. To this Alex replies, “Jewishness is not a hereditary disease” that must be hidden. When Heather rebuffs him, Alex wryly chides her by sarcastically saying, “Some of your best friends are Jewish too, huh?” This confrontation also serves to emphasize the long duration of the emotional distance between Alex and his family as Heather suggests that her resentment towards his obsession with Barna is rooted less in his concerted efforts to bring about justice than because of her perception that he “shows more feelings to the

dead” than to her and the rest of his family. Moreover, Heather claims that she only ever “wanted a tiny part of you,” but nothing seemed to matter to him.

Again, this very overt sense of a disjuncture between a Holocaust survivor and his/her family as a source of narrative tension is a quality that *Two Men* shares with both *Emotional Arithmetic* and *Fugitive Pieces*. But where Pinsent’s film differs is that these troubled relationships are almost secondary, providing a dramatic backdrop for the film’s primary narrative motivation – Alex’s pursuit to have Barna brought to justice for sending his family to their deaths. And it is through this fixation that *Two Men*’s Canadian setting becomes an essential component of the film’s construction of Alex’s sense of isolation, as his obsession is continually met by what Hugh Fraser refers to in a *Gazette* article on *Two Men* as “Canadian apathy.”¹⁵

Alex’s discovery that the man responsible for the murder of his family is currently living in the same city as him comes about entirely by accident, and shatters the relative peace of the life that he had built in Canada. During the aforementioned birthday party sequence, the film cross-cuts between Alex’s celebration and a beauty pageant, where an unidentified older man, presumably a pageant judge, claps, playfully flirts with the contestants, and kisses them as he jokes that even the “losers” deserve to be congratulated. Plenty of cameras are flashing to capture these moments and the older man clearly enjoys mugging for them. The flashing lights, light-hearted nature, and sounds of laughter of these moments are in stark contrast to the relatively reserved dancing at the birthday party, which Alex watches disinterestedly as the soundtrack is filled with mournful violins.

¹⁵ Hugh Fraser, “CBC drama *Two Men* is a timely story,” *The Gazette*, November 19, 1988, T54.

After arriving home from his birthday, Alex cajoles Margaret to watch a VCR recording that he had taken that night of a newscast during which a commercial for his business was to air. While waiting for his ad to come on, the news features a story on the beauty pageant, with the old man at the front and centre of the coverage. As Alex watches, it looks as though he has seen a ghost as he recognizes Barna from Hungary. He rewinds the piece while his wife is confused by his reaction. "It's him," Alex states. "He killed my family."

Margaret is stunned almost more by the fact that Alex has revealed *something* about his past than that which is revealed specifically. After Alex asks aloud, "What am I going to do?" Margaret immediately establishes an inability to offer her assistance by reminding him, "You never told me what happened." Although Alex tries to justify his reluctance to reveal the details of his wartime experiences to his wife by explaining that it "seemed right" to leave it unsaid, as he believed Barna to be dead, Margaret's assertion that he never shared his past with her - which is later echoed back to Margaret by Rose, to whom Alex also never confided about his past - manifests the "compartmentalization" of suffering that Dr. Krell refers to as a positive coping strategy in *Children of the Storm*. This compartmentalization is also central to the "barrier of experience" that is the focus of this chapter, and underlies *Two Men's* narrative trajectory in which Alex is repeatedly forced to pursue Barna on his own, as those who surround him are continually unable or unwilling to offer him assistance.

This diffusion of "Canadian apathy" to Alex's surroundings well beyond his immediate family is one of the ways in which *Two Men* evokes a greater sense of social commentary than *Emotional Arithmetic* and *Fugitive Pieces*, whose psychoanalytic

treatments of Canadian Holocaust survivors focus more concertedly on the individual ramifications of the Holocaust experience, and on the weight that it impresses on their familial microcosm. Of course, *Two Men* does include examples of such familial tension in the emotional dissonance between Alex and Margaret, Aunt Rose, and Heather. But this is only *one* manifestation of the experiential barrier that surrounds Alex. *Two Men* emphasizes very quickly that this barrier extends to the macrocosm of Canadian society.

The first inclination of the broader social manifestation of Canadian apathy occurs shortly after Alex and Margaret see Barna on television. The day after the broadcast, Alex goes to a Toronto police station (giving his address explicitly as 97 Bloor St., naming a relatively well-known Toronto street, which gives the film an overt sense of situated-ness) to report a “murder suspect.” Like Margaret, whose inability to fully appreciate her husband’s obsession with Barna stems more from inexperience than callous indifference, the police sergeant (Les Carlson) to whom Alex speaks initially responds with a sense of helplessness rather than malice. After being told about Alex’s murder suspect, the sergeant asks him for the pertinent details – where, when, etc. – of the crime, to which Alex replies that it occurred on “June 3, 1944” in Budapest, Hungary. At this point, the sergeant rises from his seat, visibly exasperated and tells Alex that this was “more than forty years ago” and that there “weren’t any witnesses.” At this moment, the film suggests that Alex’s plight is one that will be carried by him alone as he replies, “Just me.” He then proceeds to explain to the increasingly impatient officer that Barna betrayed his family, and had become a member of the Hungarian Arrow Cross, a Fascist group that was “worse than the Nazis.” He indicates that Barna did not actually murder his family, but “betrayed us.” The officer is sympathetic to this story, but explains that

the police have to work within the confines of the law, and that no actual crime was committed by Barna. Foreshadowing the film's conclusion in which Alex eventually tries to take the law into his own hands, he asks, "What do you expect me to do?" "Nothing," replies the officer, thus marking the first time in the film that the survivor is implicitly told that his pursuit is hopeless, and that he should try to move on – an assertion that blatantly displays both credulity towards and a corresponding inability to empathize with the experience that compels Alex to push for justice.

Alex receives an even less cordial response when he tries to appeal to a local Member of Parliament, Dave Novak (Chuck Shamata), a stereotypical portrait of a smarmy politician whose disinterest in his constituent is quickly established as he calls Alex "Albert." Confronted as he is in a rush to get to the airport, Novak invites Alex into his limousine, where the survivor makes an emotional appeal for assistance and explains how he came to Canada in 1947 after the war and "started life over again." Like a seasoned politician, Novak grasps the symbolic possibilities of this revelation, stating that he has "tremendous admiration" for Alex, and assuring him that "Any ceremony I can take a part in, count me in." Yet in terms of practical action, Alex is once again left wanting as the MP is anxious to keep his hands free of any potential controversy. He demonstrates an egregious sense of pomposity as he spouts platitudes to the desperate Holocaust survivor, claiming that when these actions took place, Barna was "only a child" and that "dredging up the past" at this point would only cause "unnecessary pain." More importantly from Novak's perspective is the fact that for his work in the community, Barna has been awarded the Multicultural Citizen of the Year award – a further indignity to Alex – and is a well-respected citizen. Appealing to the abstract ideal

of Canada's multicultural mosaic where different ethnicities are able to live together in harmony, the MP condescendingly tells Alex, "We're all Canadians now." As Srivnas Krishna would later explore more fully via a similar multicultural-idealist politician in *Masala*, this scene paints Canadian multiculturalism as an abstract ideal or useful (i.e. vote-getting) political ideology that has troubling limitations in the *realpolitick* of Canada.

The last Canadian "institution" where Alex's quest for justice is rebuffed is at the offices of the "Jewish League," where a representative tells him that Barna is a small player in the game of Nazi war criminals, and the League is primarily interested in pursuing the "big players." I have already alluded to the barrier between Holocaust survivors and the domestic Jewish community in relation to both Bialystok's book and *Children of the Storm*, and will return to this issue relative to *Two Men* in the following chapter. But at this point it is important to consider the film's deliberate construction of Alex's pursuit of Barna in relation to the film's contemporary social context.

Two Men was broadcast in November 1988, well after the 1948 Nuremberg trials, as well as the globally publicized capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann in the late 1950s and early 1960s which established the possibility that criminals who had evaded capture through emigration may eventually be brought to justice. Despite this duration, in the case of Canada, the active and concerted pursuit and trial of Nazi war criminals was coalescing in the social background in the years surrounding *Two Men*. In "Canada and the Perpetrators of the Holocaust: The Case of *Regina v. Finta*," Randolph L. Braham observes that the first actual trial of a war criminal occurred between October 1989 and May 1990, and "involved Imre Finta, a Hungarian gendarmerie captain who was charged,

among other things, with the confinement, imprisonment, and robbery of 8,617 Jews concentrated in the brickyard ghetto of Szeged, one of the largest provincial cities of Hungary, in 1944.”¹⁶ Of course, this trial itself must be seen as a certain culmination of a process that transcends Finta himself, rather than an isolated event in its own right. As such, a brief examination of this process is useful to provide a context for *Two Men*, its consideration of the topic of war criminals in Canada, and its respectively sensitive and critical portrayals of a man seeking retribution on such a criminal and those Canadian individuals and institutions unwilling to help him.

Although legislation passed in 1949 prohibited immigration to Canada for “past members of the Nazi party, the SS, the Waffen SS, and the Wehrmacht, and their collaborators,” these restrictions were short-lived, and even while they were still on the books, they suffered from vagaries (the definition of a “collaborator” – a term which would seem to clearly describe Barna’s betrayal of Alex’s family to the Nazis – was never clarified), and were “only half-heartedly enforced.”¹⁷ According to Bialystok, this lack of interest in prosecuting Nazis was due to the new totalitarian menace: “For the Allies the most pressing concern was the Cold War. They had no use for further [after Nuremberg] war crimes trials.”¹⁸

While the first Nazi war criminal trial to take place on Canadian soil would not be until the Finta case, this should not be taken as any indication that the problem of such criminals hiding in Canada only emerged around then. As early as 1965, in Donald Brittain and John Spotton’s NFB documentary *Memorandum*, there is an interview with

¹⁶ Randolph L. Braham, “Canada and the Perpetrators of the Holocaust: The Case of *Regina v. Finta*,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 9.3 (Winter 1995): 293.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 296.

¹⁸ Bialystok, 223.

Simon Wiesenthal in which the famed Nazi-hunter tells the filmmakers that there are former Nazis hiding in Canada. While the filmmakers' inquiry as to whether they can do anything to help comes across well-meaning yet innocently naïve, this moment clearly states that the knowledge of Nazis in Canada had emerged not much later than the trial of Eichmann, even if domestic efforts on this front were delayed.¹⁹

Corresponding to *Memorandum's* explicit acknowledgment of war criminals in Canada, *Delayed Impact* suggests that the 1960s marked the emergence of concerted attention being paid to this question, especially by increasingly coalescing and organized groups of survivors domestically. One reason for this attention, Bialystok suggests, was a proposal by West Germany to impose a 20-year statute of limitations on prosecutions for Nazi war criminals (which would expire in 1965). The outcry against this proposal was of course not confined to Canada, and the international pressure (in addition to some domestic opposition to the issue) eventually made the West German government push the statute of limitations to 1969, and then 1979, when it was finally lifted altogether. And as is suggested by the 1982 extradition from Canada of Albert Helmut Rauca to the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany),²⁰ and the recent trial and conviction in Munich of

¹⁹ The NFB would again tackle the topic of former Nazis living in Canada under an assumed identity in 2006 with *Once a Nazi* (Frederic Bohbot), albeit with a somewhat different perspective. *Once a Nazi* focuses on Concordia professor Adalbert Lallier, who had kept his membership in the Waffen SS secret for five decades. He decided to make his past public when he discovered his testimony could help convict his former commanding officer. While the film does not take an overt moral position *against* Lallier, neither does it offer a sense of redemption or closure due to Lallier's decision to testify. The ambivalence of the film's focus on Lallier's confession (rather than on the conviction of his commanding officer) starkly contrasts with the critical interrogation of the prosecution of war criminals in *Memorandum* or the moral culpability of *failed* prosecution of war criminals in *Two Men*.

²⁰ This was prior to an amendment to the Criminal Code that allowed domestic prosecution for war criminals in Canada (see Note 40 below). Rauca was a former staff sergeant in the Nazi SS and the first Canadian citizen to be arrested for war crimes, at the request for extradition by West Germany. See David Lancashire, "Canada Powerless? The lax hunt for war criminals," *The Globe and Mail*, July 21, 1983, 7.

former SS guard John Demjanjuk, who was extradited from the United States in 1983,²¹ the possibilities for Nazi war criminals facing trial in Germany were and are still open. However, because the 1965 statute-of-limitations proposal by West Germany also corresponded to a spate of anti-Semitic incidents across Canada during the late 1950s and early 1960s that I will return to shortly, it seemed possible at the time that the Holocaust, and the lessons supposedly learned from it, would be quickly forgotten. Like the fear of domestic anti-Semitism that Waisman alludes to when discussing the horror he felt for his daughter when she wanted to discuss the Jewish high holidays at her show-and-tell, the initial concerns expressed over the possibility of former Nazis taking up residency in Canada under assumed names came largely from associations comprised of Holocaust survivors, which at the time were distinct from associations representing the Canadian Jewish community at large. And like the resistance faced by Alex in *Two Men*, most of the responses these groups of survivors received took the perspective that there was little to be done about these crimes committed in a distant place and time.

While by 1988, the political environment in Canada was such that neither a local police force, a mainstream politician, or especially an advocacy group like the “Jewish League” (clearly a fictionalized version of a Jewish advocacy committee like the CJC) would have been so blatantly dismissive of Alex’s concerns about a potential Nazi war criminal hiding in Canada, the reactions in the film manifest the slow and very delayed path that active pursuit and prosecution of such criminals took in Canada. In *Delayed*

²¹ See Lynda Hurst, “Last chance for Holocaust justice?; The trial of an aging former Nazi guard is delayed due to failing health. Is it time to call off the hunt?” *Toronto Star*, December 6, 2009, A7. It should be noted that although Demjanjuk was convicted and given a five-year sentence, he was “immediately released...pending an appeal against his conviction.” See Benjamain Weinthal, “John Demjanjuk convicted then freed by German Court,” *The Jerusalem Post*, May 13, 2011, <http://www.jpost.com/International/Article.aspx?id=220353> (accessed June 9, 2011).

Impact, Bialystok notes that the CJC was silently lobbying the federal government from the late 1940s to early 1960s “to investigate certain individuals whose names they had received via survivors’ affidavits and from Simon Wiesenthal, who supplied evidence against suspects from his office in Vienna”²² and who intimated such knowledge in *Memorandum*. But in spite of these efforts on the part of the CJC, many survivors were becoming agitated by what they perceived as the organization’s “passive” approach to governmental lobbying.²³ This agitation only increased in the wake of a series of anti-Semitic incidents that occurred across Canada in the late 1950s and early 1960s (such as the defacement of synagogues in Toronto, Sudbury, Kingston, Kitchener, Cornwall and Galt).²⁴ A timid release by the Canadian Jewish Congress in response to these attacks “maintained the organization’s long-held principles that racial hatred should be dealt with by the political and law-enforcement authorities, and that while public pronouncements [of anti-Semitism in Canada] must be condemned, they did not present a menace to society.”²⁵ Some Holocaust survivors, who were terrified that a similar wave of anti-Jewish sentiments would engulf their new home as it had their old, perceived this stance as grossly inadequate. To counter this passivity, survivors began to form their own advocacy groups, including the Association of Former Concentration Camp Inmates/Survivors of Nazi Oppression, which was founded in 1960 and born “out the survivors’ frustration with Congress.”²⁶ This particular Association actually gained enough notoriety to have Prime Minister Lester Pearson accept an invitation to speak on Parliament Hill at a 1965 ceremony commemorating the liberation of the Warsaw Ghetto

²² Bialystok, 223.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Bialystok, 98-99.

²⁵ Ibid., 103.

²⁶ Ibid., 103-104.

– a speech that marked the first overt reference to the Judeo-specificity of the Holocaust by a Canadian Prime Minister.²⁷ The tension between survivors and the domestic Jewish community regarding the latter's responses to anti-Semitism Canada in the late 1950s and early 1960s and would culminate in a protest riot in May 1965 at Allan Gardens in Toronto, where John Beattie, leader of the incipient and tiny Canadian Nazi Party was to give a speech after receiving a permit from the commissioner of Parks and Recreation.²⁸

Concurrent with survivors' perceptions that the CJC's actions in regard to the pursuit of war criminals were inadequate, the Canadian government was largely unresponsive to their calls for inquiry. The reasons for this domestic reluctance are of course varied, but one reason that Bialystok offers is that Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau was wary about fomenting animosity in Eastern European immigrant communities in Canada. Regardless, from the perspectives of both the CJC and survivors, the government was merely paying lip service to the problem of disguised war criminals in Canada while refusing to take any concrete action. These delays had extremely practical consequences in precluding the possibility for prosecution and possible conviction. For instance, Bialystok gives the example of Antanas Kenstavicius, a Lithuanian police chief who "is alleged to have participated in the murder of 5,500 Jews while collaborating with the SS." Kenstavicius was able to take up residency in Canada after securing a visa in May 1948. As early as June 1949, the Canadian Jewish Congress received affidavits from survivors who "swore that Kenstavicius had carried out the actions against the Jews

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 95-96. The increasing influence of survivors in the domestic Jewish community, and a corresponding increasingly active stance towards anti-Semitism by the community, is also evident in the gradual encouragement of hate-propaganda legislation that organizations like the CJC would adopt from the late 1960s onwards. This of course stands in stark contrast to the community's passive response to the aforementioned anti-Semitic occurrences in the late 1950s and early 1960s. See *Ibid.*, 165-168.

²⁸ For an excellent consideration of this riot and its aftermath, see *Ibid.*, 129-141.

with zeal.” This file was passed to the RCMP, yet charges were only laid in 1996. “While waiting for a hearing by an immigration tribunal,” Bialystok writes, “Kenstavicius died at the age of ninety.”²⁹ In short, while survivors were not the *only* voices advocating action against “hate speech” and the issue of war criminals in Canada, during the first decades after WWII, they were largely on their own in their calls for actual pursuit and legislative changes. This isolation is what is manifest in the lonely quest of Alex in *Two Men*.

This widespread reluctance (outside of survivor associations and other specifically anti-Nazi groups)³⁰ towards domestic pursuit and prosecution of former Nazis only began to change in the early-to-mid-1980s. This shift needs to be understood in the context of a number of interrelated factors. First, by this time the Holocaust was understood as a distinct historical event in its own right, and had widely entered the collective consciousness of Canada, as opposed to how the systematic extermination of Europe’s Jews was perceived in the immediate post-war years as one “terrible feature of the period that had ended with the defeat of Nazi Germany [that had yet to attain] transcendent status as the bearer of eternal truths or lessons that could be derived from contemplating it.”³¹ The diffusion of the Holocaust *as* the Holocaust into popular consciousness was due in large part to the broadcast of the NBC miniseries *Holocaust* and its almost global reception, but assumed a particularly Canadian relevance in 1982 with the publication of *None is Too Many*, whose critical success and damning portrayal of Canada’s wartime anti-Semitism led to a domestic questioning of the “Canadian myth

²⁹ Bialystok, 222.

³⁰ Braham, 297.

³¹ Novick, 110.

of tolerance and acceptance.”³² The “hate speech” trials of Ernst Zundel and James Keegstra a few years later also played an important role in ensuring attention was paid to the Holocaust in Canadian media, as did increasing publicity of the story of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who disappeared under a veil of Soviet secrecy after the war after having prevented the deportation and extermination of approximately 100,000 Hungarian Jews. In 1980 the CJC passed a resolution calling for an inquiry into the Wallenberg case, while articles in Canadian newspapers generated increased publicity about this heroic figure. In 1982 a Canadian documentary by David Harel called *Raoul Wallenberg: Buried Alive* was telecast.³³ This film primarily focuses on both the diplomatic and underground efforts by Wallenberg to achieve safe haven for Hungarian Jews, but also considers contemporary initiatives that were striving to learn the truth of his disappearance, and have him recognized as a “war hero [that] never wore a uniform or fired a gun.”

In relation to the question of war criminals in Canada specifically, by the 1980s, the Canadian Jewish Congress had moved away from the passive encouragement of government action that had so incensed survivors’ associations in the previous decades, and began more overt efforts to encourage prosecution. The aforementioned extradition of Helmut Rauca in 1982, and the well-publicized 1983 extradition of Klaus Barbie (the “Butcher of Lyon”),³⁴ further set the stage for the increasing public awareness of Nazi

³² Bialystok, 179-180.

³³ For more information about Canadian interest in the Wallenberg case, see *Ibid.*, 186-188.

³⁴ Barbie was a former Gestapo officer, whose nickname (the “Butcher of Lyon”) was derived from both his brutality and from the French city where he served from 1942 to 1944. In 1983 he was extradited to France from Bolivia where he had been living under an assumed name since 1951, and where he was arrested in 1972. His case achieved even greater publicity than it may have since the United States revealed that they had aided Barbie in successfully evading capture after the war. In 1987, he was sentenced to life in prison, where he died in 1991. For a brief summary of these events/proceedings, see “Bolivian Arrest,” *Washington Post*, February 5, 1972, A10; Jonathan C. Randall, “France Seeking

war criminals hiding in Canada, which in turn put pressure on the Canadian government to take action on this issue.

After a January 1985 article in the *New York Times* claimed the sadistic Dr. Josef Mengele had applied for admission to Canada from Buenos Aires in 1962, Liberal Member of Parliament Robert Kaplan raised the issue of war criminals in Canada explicitly in the Canadian House of Commons. On Feb. 7, 1985, Parliament announced that a Commission of Inquiry (named the Deschenes Commission after Mr. Jules Deschenes, a Justice of the court of Appeal of Quebec who would be its head) would be formed “to investigate the charge that a considerable number of Nazi war criminals had gained admittance to Canada by illegal or fraudulent means.” The report was presented in Parliament in March 1987, and although it suggested that the public estimates of the number of war criminals residing in Canada were exaggerated, it determined there was sufficient “*prima facie* evidence” to pursue legal action on 20 cases.³⁵ On June 23, 1987, an amendment to the Criminal Code allowed prosecution in Canada for “war crimes” or “crimes against humanity” that were committed outside of Canada, if the accused was “a citizen of, or is employed in a civilian or military capacity to, by a state that is engaged in an armed conflict against Canada.”³⁶ It is important to note that prior to this amendment, Canada was largely legislatively impotent as the only way that a war criminal residing in

Extradition of Nazi,” *Washington Post*, February 10, 1972, A22; “U.S. apologizes to France for aiding Barbie’s escape,” *The Globe and Mail*, August 17, 1983, 2; and Erna Paris, “Gestapo Prince: The butcher is dead. Klaus Barbie, who died on Wednesday, was emblematic of a time France would rather forget,” *Globe and Mail*, September 28, 1991, D4.

³⁵ Braham, 297.

³⁶ *Martin’s Annual Criminal Code. 1988 First Supplement* (Aurora, Ontario: Canada Law Book, Inc., 1988), 3-4. Quoted in Braham, 298.

Canada could be captured and tried was “for another country to request his extradition, as Germany [had] asked for Harold Rauca.”³⁷

Canada’s first indictment against a suspected Nazi war criminal was filed on August 18, 1988 against Imre Finta. Even though the actual prosecution did not begin until October 1989, behind *Two Men*’s broadcast in November of 1988 lurked the long-delayed possibility that Nazi war criminals that had been living in Canada under assumed identities might be brought to justice on Canadian soil, thus providing a broader context in which to read the film’s thematic focus. This context is explicitly referenced in Hugh Fraser’s article written in anticipation of *Two Men*’s broadcast for *The Gazette* entitled “CBC drama *Two Men* is a timely story.” Although he does not refer explicitly to the Finta case (perhaps because at this time the indictment had been made, but Finta was still only *accused* of his crimes), Fraser does emphasize that “[t]he story is timely, with...Klaus Barbie recently convicted and Nazi war criminals extradited to answer for their crimes after decades of respectable life in Canada.”³⁸ As such, even though by the time of its broadcast the impetus for bringing Nazi criminals to justice extended far beyond Holocaust survivors and domestic Jewish groups into the legislative wings of the federal government, the film’s portrayal of the ignorance and indifference that Alex faces can in part be seen as a certain contrition for not heeding the calls to pursue such justice in Canada much sooner.

Ultimately, as Randolph Braham, who served as an expert witness for the prosecution during *Regina v. Finta*³⁹ explains, the Crown was unsuccessful in its push for prosecution and Finta was ultimately found not guilty on all counts – a decision that was

³⁷ Lancashire, 7.

³⁸ Fraser, T54,

³⁹ Braham, 303.

upheld by a number of appeals.⁴⁰ With this in mind, I do not think it is too far off to say that the lack of availability of *Two Men* (as discussed in Note 10 of the Conclusion, *Two Men* was by far the most difficult film to locate for this dissertation) may be in part due to the outcome of the Finta case. Had Finta been found guilty – the film leaves no doubt that Barna was guilty of his crimes – *Two Men* could have seemed like a prescient commentary on the possibility for justice, just as *Charlie Grant's War* may have had more longevity had the veracity of its “righteous gentile” narrative not been called into question so soon after its broadcast. Ultimately though, Pinsent’s film has been almost entirely forgotten and is, for all intents and purposes, virtually unavailable for viewing.

This chapter has explored in some detail two films that highlight the absence of the Holocaust in Canada by drawing a clear “barrier of experience” around survivors that separated and still separates them emotionally, cognitively, and even spiritually from their surroundings. *Children of the Storm* and *Two Men* emphasize the Canadian specificity of this barrier by situating it in relation to specifically Canadian sociopolitical contexts. The next chapter continues with a discussion of *Two Men* in order to consider how this barrier of experience can also transcend a sociopolitical Canadian specificity. To this end, I will emphasize more overtly how the film constructs the isolation of the survivor from his/her surroundings as derived from the invisible quality of the Holocaust experience carried within him/her, rather than from externally imposed ethnic or religious

⁴⁰ Canada’s first conviction for war crimes/crimes against humanity would not come until very recently, when Desire Munyaneza, a Montreal man, was convicted for committing crimes against humanity during the Rwandan genocide. It should be noted however that this conviction was under a newer Act than the Amendment drafted in the wake of the Deschenes Commission. Munyaneza’s conviction came under the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act, which was ratified in 2000. See Sue Montgomery, “Rwandan guilty of war crimes; Verdict a first for Canada,” *The Windsor Star*, May 23, 2009, A11 and Department of Justice Canada, “Canada’s Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Program,” <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/wc-cg/rlf-rcl.html> (accessed August 9, 2010).

discrimination, to which Alex's dismissal by the Jewish League calls particular attention. I will also consider the invisible delineation between survivor and "Jew" in *The Quarrel* in order to establish more fully the internality of this distinction, as well as to explore *Emotional Arithmetic* and *Fugitive Pieces* – two films that adopt a more overtly psychoanalytic/post-traumatic approach to the "barrier of experience" that moves beyond decidedly Canadian relevance.

Chapter Three

The Internality of Experience: Invisible and Interpersonal Barriers

This chapter explores more fully the constitution of the barrier of experience in Canada's Holocaust cinema by considering one of its most important and defining characteristics that was briefly alluded to in the previous chapter – the invisibility and localization of experience in the figure of the survivor. In the discussion of *Children of the Storm* I referred to the moment where Dr. Robert Krell lauds the resiliency of the war orphans by stating, “They know how to cry in silence, away from their families and away from their work.” While the film's juxtaposition of this speech with images of a Canada Day celebration embodies its emphasis on the challenges of assimilation, the conclusion of Dr. Krell's reflection suggests that the perpetual legacy of the barrier of experience stems from the fact that its primary source is localized internally, *within* survivors: “[When] they [the survivors] speak to audiences,” Krell continues, “they speak as that little boy or girl that endured these horrendous experiences, and then they straighten out their tie and jacket, adjust their dress, and off they go. And they're back into the world of the local Canadian, and *no one can tell*” (my emphasis).

The invisible quality of that which informs the barrier of experience – which allows and compels the survivors to “cry in silence” – is one of the reasons that reading this barrier as an act of externally imposed discrimination (or marginalization) is not sufficient. As the Introduction argued, the discourse of marginality that has dominated Canadian film scholarship since the early 1990s presumes a systemic relationship by which a source of power at the “centre” relegates individuals or groups to a space of marginality based on an essential difference. If Krell's assertion is correct that survivors

are able to go “back into the world of the local Canadian, and no one can tell,” then reading the relationship between them and “local” Canada based on a presumption of a systemic discrimination rooted in a power dynamic would be erroneous. Although Abella’s interview in *Children of the Storm* implies an almost ubiquitous anti-Semitism in post-war Canada, the challenges of assimilation discussed by the war orphans are almost never (save for Agasse’s brief mention of anti-Jewish sentiments at her work) discussed in relation to discrimination based on religion or ethnicity. And similarly, while Alex in *Two Men* does come up against loci of power in the form of the Jewish League, the Toronto police force and a local politician, their dismissal of him stems only from the fact that he is pursuing a concrete *action* at this particular time rather than because of an *essential* quality that makes him a part of a systemically marginalized group. If he was *not* pursuing Barna in other words, the film gives no indication that his life with his family would be unduly impeded by sources of power.

Yet as Alex’s troubled relationship with his family and the process of assimilation discussed by the war orphans in *Children of the Storm* suggest, the barrier of experience persists in the perspective of survivors even if it is unrecognizable to others. If then, the source of this barrier is internalized and does not stem from externally imposed discrimination or marginalization, and is invisible and potentially unrecognizable to those who “can’t tell,” it demands a consideration of how this barrier is enacted both formally and narratively via the relationships between characters and more importantly, the *perception* of these relationships by survivors. To this end, this chapter begins by returning to *Two Men*, as well as by considering Eli Cohen’s *The Quarrel*, both of which delineate an interpersonal barrier between survivors and the domestic Jewish community,

thus emphasizing this barrier as rooted in the internality of experience rather than in externalized membership in an ethnic or religious community. In both of these cases, there are instances where individuals outside of the barrier (i.e. those who did not experience the Holocaust) welcome the survivors into either religious or secular communities, yet are unable to recognize the persistence of the barrier that is property only of the “experienced.” After further establishing the internal and invisible quality that informs the barrier of experience, I will move on to two more recent films – Paolo Barzman’s *Emotional Arithmetic* and Jeremy Podeswa’s *Fugitive Pieces*, both of which were released in 2007. While these films do not situate the problematic of the barrier in relation to either religious or ethnic groups, narratively these films place survivors in relation to family members that – like Margaret in *Two Men* – know of their past, but whose inexperience renders the emotional barrier that exists between them unresolvable. Moreover, these films also use formal devices to evoke the psychological subjectivity of the past that remains internalized as a traumatic legacy that is the unique property of he or she who experienced it.

As a final note of introduction for this chapter, it is worth stating that while these films are all at least in part set in Canada, they all – including *Two Men* and its emphasis on Canadian loci of power – are less concerned with the fact that the barrier of experience exists in *Canada*, than that the Holocaust experience and the memory of it are internalized in those that lived through it, and thus perpetually unavailable or unrecognizable to those that did not. This barrier persists for the “inexperienced” regardless of whether their inexperience of the Holocaust was through personal circumstances of space or time. A more sustained consideration of how the barrier

functions *internally* amongst the “experienced” characters in these films thus opens this corpus to broader questions about how this heuristic can address formal/aesthetic challenges of historical representation that may be overlooked if analysis is restricted to the Canadian-specific socio-political questions that informed the previous chapter, or the cultural nationalist/margin-centre paradigms that have dominated and continue to form the discursive shape of scholarship on Canadian cinema.

Religious Barriers: The Invisible Difference of Survivors in the Jewish Community

The subtle, invisible, and internalized quality of the barrier of experience is articulated in a particularly cinematic manner at the conclusion of *Two Men*. By “particularly cinematic” I mean that the film visualizes the fact that this barrier is one primarily localized *within* Alex in a formal manner that could only be accomplished in the cinematic medium. Towards the end of *Two Men*, Alex’s frustration eventually boils over after being continually denied official assistance in his quest to have Barna captured and he decides to take matters into his own hands. The film cuts between Barna at a play and Alex in his shop, where he grabs a gun, leaves, and goes to break into Barna’s house. When Barna arrives home from the play, Alex emerges from the shadows and tells his former friend, “No one seems to want to punish you.” In response Barna desperately explains that when he betrayed Alex’s family he “did not know about Auschwitz” and, echoing the police officer’s statements from earlier in the film, proclaims that the boy that he was has nothing to do with who he is now. As this showdown is taking place, Barna’s wife Elaine (Patricia Collins) pleads with Alex, “Don’t! Just go. You’re not a murderer.” Although the gun is pointed at his adversary and Alex is shaking with a

conflicted desire to use it, he eventually lowers the weapons, saying, “No I’m not a murderer...he is.”

This moment of absolution offers a putative sense of resolution on both sides of the Alex/Barna conflict. After Alex departs from their home, Barna’s wife – having discovered the truth of her husband’s past – disgustedly leaves him sitting pathetically on the bed sadly mumbling, “You’re my life.” As such, there is a sense of personal cost that Alex makes Barna pay for his actions, even if he has not been forced to pay the judicial (or mortal) cost that Alex desired. In terms of Alex, his decision to spare Barna’s life is initially painted as cathartic, perhaps even marking a certain resolution to his barrier of experience, since immediately after leaving the Barnas he arrives at his own home to find Margaret waiting for him. When he enters his home, the Koveses hug in an act of tenderness that has heretofore been precluded by his obsession with Barna, his unwillingness to share his past with his family, and Margaret’s inability to comprehend the extent of its weight on Alex’s present. The film also suggests that this moment marks a new beginning for the couple as they greet each other tentatively, “Hello Margaret”, “Hello Alex.”

The next scene, which marks the beginning of the film’s final sequence, continues this intimation that Alex’s act of mercy has resolved for him not only the emotional barrier between him and Margaret, but also that between him and his Judaic faith as they walk towards a synagogue. As they approach the building though, the barrier returns as it becomes clear that Alex will be going into the synagogue without Margaret. While the film’s narrative makes clear that Margaret is not Jewish (which is part of the source of contention between Alex and his Aunt Rose), the fact that the couple separates at this

moment of potential spiritual reconciliation for Alex is conspicuous. It is ultimately left ambiguous as to whether Margaret *refuses* to accompany her husband into the synagogue or Alex simply wishes to enter by himself. Regardless, the tender affection that only comes to the fore in the previous scene is still clearly evident as they depart from each other. Alex promises that when he gets home from the service, “We will have some hot chocolate and [slightly choked pause] talk or something.” “I’d really like that,” Margaret replies as Alex enters the building and she walks away.

Alex’s perception that he is still out of place within this spiritual space persists somewhat as he apologetically tells an usher that he’s “not a member of this congregation,” but is assuaged as the usher replies “That’s alright,” and points him to a seat beside a family as a cantor’s voice rings out. As he sits down beside the family, the camera frames the row from a side angle that makes it appear as though he is right beside a young boy. The potential inclusiveness of this space for Alex that is symbolized by the welcoming usher – which continues the implication that his spiritual barrier is in the process of being resolved – is further expanded as the young boy politely hands him a prayer book, for which Alex thanks him. He opens the book, takes out his glasses and puts them on his face and is preparing to sing at the moment where the congregation is about to join the cantor. But as Alex is about to sing he stops, while the collective voice of the congregation swells. He slowly takes off his glasses as the camera cuts to an overhead shot that shows that while he is in the same row as the family, there is actually a significant space between himself and the young boy.¹

¹ A frame from the film would help illustrate this point. Unfortunately, I do not have access to a copy of *Two Men*, which I had to view on-site at Toronto’s Centre for Jewish Education. More generally, I have opted not to include any such images in this project, as many of the prints that I have are already somewhat

Of this dissertation's entire corpus, this moment most succinctly and effectively conveys the *invisible* quality of the barrier of experience that allows survivors, in the words of Dr. Krell, to "cry in silence." The division between Alex and the fellow Jews in the synagogue is not overt. It is disguised by as simple a device as a shot taken from an angle that visually effaces how much distance is between Alex and the young boy beside him. The cut to the overhead shot is a formal revelation that this division persists for Alex, whose sense of the unresolved barrier is apparent in his inability to join in the congregation's hymn, as the previous shot's visualization of his propinquity to the boy is exposed as presumptuous. This formal strategy for evoking the subtlety of the barrier of experience is a decidedly cinematic one, possible only in a medium in which the spatial relations between objects can be manipulated by staging, angles and editing. In a literary work, Alex's distance from the boy could either not be mentioned at all, or he could perhaps be described as *right* beside him, or with a small space between them. If it attempted to indicate that initially he is immediately beside the boy, but then *actually* a bit further away, it would lose the essential invisible and subtle quality of this barrier. Similarly, this moment could not be conveyed the same way on a theatrical stage where the distance between two individuals could only be changed by the physical movement of one of the actors that would be perceived by the audience, and thus not localized in the perception of the character (Alex).

The notion that the barrier has been resolved is deceptively intimated by the side angle shot that makes it seem as though he is right beside the family which follows the usher's friendly greeting. The overhead shot works to call attention to the fact that the

degraded visually. Because of this omission, my discussions of some of the films' formal qualities are lengthier than would be necessary if the analysis included visuals.

barrier persists for Alex as he is unable to fully assimilate himself back into this setting by participating in the service. This persistence is formally expanded as the overhead shot tilts up to reveal the cantor in the front of the synagogue, and eventually stops at a painting behind the altar that contains the image of an elk and lion.² After the camera ceases movement, images of the family picnic that Alex was recalling in the car on the way to his birthday party are superimposed over the painting. This time these memories are not interrupted, unlike in the car when Margaret calls him “birthday boy.” The film thus concludes with formal allusions that the barrier of experience surrounding Alex is still very much intact, still localized within him as something he must carry internally, unrecognized by the usher and young boy who are well-meaning, but whose inexperience places them outside of the barrier, leaving Alex alone within it.

It is also important to note that the song that Alex is unable to participate in is the *ein Keloheinu*, a traditional Jewish hymn that professes an ardent faith in the Almighty in its proclamation, “None compare to our God, to our ruler.”³ This inability to complete

² A similar image appears in many Jewish synagogues, and its symbology refers to Genesis 49 in which Jacob blesses his sons, who will lead the twelve tribes of Israel, by ascribing to them metaphorical characteristics – including those of animals - that “may tell what is to befall [them] in days to come” (v. 1) The lion refers to Judah (“Judah is a lion’s whelp; Oh prey, my son, have you grown. He crouches, lies down like a lion, Like – the king of beasts – who dare rouse him” v. 9). The elk refers to Naphtali (“Naphtali is a hind let loose, Which yields lovely fawns” v. 21). Text taken from *The Torah: The Five Books of Moses: A new translation of the Holy Scriptures according to the traditional Hebrew text* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), 92-93. Thanks to my cousin Steven Hyman for his assistance with these images.

³ In *Two Men* the *Ein Keloheinu* is of course sung in Hebrew. The translated text is as follows: “None compare to our God, to our Ruler. None compare to our Sovereign, to our Deliverer. Who compares to our God, to our Ruler? Who compares to our Sovereign, to our Deliverer? Let us thank our God, our Ruler. Let us thank our Sovereign, our Deliverer. Let us praise our God, our Ruler. Let us praise our Sovereign, our Deliverer. You are our God, our Ruler. You are our Sovereign, our Deliverer. You are the One to whom our ancestors offered incense.” (Transliteration: “*Ein keloheinu, ein katonenu, ein k’malkenu, ein k’moshi-enu. Mi kheloheinu, mi khatonenu, mi kh’malkenu, mi kh’moshi-enu. Nodeh leloheinu, nodeh l’adonenu, nodeh l’malkenu, nodeh l’moshi-enu. Barukh Eloheinu, barukh Adonenu, barukh Malkenu* (at this point of the song in *Two Men*, the sound of the congregation singing fades into the music for the closing credits), *barukh Moshi-enu. Atah hu Eloheinu, atah hu Adonenu, atah hu Malkenu, atah hu Moshi-enu. Atah hu she-hiktiru avoteinu l’fanekha et k’toret ha-samim.* Both translation and transliteration taken from the *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals* (New York City: The Rabbinical Assembly, The

his spiritual reunification makes it quite clear that even if his absolution of Barna has afforded him a personal/emotional reconciliation with Margaret (which the film ultimately leaves as ambiguous as they separate outside of the synagogue), he is unable to resolve the barrier between himself and his abandoned faith (and faith community). In short, if it is the devastating loss that he experienced during the Holocaust that engendered his crisis of faith (which is implied quite clearly in one of his discussions with his Aunt Rose regarding her disappointment for his lapsed Judaism), his inability to articulate a song that professes faith in God suggests that *this* aspect of the barrier strongly persists.

It is also useful to observe at this point though that given the emotional distance between Alex and his family, and the dismissive attitudes that he faces from (both Jewish and non-Jewish) Canadian institutions, this inability for him to fully re-integrate into the Jewish faith community is only *one* of the aspects that informs the barrier of experience in *Two Men*. The question of religious identity and its link to the legacy of the Holocaust experience is much more central to Eli Cohen's *The Quarrel* (based on the short story "My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseynier by Chaim Grade, and the adapted play by Joseph Telushkin). *The Quarrel* is primarily a dialogue film that focuses on the serendipitous reunion between two Holocaust survivors in Montreal's Mount Royal Park on *Rosh Hashanah* (the Jewish New Year) in 1948. The "quarrel" alluded to in the title refers to the debate that they have regarding the interrelationship between God, Judaism and the Holocaust, with Rabbi Hersh Rasseynier (Saul Rubinek) having carried his faith through his experience and having founded a *yeshiva* in Montreal, and the secularized Yiddish

United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, 1998), 182. Thanks again to Steven Hyman for pointing me to this resource.

writer Chaim (R.H. Thomson) who is visiting Montreal from New York to give a reading of his new book, whose faith in a just deity has been annihilated by the loss of his family in the Holocaust.

The theological focus of *The Quarrel* is explored in significant detail in Terri Ginsberg's chapter "The *Quarrel* in/over Quebec" in her full-length study, *Holocaust Film: The Political Aesthetics of Ideology*, in which she aims to re-direct Holocaust film criticism from a "Judeo-Christian" paradigm whereby the "Jewish" aspect of the Holocaust is posited as a christological "other." For Ginsberg, this christological tendency works to elide the ideological implications behind the invocation of the Holocaust as a (Zionist/American) imperialist strategy,⁴ as questions central to the link between the Holocaust and "global capitalism and its ideological ethos [become] for Holocaust film criticism an index of human fallibility."⁵

Ginsberg's understanding of the protagonists' quarrel about post-Holocaust faith and non-faith in Cohen's film very much corresponds to this overall goal of offering a film analysis that can "re-envision the Judaic and its 'Jewish' intelligibility within Holocaust cinema studies not as the familiarly ideal 'other' of, but a philosophical system at once *other than* and *radical to*, that of the 'Judeo-Christian.'"⁶ This attempt at ideological underpinning emerges in Ginsberg's discussion of *The Quarrel* as she uses specialized Judaic hermeneutics in order to read the debate between post-Holocaust religious and secular Judaism. She extends this towards a critical questioning of Zionist manifest destiny, which in turn paves the way for her consideration of how a Judeo-Christian understanding of the Holocaust "marginalizes other and alternative interpretive

⁴ Ginsberg, 38.

⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁶ Ibid., 36, original emphasis.

modes such as those rooted in non-Jewish Palestine and in cultures indigenous to pre-Christian Europe and North America that do not historically serve the needs of Western hegemonic development.”⁷ As such, for Ginsberg, the quarrel of *The Quarrel* affords an ideological base upon which to offer a post-colonial consideration of hegemonic marginalization, such as the Israel/Palestine conflict (bolstered by director Eli Cohen’s Israeli nationality) and the Anglo-Québécois tensions fomenting in Canada at the time of the film’s release in 1991 (especially in the context of the contentious and ultimately failed Meech Lake Accord⁸). Yet aside from a brief line from Chaim about the contemporaneous establishment of Israel as a nation-state (in 1948) that is almost a throw-away line that he feeds to Hersch in order to distract the rabbi from his argument, the film makes virtually no overt or I would even argue allegorical reference to these political issues.

At this point I would thus like to step back from Ginsberg’s politicized reading of *The Quarrel* in order to re-consider the seemingly axiomatic link that the film makes

⁷ Ibid., 98.

⁸ The Meech Lake Accord was a proposed constitutional amendment negotiated in 1987 by the Progressive Conservative government of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney to persuade the government of Québec to sign the 1982 Constitution. The Accord promised several initiatives for this signature such as the recognition of Québec as a “distinct society.” However, the Accord ultimately failed in 1990 when the legislative assemblies of Manitoba and Newfoundland failed to endorse it. (The Manitoba MLA Elijah Harper voted against the Accord, which prevented the unanimous result that was required. In the Newfoundland House of Assembly, the voting process was cancelled, as it was almost certain to not pass. In other words, the Meech Lake Accord was meant to foster a greater sense of national unity by symbolically bringing Québec into the “rest of Canada,” but its failure served to revive the Québécois sovereignty movement as the divisions between Franco- and Anglo-Canada were once again affirmed. See Gerald L. Gall, “The Meech Lake Accord,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0005208> (accessed May 25, 2010), John Geddes, “A life of its own,” *MacLean’s* 113.25 (June 19, 2000), <http://proquest.umi.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/pqdlink?index=5&did=55480659&SrchMode=3&sid=1&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=POD&RQT=309&VName=POD&TS=1274824113&clientId=13709&aid=2> (accessed May 25, 2010), and Anthony Wilson-Smith, “A day that changed Canada,” *MacLean’s* 113.25 (June 19, 2000), <http://proquest.umi.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/pqdlink?index=38&did=55480608&SrchMode=3&sid=1&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=POD&RQT=309&VName=POD&TS=1274824283&clientId=13709&aid=2> (accessed May 25, 2010).

between the Holocaust and Judaism, as it frames its consideration of the Holocaust from a decidedly Judeo-religious context. The link between the two is certainly explicit in the film not only on the basis of Hersh and Chaim's quarrel which is rooted in the question of post-Holocaust faith and their shared history at the *yeshiva* in their hometown of Bialystok, Poland, but also in the fact that of the films comprising this corpus, *The Quarrel* most overtly affords a *physical* mark of difference to a survivor within the barrier of experience. As I mentioned in the Introduction, one of the reasons that the barrier of experience as it functions in Canada's Holocaust films cannot adequately be covered by a discourse of marginality is because such an approach tends to consider *obvious* difference, which the white, middle-class, healthy European survivors documented or represented in these films lack. In contrast, in *The Quarrel*, Hersh is immediately recognizable as a member of an ethnic/faith community by his dress and appearance, as he wears the cloak and hat, along with sporting the full beard of an orthodox Jewish rabbi.

But despite this inextricable link between the Holocaust and Judaism, the film is also careful to establish a clear division rooted in experience between Hersh and Chaim and their surroundings, including fellow members of the Montreal Jewish community. And like the welcoming actions of the usher and the young boy in the synagogue in *Two Men*, the internalized quality of this barrier depends on a certain putative inclusion within the Jewish community that is unable to resolve this sense of division. When the two former friends have their first indirect contact it is by accident as Chaim is corralled by a Jewish man on the streets of Montreal in order to achieve a ten-man quorum for a prayer *minyán* (i.e. the minimum number of Jewish men necessary for a ceremonial prayer) at

the bedside of a dying man. Immediately prior to this scene, Chaim is shown eating bacon and eggs in a diner as his voiceover indicates that it is *Rosh Hashanah*, as the same Jewish man that will eventually try to recruit him for the *minyan* gazes through the window at him with a bemused and contemplative expression. This juxtaposition of Chaim eating a decidedly non-Kosher breakfast and his (reluctant) participation in a Jewish prayer ritual suggests quite clearly that not only does Chaim have a complicated relationship with Judaism, but that he is also recognized as Jewish by a member of the domestic community and welcomed into a Jewish setting, despite his hesitation (“Why me?” Chaim asks the man trying to gather him for the *minyan*. “Why not you?” the man replies).

The first time Hersh appears in the film it is even more explicit that he is fully immersed in the Montreal Jewish community. After Chaim enters the hospital room and dons a prayer shawl, as he asks in voiceover what compels him to join this group praying prayers that he no longer believes in, in the right background a darkly dressed individual enters and is warmly greeted by the other men. This individual is largely (although not entirely) blocked by the bodies in the room, obstructing a clear view of him for both Chaim and the film spectator, yet Chaim’s expression as he hears the man’s voice and strives to see this individual is clearly one of partial recognition. The other men in the room also treat this new arrival with deference and respect, with even the bed-ridden man recognizing him as a rabbi as another respectively tells him that since they were able to get a tenth man for the *minyan*, he can leave and go back to his students. As this man is shortly thereafter revealed to be Hersh, Chaim’s friend from Bialystok, this scene very

clearly suggests that Hersh's immersion in the Montreal Jewish community is not only unquestioned, but that he is a respected faith leader.

After the *minyan*, Chaim goes to the park to meet his lady-friend Freda (Ellen Cohen) and return a necklace that she had left at his hotel room (another intimation of Chaim's secularization), where he watches Jewish men and a few Jewish women praying by a pond. It is here where he again sees the darkly clothed man from the hospital, surrounded by his students. At this moment, Chaim's voiceover recalls his own memories of praying at the water in Bialystok on *Rosh Hashanah* with his rabbi and fellow *yeshiva* students. As he continues to watch, Chaim begins to recognize the man as Hersh Rasseynner, his former *yeshiva* classmate who Chaim describes as "my dearest friend, and my bitterest enemy." Through voiceover, Chaim reveals that he had thought Hersh had been killed in the Holocaust, which at first makes him reluctant to believe that the man across the pond could possibly be him. The film visually conveys this gradual process of recognition by employing a shot-reverse-shot technique between close-up shots of Chaim's face gazing intently, and shots of what he is watching - the men chanting by the water, who are conveyed in a medium shot with Hersh centered. As Hersh begins to walk closer to Chaim with two older Jewish men, Chaim approaches the group gingerly until Hersh finally sees him and they stare at each other in amazement. As they eventually recognize each other, they both step into the frame (a medium two-shot), and Hersh immediately reveals that he too had assumed Chaim to have been killed as he greets his old friend by saying in shock, "Chaim, you're still alive." As the two survivors walk towards each other, Chaim takes Hersh's arm and quietly whispers, "Let's walk." Hersh looks back without a word at the two older men he had been walking with,

and allows himself to be led away into a discursive world constituted by his and Chaim's common past. Their mutual recognition of each other as Holocaust survivors engenders both a narrative and formal separation of Chaim and Hersh and the rest of the Montreal Jewish community (the film physically shows them walking away from the group of gathered Jews).

While one could argue this is simply a moment where two separated friends are happy to see each other and want to "catch up" in private, the film makes it clear that this movement away from the broader community is rooted in the past experience shared by Chaim and Hersh that is unshared (or at least left largely ambiguous) by those other members of the Jewish community.⁹ Immediately as they begin walking away from the pond, Hersh tells Chaim that he was in the ghetto with his parents. In voiceover, Chaim then makes clear that his desire to get Hersh alone is bound not to the questions of religion that the quarrel will eventually turn to, but to the Holocaust past that he carries within him: "I knew my parents had been killed by the Nazis, I even knew how. But I needed to hear it again." In other words, these two individuals are compelled towards each other by their shared experience rather than by their association with an identifiable group. Once they recognize each other from their past, they literally break away from the Jewish group praying by the pond as the narrative proceeds towards the theological debate that they will have with the specter of the Holocaust overshadowing them.

In addition to the narrative and formal division between Chaim and Hersh and the Jewish community, the film also alludes to a barrier between them and the surrounding

⁹ Hersh reveals that young people that he met in Displaced Persons camps in Germany, and whom he brought over to Canada, largely populate the yeshiva he founded in Montreal. Yet aside from one student explicitly identified as a survivor later in the film, which is discussed below, *The Quarrel* offers no indication that the surrounding Canadian Jewish community, from which they isolate themselves before engaging in their quarrel, shares Hersh and Chaim's Holocaust experiences in any general sense.

Canadian environment. Although this barrier is subtler than the assimilative challenges articulated in *Children of the Storm* and Alex's failure to procure help from Canadian institutions in *Two Men*, it nonetheless persists in Chaim and Hersh's placement relative to their surroundings. In short, for the majority of the film, no one pays them any attention. As the film is set so shortly after the Holocaust in 1948, the fact that people in the park are ignoring an (often loud) discussion between two individuals – one that is visually identified as an orthodox Jew by his clothing – implies that such a context would only be possible in a space from which the recent and tragic history of the Holocaust and its attempted annihilation of European Jewry was wholly absent. This barrier between the traumatized Holocaust survivors and the ignorant-by-inexperience Canadian environment is visualized almost immediately once they depart from the rest of the Jewish faithful. As Hersh recalls the Nazis marching prisoners into the forest to murder them and both men confirm that they lost their families, in the background a group of children are playing a baseball game, inflecting Hersh and Chaim's lamentations with sporadic sounds of joy.

At the same time, Hersh and Chaim are not completely ignored in this way throughout the film's duration. A number of times, they are approached or paid attention to by individuals, but it is essential to note that these moments of acknowledgment fully correspond to the barrier of experience since these instances of recognition or attention fail to recognize Hersh and Chaim for what they most fully are *at this moment* – Holocaust survivors. For instance, when Freda finally finds Chaim in the park, there is no indication that she even knows that he is a survivor. When Chaim introduces her to Hersh, both she and the rabbi are noticeably uncomfortable, although the source of this

discomfort is left ambiguous. It is possible that she is embarrassed about her amorous (one night stand) relationship with Chaim in the presence of a rabbi, especially since the film suggests she is Jewish as she responds to Hersh's holiday greeting of "*Shanah Tovah*" to mark *Rosh Hashanah*. Similarly, the two men are approached later in the film by a well-dressed man named Solomon Rosenberg (Ari Snyder), a fellow writer who recognizes Chaim from his public reading, and dismisses the rabbi with quickly spoken platitudes in Hebrew. In this case, Rosenberg's recognition of Chaim is *as a writer*, and his invitation to join a small literary group that he delivers with none-so-subtle homosexual proclivities,¹⁰ clarify that the past that separates Hersh and Chaim from their surroundings is shared between only the two of them and not recognized by these others.

In fact, the only time Hersh and Chaim are recognized and approached *as survivors* is by another survivor - one of Hersh's *yeshiva* students named Joshua (Robert Haiat) who finds his rabbi waiting in a building in the park while Chaim is washing mud off of his pants. When Chaim comes out of the bathroom and is introduced to Joshua, the young student begins excoriating him for his abandoned faith and demanding to know whether his lack of faith would have allowed him to act as a hero in a camp. In this case, Joshua acts as a younger, angrier, and less subtle version of Hersh's own exhortations of the need for and justification of post-Holocaust faith, which enrages Chaim. Yet even in this instance the film implies a barrier around these (now temporarily three) survivors and their surroundings as a Québécois worker on a ladder inside the building glances over at the increasingly loud debate, and visually purges the group from his attention with a dismissive wave of his hand as he turns back to his work.

¹⁰ Ginsberg, 116.

As the final sequence of *Two Men* suggests, moments that afford the misrecognition of an “experienced” survivor as immersed within his or her surroundings most cogently articulate the internalized quality of the barrier of experience, and it is precisely such misrecognition that occurs towards the conclusion of *The Quarrel*. As Hersh and Chaim sit on a bench, emotionally weary from their reunion and quarrel, happy families are again visualized in the background, completely oblivious to the two survivors consumed by pain. Just like the earlier moments that placed a youthful baseball game in the background as Hersh and Chaim confirm the deaths of their families, in this case these background scenes of family togetherness contrast both Hersh’s detailed admission that he never had the chance to make amends with his father before the Nazis shot him, as well as Chaim’s inalienable guilt that he fled to Siberia, leaving his family behind on the advice of his wife and the mistaken belief that the Nazis only wanted men for the work camps. It is essential to note that Chaim’s response of his own guilt only comes after Hersh has confessed himself and pleads with Chaim to share his own internalized feelings that engender emotional isolation, stating, “Say something. I feel so alone.” As the next chapter will return to, this reciprocal act of confession is the most explicit moment that clarifies the importance that what these two men share, they share only (at least in this environment) with each other.

After this instant of emotional unburdening and unambiguous articulation of their shared experience, Hersh begins to sing a song from their days at the *yeshiva* that they had been unable to recall earlier. Eventually Chaim joins in. At this moment, the two are framed in a straight medium-shot with the families in the background. The two men then slowly rise from the bench and begin dancing in what Ginsberg refers to as a moment of

“spiritual reunification in a wave of kabbalistic ecstasy.”¹¹ As Hersh and Chaim rise, the film cuts from the medium-shot to a series of canted close-ups that destabilize the spatial relations afforded when they are seated on the bench with the families behind them. Finally, the sound of applause breaks them from their trance-like dance and the film cuts to a wide-shot that shows the two men surrounded by those same people who were previously picnicking behind them. One man shakes Chaim’s hand as members of crowd express appreciation for this performance that they clearly misperceive as a quaint example of unthreatening ethnic difference.

This misperception is of course implicit and derived from my own reading of the film. Yet the well-meaning applause from the crowd stands in such stark contrast to the meaning of the dance for Hersh and Chaim that this incongruity is almost blatant. For the two survivors, this moment marks a painful articulation of what they have lost. Near the beginning of the film, Chaim’s voiceover states that “Bialystok no longer exists, except in the memories of its survivors.” As such, this “performance,” which they are finally able to remember, constitutes a painful or at least bittersweet acknowledgment of precisely that which is no longer. Yet for those who surround them and applaud, this appreciation marks a welcome inclusion within a multicultural society (the film’s 1991 release comes in the cultural aftermath of the institutionalization of multiculturalism as official government policy in Canada in the form of 1988’s Canadian Multiculturalism Act)¹². Yet since the *meaning* of this dance for the crowd as, again, a quaint ethnic performance is so diametrically opposed to the painful loss that it evokes for Hersh and

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹² For the full text of this Act, see Department of Justice Canada, “Canadian Multiculturalism Act,” <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/C-18.7/FullText.html> (accessed May 25, 2010). I will return to this Act in more detail in Chapter Five.

Chaim – which is made clear by the powerful emotional quality of their subsequent farewell – the barrier of experience still persists for them based on this misapprehension. In this sense, the appreciative, cheering crowd of people actually resemble the Chevalier family in *La vie d'un héros*, whose idealistic image of a Nazi POW obfuscated the practical reality of the actions he had committed. *The Quarrel* actually alludes to the division between multicultural idealism and pragmatism as Chaim arrives at the park and wryly reflects on an inscription on a statue that reads, “We of different races must never war against each other.” That the inclusion of these two individuals and their performed ethnicity operates under a rubric of multicultural *idealism* that may not trickle down into the practical, lived reality of the body politic is further evident in the fact that after the man from the surrounding crowd shakes Chaim’s hand, a mother grabs her child and scolds him for touching the rabbi Hersh as she exclaims with clear exasperation, “très bizarre!” The actions and sentiments of this Francophone mother – who is one of those who are *watching* Hersh and Chaim’s dance - of course imply that an appreciation for ethnic performance does not necessarily correspond to full communal absorption.

That being said, this moment of public acknowledgment of Hersh and Chaim – even if they and the meaning of their actions are misrecognized – must not be viewed as cruel or discriminatory. Aside from the mother scolding her child for contact with Hersh, the actions of this group clearly suggest that these two individuals can be included in the broader community. Like the welcome given to Alex by the synagogue usher and the prayer book offered by the young boy in *Two Men*, the applause in *The Quarrel* constitutes a (perhaps unstated) attempt to welcome these individuals. Yet like Alex who is unable to fully immerse himself into the congregation when active participation is

required, Hersh and Chaim quickly break away from their audience for a tearful goodbye. Even if the community has “accepted” them, from their perspective a barrier persists that remains un- or misrecognized by those members of the surrounding community.

In addition to positing an internalized division between Hersh and Chaim and their surroundings, *The Quarrel* also offers a number of examples that demonstrate the traumatic nature of their past that threatens to flare up in their subjective presents. For instance, in the film’s opening scene, a ringing phone in his hotel room awakens Chaim while his voiceover ruminates on the dreams and nightmares that he had the previous night. As he jerks up in bed, Chaim is framed in a close-up from the mid-chest up. In this shot, all that is visible is his face and his pajama top with white and blue stripes that evokes the prison uniforms that have become almost iconic in representations of prisoners in Nazi camps. As he looks out the window, the film cuts to a downward-angled POV (point of view) shot that assumes Chaim’s perspective. What Chaim sees (or what the film suggests he perceives via the POV shot) at this moment evokes the imagery of a concentration camp, appearing like a field with stoic brown buildings populating it. The image then dissolves from the downward-angled POV shot into an upward-angled shot (thus offering a third-person perspective rather than implying a continuity of Chaim’s) of the iconic Mount Royal Cross that overlooks Montreal, suggesting an incongruity between Chaim’s perspective and where he actually is. Similarly, Hersh is ostentatiously frightened by the sudden appearance of a police horse and officer while he is drinking from a water fountain, as well as when he hears people outside of a building where he and Chaim are seeking shelter (or hiding out) from the rain. These instances serve to illuminate that the past experience that divides Chaim and

Hersh from the Jewish community is very much localized within their memories and can emerge for them unexpectedly in the present as they react to seemingly benign stimuli.

In short, in both *Two Men* and *The Quarrel*, the barrier of experience is primarily enacted relationally by delineating an interpersonal division between survivors and their surroundings. These films also include instances that frame the barrier of experience in relation to the individualized quality of traumatic memory. I would now like to move on to discuss two more films that address the barrier of experience – Paolo Barzman’s *Emotional Arithmetic* and Jeremy Podeswa’s *Fugitive Pieces*, based on the novels of the same names by Matt Cohen and Anne Michaels respectively. These works are notable as they illuminate more explicitly the *interrelationship* between these two approaches towards the barrier of experience, and pay more concerted attention to the decidedly traumatic quality of subjective Holocaust memory that is left implicit in the visual allegories and Hersh’s frightened demeanour in *The Quarrel*, and in the angle and staging of Alex in the final scene of *Two Men*.

Interpersonal Barriers and the Persistence of Traumatic Memory

Emotional Arithmetic and *Fugitive Pieces* offer more sustained considerations than *Two Men* and *The Quarrel* of how the barrier of experience can function as traumatic memory in the psychological realms of survivors. These films also suggest that such memory and its traumatic manifestations are available only to the survivors themselves by emphasizing an *inability* derived by *inexperience* for family members or acquaintances of survivors to fully comprehend the legacy of the past, even if they generally know *of* the survivors past and *want* to act as a source of empathy for them. In

other words, like *Two Men* and *The Quarrel*, these two films emphasize that the legacy of the Holocaust past is internalized in survivors, which constitutes a barrier at an interpersonal level, but overlaps this relational quality with a consideration of the psychologically subjective quality of traumatic memory based on a past that is property only of he or she that experienced it. But before getting to *Emotional Arithmetic* and *Fugitive Pieces* themselves, it is essential at this point to first consider this “overlapping” of an interpersonal barrier with the traumatic quality of subjective memory, since it is the interrelationship between these two frameworks that clarifies the inextricable link between the barrier of experience and the internalized quality of that which informs it (subjective memory).

By its nature, the subjective memory of a traumatic experience is of course internal (regardless of the ontological *accuracy* of this memory) and thus unavailable to those who did not experience it. And again, the internal nature of this past renders the source of the barrier of experience invisible, localized only in the mind of the survivor that is visibly healthy. As the Introduction mentioned, the focus in films like *Children of the Storm*, *Two Men*, *The Quarrel*, and as we will see with *Emotional Arithmetic* and *Fugitive Pieces*, on the *psychological* wounds left by the Holocaust correspond to a broader shift in the representation of Holocaust survivors that Julian Levinson identifies in *American* cinema. This shift, Levinson argues, is one that moves from a focus on the “maimed body” of the Holocaust victim that derived from the devastating newsreel footage of survivors upon the liberation of the camps, towards a concerted attention paid to his or her “tortured psyche,”¹³ which reached a certain cinematic apex in Sidney Lumet’s portrayal of a traumatized Holocaust survivor *par excellence*, *The Pawnbroker*

¹³ Levinson, 142-143.

(1965). Lumet's film is particularly notable in this regard since it takes liberties with Edward Wallant's source novel (1961), which portrays the survivor protagonist Sol Nazerman as *physically* disabled as the victim of Nazi experimentation. Yet like those survivors interviewed in *Children of the Storm* or portrayed in *Two Men, The Quarrel, Emotional Arithmetic* or *Fugitive Pieces*, Nazerman as played by Rod Steiger in the film version of *The Pawnbroker* has his body left intact.

That being said, in Lumet's film, Nazerman's internal trauma takes an external form at a number of different moments. For instance, while on a subway car in New York, he flashes back to being on a cattle-car with his family and has a visceral physical reaction as he charges through the subway to the confusion of his fellow passengers. The most overt example of an externalization of internal trauma occurs after Nazerman's assistant Jesús (Jaime Sánchez) is killed in a botched robbery, when Nazerman impales his hand on the metal spike that he uses for his pawn receipts in a desperate attempt to lend his trauma in an identifiable physical source. After this the film shows Nazerman stumbling down the street in an ascending crane shot, doubling over, holding his head and leaning against the building in an ostentatious display of emotional agony as the credits begin to role. Although Levinson does not explicitly discuss these specific instances as externalizations of internal trauma, he does suggest that the invisible markings of an internalized traumatic past are often externally twinned in films like *Sophie's Choice* (by the emotional and physical abuse reigned on Sophie [Meryl Streep] by her lover Nathan [Kevin Kline]), or in Liliana Cavani's *The Night Porter* (1974, via the resumption of a sado-masochistic relationship between a former concentration camp

inmate and guard [Dirk Bogarde and Charlotte Rampling respectively].¹⁴ Such moments in which the internality of a traumatic past assumes ostentatious external manifestations also occur in the films discussed thus far in the chapter. For instance, Alex's decision to ultimately confront Barna in his home with a gun, Hersh and Chaim's ethnic performance in the park, and, as we will see, an extra-marital relationship between two survivors in *Emotional Arithmetic*, both suggest that while the traumatic past is localized psychologically, this does not mean that the internal never assumes external significance.

Yet where *The Pawnbroker* (the primary text upon which Levinson builds his argument, even if he refers to others) differs from the Canadian films is its reluctance to overtly situate Nazerman's traumatic memories and their emergence in the context of interpersonal barriers. Certainly Lumet's film implies a certain barrier of experience that persists for Nazerman. For instance, the gang members that will eventually try to rob his store and kill Jésus are completely ignorant about the meaning of the numbers tattooed on Nazerman's arm. Similarly, a well-meaning social worker named Marilyn Birchfield (Geraldine Fitzgerald) professes that she wants to hear what has reduced Nazerman to his almost somnambulist-like state, which he rebuffs. But these examples operate in addition to rather than in conjunction with Nazerman's internalized trauma. In *The Pawnbroker*, the gradual emergence of Nazerman's psychological memories in the realm of his physical present is linked not to his inability to forge meaningful relationships with those that pervade his life in Harlem, but due to the upcoming anniversary of his family's deportation to a concentration camp that is coupled with his guilt for being unable to

¹⁴ Levinson, 154. Levinson's inclusion of Cavani's film is somewhat perplexing since his article is on "Holocaust Survivors in American Film," and he does not explain why he briefly refers to an Italian film. However he does not linger on *The Night Porter* and is perhaps merely using it as an example of one of many films that "have centered upon the psychological symptoms of the Holocaust survivor."

protect them from this fate.¹⁵ In other words, interpersonal barriers operate neutrally in the background of the gradual return of Nazerman's traumatic memories, rather than either directly informing them like the relational link between Alex and the sources of power that *refuse* to help him in *Two Men*, or manifest in the contrast between the foreground of Hersh and Chaim's quarrel and the ignorant background surroundings, which establishes the structural indifference that constitutes (in part) the barrier of experience. Moreover, while there are instances in *The Pawnbroker* that point to an interpersonal barrier between Nazerman and others, the film also intimates a clear *erasure* of an experiential barrier in its formal and stylistic juxtaposition of the Holocaust in Nazerman's memories and his present in 1960s Harlem. In this case, the juxtaposition of visuals like abandoned storefront windows and the proliferation of racially charged violence invariably evoke a *similarity* of experience by which the two spatiotemporal sites (the Holocaust and Harlem) are *linked*, albeit via Nazerman's subjectivity. For instance, after he is propositioned by a black prostitute and discovers that his pawnshop is being used as a front for a prostitution ring, Nazerman experiences a flashback that recalls his inability to protect his wife from being sexually assaulted by a guard in the concentration camp.

Judith Doneson articulates such parallelisms as experiential in *The Holocaust in American Film* by asserting that Lumet's film "juxtapos[es] those who suffered during the Holocaust with blacks and Puerto Ricans struggling to survive in Harlem."¹⁶ This

¹⁵ For a detailed analysis of the formal and narrative emergence of Nazerman's traumatic memories from the realm of his psychological past to that of his physical present, see Jeremy Maron, "Bringing the Psychological Past into the Physical Present: The Formal and Narrative Emergence of Traumatic Memory in Sidney Lumet's *The Pawnbroker*," *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 15.3 (Winter 2009): 57-70.

¹⁶ Doneson, 110.

evocation of a *similarity* (as opposed to barrier) of experience of course fully corresponds to Doneson's assertion that American films have sought to assimilate the Holocaust into an Americanized framework, even if *The Pawnbroker* lacks the Classical Hollywood Cinema trope of "universalization" evident in films like *The Diary of Anne Frank* (George Stevens, 1959), *Holocaust* (Marvin J. Chomsky, 1978), and *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993). Such a correlation, or what Wendy Zierler refers to as the "facing" of the Black (African-American) and Jewish (Holocaust survivor) experience,¹⁷ is completely contrasted in the Canadian films that emphasize the internality of subjective memory, which posits a barrier around the survivors that *directly* relates to how they perceive and interact with their surroundings, even when their internal memories inform externalized behaviour.

In those moments referred to earlier when survivors take concerted actions that imply an externalization of their internalized trauma, they are all played out in the context of and thus bound to the barrier of experience. For instance, Alex would not have gone to Barna's home had his aims to bring the war criminal to justice not been continually dismissed by the police, the Jewish League and his Member of Parliament. The ethnic performance in *The Quarrel* occurs only after Hersh and Chaim have articulated precisely that what they have experienced they share with each other, but no one else ("Say something. I feel so alone"). In *Emotional Arithmetic*, as I will discuss below, the extra-marital affair between two survivors cannot be read outside of the context of the woman's love-less marriage to her husband, whose resentment towards her inability to leave her memories in the past is palpable. It is this overt, perhaps even causal link between the

¹⁷ Wendy Zierler, "'My Holocaust is not Your Holocaust': 'Facing' Black and Jewish Experience in *The Pawnbroker*, *Higher Ground*, and *The Nature of Blood*," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 18.1 (Spring 2004): 46-67.

internalized trauma of survivor memories and an interpersonal barrier between the “experienced” and the “inexperienced” that a film like *The Pawnbroker* lacks.

Both *Emotional Arithmetic* and *Fugitive Pieces* establish an overlapping relationship between interpersonal barriers around survivors and the internally subjective quality of the traumatic Holocaust experience that informs them. In each film, survivors are positioned within social and familial networks that call attention to the uniqueness of their past experiences that informs a division between them and those that occupy their surroundings. Unlike *The Quarrel* though, whose barrier is primarily intimated by what I referred to as a structural indifference rooted in the inability of individuals to recognize Hersch and Chaim as survivors, the interpersonal barriers in these two films fall closer to those in *Two Men* – namely that which consists between Alex and his family – insofar as the “inexperienced” individuals *know* of the survivors’ experiences, and often *attempt* to offer a sense of empathy or at least some degree of understanding. Such efforts are revealed to be futile however since the internality of experience remains the property of the survivors only. This inability to forge an emotional or cognitive connection with his or her family is bound to the infusion of the survivor’s traumatic past in his or her psychological present.

The traumatized protagonist in *Emotional Arithmetic* is Melanie Winters (Susan Sarandon), a Holocaust survivor who was unfortunate enough to be an American Jew visiting France with her parents when they disappeared during the Nazi occupation. She herself was subsequently captured and transferred to Drancy, a transit camp in France from which most prisoners were sent to their deaths. The film is set in 1985 in Québec’s bucolic Eastern Townships where Melanie lives in a large country home with her

philandering husband David (Christopher Plummer), a former professor of history who is visibly tired of sharing his life with a woman unable to break free from her memories, their adult son Benjamin (Roy Dupuis) who is more empathetic towards his mother's past than his father but, like Margaret in *Two Men*, has been kept largely in the dark due to Melanie's reluctance to talk about it, and Benjamin's young son Timmy (Dakota Goyo). In the course of the film's narrative, the weight of Melanie's personal history on her own memory and psyche and on the relationship between her and her family is played out when the past metaphorically arrives at Winters' farm in the form of Christopher Lewis (Gabriel Byrne), who was imprisoned with her as a young boy in Drancy, and Jakob Bronski (Max von Sydow), the man who protected them in the camp, who has just been released from a psychiatric hospital after decades in a Russian gulag.

Like the other Canadian films that focus on Holocaust survivors – both documentary and fiction – the psychological wounds of Melanie's past are not immediately visible in the film. In the source novel by Matt Cohen, the first introduction to Melanie is while she is staying at Heritage Acres, a “mental institution.”¹⁸ In contrast, Barzman's film first visualizes Melanie in an upper bedroom of a beautiful country home, wearing a deep red dress as she meanders around the room, takes a button from a jewelry box and looks at herself in the mirror. While she does touch her face and cover one eye while looking at her reflection, in this moment Melanie appears to be composed and there is nothing that explicitly indicates any semblance of the mental instability that is immediately established by her presence in a mental treatment facility in Cohen's novel. As the film progresses, it clarifies Melanie's psychological problems that stem from her past, but only gradually. The earliest indications of this are Benjamin reminding her to

¹⁸ Matt Cohen, *Emotional Arithmetic* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys Publishers, 1990), 2.

take her “pills,” and David angrily dismissing Benjamin’s comment that a “Dr. Levin” suggested that Melanie’s reunion with fellow survivors may be healthy for her (in Cohen’s novel Dr. Levin is the chief psychiatrist who runs Heritage Acres,¹⁹ but he is not referenced in the film beyond this brief exchange between Benjamin and his father). Once Christopher and Jakob arrive, the extent of Melanie’s psychological turmoil becomes more overt. For instance, when she and Christopher go into town to get supplies for dinner, she races to beat a train at a crossing which she barely does, leaving her and Christopher both gasping for breath. At the store, a neighbour recognizes Melanie and asks when she “got out,” and it is only after Christopher presses her on this in the car on the way back to the farm that she finally admits that there is a “comfy little clinic I check into when I’m having a breakdown.” Lastly, the overwhelming weight of Melanie’s past on her present is evident in her obsession with collecting and documenting the details of atrocities committed around the world, which stems from a notebook given to her by Jakob in Drancy with instructions to keep track of “names, height, weight, where they [prisoners coming into Drancy] are from. All ages. Because we’re witnesses. Someday people will want to know what happened here. And we must be able to tell them.” Although it is never explicitly referred to as such, this notebook and the corresponding collection of facts and number of human catastrophes that spill over cabinets and file folders in the Winters’ house are the “emotional arithmetic” that leaves Melanie psychologically chained to the experiences of her past as she emotionally internalizes the raw data of humankind’s inhumanity.

The internality of Melanie’s psychological trauma which is only gradually revealed in the film yet explicitly articulated within the first couple of pages in the

¹⁹ Ibid. 6.

literary version of *Emotional Arithmetic* hearkens the cinematic medium's ability to call attention to the presence of that which is externally absent, while maintaining the subtlety of the internalized experience that allows the survivor the ability to "cry in silence" and carry their burden in a public where "no one can tell." Barzman's film emphasizes the internalization or putatively hidden quality of this trauma that persists below Melanie's unmarked surface by mirroring this microcosmic deceptiveness in the environmental and familial macrocosms that surround her. For instance, the film pays much visual attention to the natural beauty of the Eastern Township by often placing the characters in the vast yard of the Winters' home that overlooks a picturesque lake, or in the wooded areas and ponds surrounding the property. The film also includes numerous shots of uninhabited nature. Given the dark pasts carried within Melanie, as well as within Christopher and Jakob, this setting serves as a stark contrasting device.²⁰ The implication that the calm, peaceful and beautiful hides something much darker underneath extends to the beautiful home that hides the Winters' familial tensions, and even finds a metaphorical reference in the house itself when Jakob remarks to David, "You live in a paradise", and David replies, "Just don't look too closely. It's a money pit. The damn place is falling into arrears."

While the difference between the overtly institutionalized literary Melanie and the outwardly composed cinematic Melanie corresponds to the difference between *The Pawnbroker*'s physically deformed literary and physically whole cinematic Sol

²⁰ Such a contrast between style and narrative content is also essential to Vittorio de Sica's *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* (*Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, 1970), a portrayal of a Jewish family in Ferrara, Italy during the increasingly anti-Semitic legislation of Mussolini's government and its alliance with Nazi Germany. For a more detailed discussion of this film and the importance of this contrast, see Jeremy Maron, "Illusions of Gardens, Conformity and Beauty: Performing Normality in Three Italian Holocaust Films," (M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 2006), 19-45.

Nazerman, *Emotional Arithmetic* clearly delineates a barrier between Melanie's present in Québec and her past in Drancy in a manner that differs from *The Pawnbroker*'s visual allusions that overlay Harlem and the Holocaust. First, the contemporary rural beauty of the Eastern Townships is formally *contrasted* with the horrific reality of Drancy in a way that is occluded by *The Pawnbroker*'s evocation of a certain similarity between the Holocaust and Harlem's barred storefront windows and gang/racial violence. In a manner similar to *Children of the Storm*'s juxtaposition of survivor interviews in the safe haven of the present with archival footage of camps, ghettos and emaciated survivors - which creates a formal division between here-now and there-then - when *Emotional Arithmetic* visualizes Melanie's, Christopher's and Jakob's past in Drancy, these images are set apart from the present not only by editing but by formal devices that give this period a distinctly surreal quality. There are approximately nine times that the film moves from the present to the past, showing moments such as Melanie's arrival at Drancy, Jakob giving instructions to Melanie regarding the notebook, and Melanie and Christopher being separated after their liberation. In stark contrast to the bright autumn colours that frame the Eastern Townships, the scenes in the camp are black-and-white, with highly expressionist lighting that bathes the young Jakob, Melanie and Christopher (played by Kristen Holden-Ried, Regan Jewitt, and Alexandre Nachi respectively) in heavy shadows. The backgrounds in these scenes are also highly stylized, with two-dimensional *Caligari*-esque buildings as well as blown-up identity cards and pages from Melanie's notebook that provide backdrops to the action that lend these visualizations of the past a quality of theatrical staginess that is (with one exception that I will discuss below) formally distinct from the environment that surrounds Melanie in her present.

This formal distinction of Drancy during WWII works to emphasize that in 1985 Québec, the traumatic past is localized internally within Melanie and not present outside of her. Moreover, the film links this internalization of experience to the constitution of interpersonal barriers between her and her family that derive from her inability to (in the words of David) “forget” the past. The most explicit example of such an interpersonal barrier is between Melanie and her husband, who displays a callous inability to understand the tangible weight that his wife’s experiences in Drancy place on her seemingly bucolic life on his farm. The film subtly points to this barrier as it visualizes Melanie and David together for the first time only once she arrives home after picking Jakob and Christopher up at the airport, suggesting that the barrier of experience that surrounds Melanie is somewhat mollified by the arrival of the other survivors. More explicitly, David evokes a quality of macho naiveté while he is helping Christopher prepare his bed and he asks, “You put it all behind you now, Drancy, the whole experience?” When Christopher asks what he means by this David implicitly contrasts what he perceives to be Christopher’s ability to forget the past with the cloud that Melanie brings to the household: “Why, I mean, no tragic aura, no black pit of depression, no compulsive returning to the past! I admire that. Move on, that’s the trick!” Although the extent to which the past weights on Christopher is clarified only towards the film’s end, this conversation reveals that David, the former history professor, is unable to recognize the invisible trauma that Christopher also carries, and also that he is unable to grasp the extent to which an individual’s physical present can remain intimately bound to a traumatic past that is localized in one’s psyche. This naiveté becomes even more overt when Melanie enters a sitting area while David is reading an art history book, and he

points to a Biblical painting of the story from Genesis in which Jacob wrestles with an angel in a confrontation that leaves physical marks upon him. David explains the painting to Melanie in a pointed fashion, suggesting that most Biblical scholars believe that the physical confrontation was meant as a dream that was so powerful that Jacob was able to feel the tactile results of it afterwards. While the film does not make explicit the connection between the Biblical Jacob and Jakob Bronski, there is little doubt that his explanation to Melanie implies that he feels her unstable behaviour in the present is overstating the tangible effects of her past in Drancy.

David's inability or unwillingness to empathize with Melanie's past is further evident when Benjamin confides to Jakob how he has always been curious about what happened in Drancy, but his mother had never told him. He tells Jakob that when he was eleven, he found some photos of Drancy amongst Melanie's "collection" of material related to atrocities around the world, which terrified him so much that he actually hid. Benjamin also explains that after David found him hiding, his father briefly explained the WWII camps for "Jews like us" (this is the only moment in the film where David reveals that he is, at least ethnically, Jewish), and Melanie's internment. Yet Benjamin emphasizes to Jakob that while his father was explaining this to him it was like he was talking to his "students" rather than his son, suggesting that David's conception of the relationship between Melanie's traumatic past and her present is cerebral, logical, and thus lacks any emotional quality that may afford an empathetic relation. This lack of empathy is also evident in David's feelings towards Jakob. Even before Jakob arrives David expresses his reluctance to Benjamin about having a man who has been in a Russian gulag as a houseguest. While he tries to frame his feelings as concerns about

Jakob's physical and mental health, this actually exacerbates the emotional barrier between him and Melanie. When David angrily raises these concerns to his wife after he hears a shot in the barn and finds Jakob inside holding a rifle, Melanie sharply rebukes him, insisting that she is only alive because Jakob took care of her in Drancy and that David had better get used to it because he is a part of the family now. This moment in which Melanie perceives David's lack of understanding of what exactly Jakob meant in her past and for her present prompts her to ask her husband if he still loves her, which he tries to laugh off. Melanie persists, asking him to say it, which he does only as she forms his mouth for the words with her hands.

As is discussed in the next chapter, the arrival of Jakob and Christopher acts as a means of bringing the past to the present in a manner that is external to Melanie's individual psyche. This is made most explicit via Jakob's continual trips to the family barn, in which he sees Melanie and Christopher as children in the rafters, mostly silent, but occasionally speaking with him. However, like the internalization of the past in the figure of Melanie, when Jakob sees these figures in the barn, they stem from his own subjectivity. They are not "ghosts" present outside of his psychological perspective, which is made clear when Timmy comes to fetch Jakob for dinner and asks if he was talking to himself. The presence of Christopher is more troubling for Melanie. While Cohen's novel makes quite clear that they shared a physical or sexualized relationship as young people in the camp ("She had undone his pants. Run her hands the length of his body. 'So you don't die untouched,' she had said"),²¹ Barzman's film leaves the physical extent of their camp relationship more ambiguous. Yet through their interaction in the present and the stylized visualization of the past, it makes clear the extent of their

²¹ Matt Cohen, 39-40.

emotional bond. In the context of their reunion, Christopher tells Melanie explicitly that he is still in love with her and regrets that he let her be separated from him. This admission eventually prompts Melanie to have a hyperventilating panic attack as she tries to explain why she married David even though she still loved Christopher. In other words, Christopher is initially a figure that throws Melanie's present into a greater state of emotional flux.

At the same time, Christopher also offers a very clear sense of resolution for Melanie towards the film's conclusion when he tells her, "Melanie, I just want you to know that...that I'm there too. Walking through the gates of Drancy, that was the day my life stopped. Can you believe it, I mean, I still miss it. Not the inhumanity...but just the sheer joy of being alive, with you." Like the unification afforded by Hersh and Chaim's reciprocal confessions in *The Quarrel*, Christopher's admission makes clear that Melanie is alone neither in her emotional pain and loneliness, nor in her psychological entrapment within Drancy, thus dissolving the barrier between her and her present surroundings from which her past is absent (i.e. her life with David and Benjamin). In other words, at this moment the legacy of the past that persists within Melanie's memories simultaneously transcends *outside* of her in the present. The film formally alludes to this conflation as the tender actions of Christopher and Melanie in this scene are mirrored in their actions as children, as the film cuts between the present and the past and the young and older Melanie and Christopher simultaneously take each others' hands and stroke each others' faces. This is the only time in which there is visual match between the present and the formally distinct and stylized past, implying that with Christopher's confession that he shares Melanie's trauma, the past in the present is no

longer localized only within her. That this moment is one of “rebirth” for Melanie is further emphasized as the rain outside falls on her notebook of Drancy “arithmetic” that was left on the picnic table, metaphorically cleansing the past that had heretofore been carried by Melanie herself as a painful burden of responsibility for having survived. At the same time, the metaphor of the cleansed notebook, which implies that the past is paling for Melanie, offers a contradictory contrast to her “embracement” of the past via her sexual encounter with Christopher. This contradiction suggests a certain ambiguity as to whether Melanie is able (or wants to) move away from or stay psychologically bound to her past, and this ambiguity persists the next morning when she bids Christopher farewell, to which I will return. It is also significant that it is Benjamin who discovers the sopping notebook the following morning and attempts to rescue its information – a cross-generational discovery that Chapter Five will consider.

While David’s callousness may be an example of overtly malicious treatment of a survivor, *Emotional Arithmetic* is careful not to paint him simply as an insensitive boor, but also as a victim of the barrier around Melanie. At the dinner table, David confesses to Christopher and Jakob, “You have no idea what it is to be with her...Melanie feels the pain of the world as if it were her very own... Next to her, suffering from a migraine becomes an act of treason. And it’s true. I mean, how can anyone pretend to be in pain after all you went through? I guess that’s my story. A story of a man who never had the right to suffer because the pain his wife endured was so much greater than any other.” After a beat of awkward silence, Jakob articulates that which David seems to be suggesting: “You are an indirect victim of the atrocities of war.” “Yes, maybe,” David replies. “But what about us?” he asks, turning to Melanie. “Your husband, your son.

Your family. Do we have to be tortured or dead first before we matter?” As the film progresses, David also becomes a more sympathetic character, not only because his wife (re-) enters a physical relationship with Christopher, but also because he makes certain amends with Jakob as they share a late-night beer.

This dual resolution between Melanie and Christopher and between Jakob and David is in stark contrast to Cohen’s novel, in which David tries to bash Christopher’s head in with a rock for his affair with Melanie, which Jakob stops by shooting at him with a rifle (the book leaves it unclear as to whether Jakob’s shot actually hits David or he has a heart attack because of the shot, but he eventually dies in the hospital nonetheless).²² The final moments of the film on the other hand are a light-hearted breakfast at the same table where David’s outburst shocked the others into silence the previous night. On the one hand, this conclusion can be seen as almost a clichéd nod that “everything will be okay” - Christopher has broken Melanie’s emotional barrier, and the emotional arithmetic that keeps her rooted the horrors of the world has been washed away by the rain. Yet film also suggests that such an optimistic reading may be self-consciously platitudinous. First, Benjamin’s rescue of Melanie’s notebook points to either the necessity or inevitability of passing on painful knowledge of the past to future generations, and calls into question the putative value of “forgetting” – which is articulated by both David at Melanie’s inability to escape her past, and Jakob who expresses guilt for giving Melanie the assignment of the notebook when she was young, and that he was wrong to tell her to remember. Second, when Melanie says goodbye to Christopher, she shows him the button that she took out of the box in the film’s opening scene, which is revealed in one of the scenes in Drancy to be one that she tore off of

²² Matt Cohen, 177-178, 185-192.

Christopher's jacket after they are separated upon liberation. After pretending to hand it back to him, she playfully pulls it away and says, "I'll keep it 'til the next time." Such a conclusion ultimately leaves uncertain the delicate balance between David's exhortations for Melanie to forget the past and her compulsion to remain obsessively bound to it. Yet this refusal to give up the symbolic button suggests that once Christopher - the ultimate source of comfort that allows Melanie's past to be shared by another person - leaves, the legacy of the past will persist within Melanie, thus implying that her experiential barriers will remain intact. This ambiguity contrasts sharply with the conclusion of Cohen's novel in which Melanie happily confirms to her son that Christopher will be returning for a "long visit" after David's death.²³

Jeremy Podeswa's *Fugitive Pieces* covers similar thematic ground as *Emotional Arithmetic*. It stresses the link between the interpersonal barriers derived from, and the internalized trauma of, the Holocaust experience, and actually goes further than Barzman's film in its consideration of the subjective nature of experience and the memory of one's traumatic past. It does this not only by contrasting the less overtly traumatized survivor-protagonist with another survivor whose inability to cope with his personal history eventually compels him to commit suicide, but also by emphasizing the importance of the survivor's *perception* of the barriers that persist around him rather than placing the emotional conflicts that are the *result* of these barriers at the forefront. Moreover, the film uses this subjective perception to offer an implicit commentary on the *persistence* of the tangled web between the past and the present that actually counters the protagonist's *articulated* perspective that he is able to move beyond his traumatic past. The film does this by offering cues that destabilize the "happy ending" intimated by the

²³ *Ibid.*, 197.

life-affirming relationship between the survivor and his second wife, which concludes the film. These cues, as I will discuss below, imply that he is only able to perceive himself as escaping the past by failing or being unwilling to recognize its perpetual continuation in his present.

Fugitive Pieces' thematic focus on the psychological intermingling of the past and present is doubled by the film's non-linear narrative structure, which frequently jumps between different periods in the life of Holocaust survivor Jakob Beer. As such, it is useful to begin a discussion of the film by clarifying the chronological order of its fragmented narrative. The earliest period (P1), which opens the film, is of Jakob as a young boy (played by Robbie Kay) who is rescued in the Polish countryside by a Greek archaeologist named Athos (Rade Serbedzija), after his parents are killed and his sister Bella (Nina Dobrey) is dragged away by Nazis. Athos brings Jakob back to Greece where they live out the war years in relative security, although the ubiquitous threat of punishment for hiding Jews is evident in a round-up in which one of Athos' neighbours killed. After the conclusion of the war, Athos receives an invitation to teach at a university in Toronto, so he and Jakob move to Canada. The second temporal period (P2) consists of Jakob as a young man (played by Stephane Dillane), with Athos noticeably more elderly. In this period, Jakob and Athos are still living in their Toronto apartment, and Athos eventually dies. The third period (P3) is comprised of Jakob's life with his first wife, Alex (Rosamund Pike). This relationship is troubled by the weight of Jakob's past, which Alex, like David in *Emotional Arithmetic*, is unable or unwilling to understand. Eventually he and Alex split up and Jakob returns to Greece to write and finally bury Athos' ashes. The latest chronological period in the film (P4) features Jakob

as a middle-aged man, now a published writer, who meets his second wife Michaela (Ayelet Zurer). In this period, Michaela offers Jakob a greater sense of comfort in terms of resolving the turmoil that his past wreaks on his present life.

Since the film moves fluidly between these periods, and even shifts temporally while within a single period, the interrelationship of Jakob's past and present can be difficult to follow, let alone analyze. Yet the film's discontinuous temporality is afforded a sense of unity in the figure of Jakob's sister Bella. As Jakob moves through the different periods of his life, one constant is his ruminations about Bella's perpetual absence, except in the form of his subjective memories of her. Jakob's unresolved memories of his sister are not only presented as essential to his interpersonal barriers; they also compel him to undertake a psychological search that concludes only once he finds a figure that is able to act as metaphorical stand-in for Bella, in the form of Michaela.

The opening moments of *Fugitive Pieces* set the stage for the essential space that Bella will occupy in Jakob's psyche throughout the film. The first image is of Jakob as a child lying facedown in the Polish forest where Athos will eventually find him, which is accompanied by his voiceover stating, "I did not witness the most important events in my life. My deepest story must be told by a blind man, from behind a wall, from underground." On the one hand, this reference can be taken as an acknowledgment that by being taken by Athos to Greece, Jakob was able to escape the historical events in Poland that saw his family killed. This is implied towards the film's conclusion when this reference is revealed to be some of Jakob's writing, in which he expands that "While I hid in the radiant light of Athos's island, thousands suffocated in darkness. While I hid

in the luxury of a room, thousands were stuffed into crawlspaces, stables, pigsties. While I was learning Greek and English...Jews were filling the corners and cracks of Europe.”

On the other hand, the ambiguity of this opening statement is clarified by the sequence that immediately follows it, which suggests that what he does not witness, and thus what becomes the most important event in his life, is the fate of his sister. As young Jakob sits at a piano taking lessons from Bella in the family’s modest country home, gun shots from outside coupled with Bella’s silent tears and their father hiding valuables suggest the inevitability of the attack to come. As his mother nervously glances out the front door, she quickly grabs Jakob and pulls him to a hiding space in the walls of the house, leaving her, his father and Bella in plain sight. As officers break into the home, Jakob’s parents are both shot, while Bella is taken alive. This attack is shot from Jakob’s hidden perspective, allowing only a glimpse of it through the wall. When Jakob finally emerges from his hiding spot as night falls, the bodies of his mother and father are sprawled out on the floor, leaving no doubt as to their fate. Bella, however, is gone, leaving Jakob ultimately uncertain of what became of her.

Since Jakob actually sees his parents being killed – even if it is from a hidden vantage point – it is unlikely that the un-witnessed “events” articulated in the opening voiceover simply refer, broadly, to the Holocaust which he was able to escape in Greece. It is rather the uncertainty of Bella’s fate – the fact that he is unable to know what happened to her – that has a profound effect on Jakob’s relationship to his past and his inability to allow himself to be fully absorbed in his present. While at Athos’ home in Greece, it is specifically memories of Bella that he returns to. For instance, while having his hair cut, Jakob recalls Bella stroking his hair and playfully blowing in his face.

Similarly, while watching Athos make coffee, he thinks back to Bella telling him about how Beethoven used to make his coffee with precisely sixty beans. Most importantly, he also dreams of Bella being dragged through the woods away from their home – an event that he did not witness and is striving to imagine by filling in these “fugitive pieces” of memory.²⁴ Jakob spells out this compulsion explicit explicitly in P4 near the film’s conclusion, as he confides to Michaela while in bed together, “You take specific moments, and your mind fills in the gaps. I spend years trying to imagine Bella’s route from the house. Where did she die?” Here Jakob also articulates the importance of the uncertainty of Bella’s fate: “I used to dream that maybe she escaped...I also used to wonder what would have happened if I had stayed. Waited in the house instead of running away. Maybe she came back.”

Similarly, in P1 while in their Toronto apartment, Jakob imagines Bella miming playing piano at their dining room table, which the film visualizes through a close-up of Jakob’s face turning to the right as the sound of a piano begins on the soundtrack. His imagination of Bella is intimated via a transtemporal shot- reverse-shot of Jakob watching, and Bella miming. There are 2 shots in this “encounter” that include both of them – over-the-shoulder shots from behind Jakob as Bella gazes lovingly at him. The piano on the soundtrack then abruptly ends, as the image shifts to Athos’ perspective of the scene through a long-shot of Jakob staring at an empty chair. When Athos enters the frame from behind Jakob, he assures the young boy, “I still think of her too.” Jakob asks Athos, “You think she’s dead, don’t you,” to which Athos replies, “I don’t know Jakob.

²⁴ The implication that the “fugitive pieces” alluded to in the film’s ambiguous title are fugitive pieces of memory of course underwrites the focus on Jakob’s compulsion to continually return psychologically to his fragmented and incomplete memories of Bella, and his imagination of what happened to her after she was seized. This connection is made more overt in the film’s French title, *La mémoire en fuite*.

Maybe it's best not to hope." This moment is also essential because it formally conveys that the memory of Bella specifically is the one that is inevitable and inescapable for Jakob. After Athos tells Jakob that it might be best not to hope that his sister is still alive, he gives the young boy a notebook and tells him that writing can be a source of relief when he feels things "building up inside." After he hands the notebook to Jakob, the film cuts from this moment in P1 to P2, with the now-adult Jakob reading his own writing to the elderly Athos that spells out the inescapable quality of memory and leaves both Jakob and the older man in tears: "At night, memory roams your skin...Nothing releases you. Not death in the dream, not waking. This is how one becomes undone by a smell, a word, a place, a photo of a mountain of shoes. By love that closes its mouth before calling your name." While this reading does not specifically refer to Bella, the filmic juxtaposition of Jakob's painful yet cathartic writing with the moment that Athos gives him his first notebook, after he sees the young boy's longing pain while imagining his sister, clearly establishes memories of Bella as those fugitive pieces that haunt Jakob's present.

The most critical moment in *Fugitive Pieces* in regards to the importance of the memory of Bella for Jakob occurs after Athos' death, when he discovers letters that his guardian had written to various authorities trying to find out if his sister had survived. As there are no responses within this collection, this is the moment where the film comes closest to confirming that Bella is indeed dead, as Jakob collapses in tears. In terms of both the chronology of Jakob's life (the film's "story," or *what* constitutes the film's narrative) and the film's formal construction of his life that progresses *out of* chronological order (the film's "plotting," or the order of the narrative's presentation in

the duration of the film), this discovery presents Jakob with an opportunity to free himself from the entrapment of the past that stemmed in part from the uncertainty of Bella's fate, which afforded a faint hope that she had survived.

Although Jakob's relationship with his first wife Alex (P3) occurs prior to Athos' death (in P2) in the film's plot, in terms of the film's chronological story, it occurs *after* the implicit confirmation of Bella's death that follows Athos' (hence P3 follows P2).²⁵ Jakob's relationship with Alex thus at first seems to offer a welcome escape from his past. His initial meeting with her in a record store quickly establishes her as a "free-spirit" who insists on buying a pair of expensive red high-heel shoes to run in the rain, which she keeps on as they have sex. That Alex offers a stark contrast to Jakob is spelled out as she laughs at him during sex for being "so serious", and later remarks that she has "never lived anywhere for more than two years" while Jakob is still in the apartment he and Athos lived in upon their arrival in Canada.

Initially, Jakob welcomes the change that Alex signifies for him, and hopes that she may "let in a finger of light." After he admits during their first meeting – which the film will eventually reveal happens *after* Athos' death - that he does not "really have any friends," he attempts to fit in with a group of her cultured acquaintances as they joke at a coffee house with cigarettes precariously hanging out of their mouths about "some

²⁵ Here I am drawing on the Russian formalist distinction between the *fabula* and the *sjuzhet*, or plot and story of a narrative. David Bordwell has applied this distinction to film studies most notably by explaining that the *fabula*/story of a film "embodies the action as a chronological, cause-and-effect chain of events occurring within a given duration and a spatial field." The *fabula* can thus demand a chronological arrangement of the film's narrative in the mind of the spectator, which may only be possible retrospectively in a film like *Fugitive Pieces* where events are presented out of chronological order in the *sjuzhet*, which is the order of events as they are presented in the film. For instance, in *Fugitive Pieces*' plot, Jakob's relationship with Alex comes before the death of Athos'. In terms of the film's *fabula* however, Athos' death chronologically predates this relationship. My analysis of this relationship in the context of an *earlier* chronological event (Jakob finding Athos' letters) that actually appears *later* in the film is indicative of the retrospective necessity of *fabula* construction. For a further discussion of the *fabula* and *sjuzhet* in film narration, see David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1985), 49-53.

horrible underground jazz club,” “a lecture by Marshall McLuhan,” or “some very worthy but very dull meeting on the joys of the Labour Progressive Party.” Although Jakob’s discomfort in this scene is palpable in his stiff behaviour, which implies a certain social barrier around him, he does make an effort to “loosen up” as he jokingly leans across the table to kiss one of Alex’s male friends on the cheek after he is given an origami swan.

Yet Alex’s ability to sever Jakob from the shadows of his past is called into question as their relationship and eventual marriage unfolds. Like Melanie in *Emotional Arithmetic*, Jakob becomes obsessed with specific stories of the Holocaust, like a woman in Birkenau who kept a photo of her family under her tongue for three months, or a woman who hid Jews during the war without the knowledge of her husband, who beat her nearly to death when he found out. Jakob’s keen interest in these historical instances that offer clear information about their human participants invariably work to counteract his inability to know what actually happened to Bella after she was taken by the Nazis, even if he is now able to accept her death. And like *Emotional Arithmetic*’s David, Alex’s patience begins to wane over what she perceives as her husband’s obsession over the details of history.

In a manner that also evokes the relationship between David and Melanie, the increasing barrier between Alex and Jakob is not simply due to her inability to empathize with his experiences and memories, but is also bound to the complex relationship to the past (and to Bella more specifically) that is constituted in Jakob’s subjectivity. Alex’s role as a “finger of light” – which Jakob initially perceives as a welcome escape from the entrapment within his personal history - eventually turns into an unwelcome obstacle that

stands in the way of the pieces of his memory that he longs to retrieve. When Alex finds one of Jakob's notebooks, she reads that from her husband's perspective she "never understands, she thinks that she's doing me good, snatching me from the jaws of despair. But each time a memory or a story slinks away, it takes more of me with it." Jakob's writing also suggests that this conception of Alex as blocking his psychological search for his past is more specifically blocking his search for Bella: "Everything is wrong. The bedroom, Alex beside me, my panic. How will Bella ever find me here, beside this strange woman?" When their marriage finally dissolves, Jakob laments that the inevitable and inescapable ties to the past and to Bella invariably necessitate a barrier around him in his present that Alex was only temporarily able to penetrate since "to live with ghosts requires solitude."

Jakob's passive resentment towards Alex's "finger of light" that blocks the shadows of his past cannot however be read as an instance of emotional masochism that *welcomes* the inextricability of Bella from his present. Rather, this imposition can be more accurately understood as an inescapable load that he perceives he has a certain responsibility to carry. This sense of responsibility is articulated towards the end of the film when Jakob's voiceover admits that his compulsion to psychologically return to Bella was rooted in his perception of *her* "loneliness," which precludes the possibility of engaging in an emotional connection with the living (as opposed to "ghosts"). When Jakob returns to Greece to bury Athos' ashes after his and Alex's marriage falls apart, his voiceover actually professes that he longs to leave his memories behind. Yet the memories of Bella are inescapable as he is "haunted" by his perception of her perpetual presence. For instance, as he watches a woman with dark, Mediterranean hair hang her

laundry, it sparks memories of his sister. This connection is made explicit as the woman's act of hanging clothes is framed by Jakob's voiceover ruminations about Bella as he watches her, and is visually doubled as the film cuts to images that show (from Jakob's memory) Bella moving playfully through a filled clothesline. In short, the optimism with which Jakob begins his relationship with Alex that is chronologically linked to his discovery of Bella's death is ultimately unable to relieve the weight that his past holds over him.

Accordingly, if we consider P3 (Alex and Jakob's relationship, break-up and his travels back to Greece) as chronologically following Jakob's realization that Bella did not survive the war, what this period covers is the potential and ultimate failure of Jakob to break the hold of Bella over him. The reasons for this failure can in part be explained by Alex's resentment towards her husband's obsession with the past. However, in a manner that looks forward to what I will argue is Bella's continuing presence for Jakob in the figure of Michaela, the plotting of the film suggests that an essential reason for Jakob's inability to escape his past while with Alex is because even after Bella's death has been clarified for him, he ironically still needs to perceive Bella's spectral compulsion to *allow* him to move on in order to live in the present. The film establishes this necessity by cutting from Jakob crying at the end of P2 over the pile of Athos' letters to a dream in which Bella says, "Jakob, I have something to tell you." Yet when he awakens from the dream, he is not in P3, which would follow chronologically but has already occurred in the film's plot, but at the beginning of P4 – the period in which he will eventually find a sense of peace and resolution with Michaela free from the ghosts of his past, which eluded his relationship with Alex. It is crucial to note that the film implies this link

between Bella and Jakob's second wife, as it is the phone call to invite him to the dinner where he will meet Michaela that awakens him from this dream.

The film further articulates the importance of Jakob's psychological need for Bella to "allow" him to fully immerse himself in a relationship with Michaela by pointing to the pragmatic dangers of remaining trapped in one's traumatic past. After Jakob and Michaela have met, but before their relationship has assumed the transcendental quality that it does in the film's conclusion, Jakob discovers that Jozef (Diego Matamoros), another Holocaust survivor who lived in the same building as him and Athos, has committed suicide. As the ambulance takes the body away, Jozef's son Ben (Ed Stoppard) tells Jakob that even though both he and Jozef had gone through the experiences of the Holocaust, Jakob's generosity and his father's emotional "impenetrability" make them seem like they are "from different worlds." Jakob's response downplays this contrast as he assures Ben, "Your father suffered a lot Ben...[He] told me not long ago that he still would dream about his mother and father. The smallest things. The detail of his mother's coat, a button. His father's shoes outside in the rain. And that when he woke up in the morning, old as he was, he was still crying."

The subtext of this explanation to Ben is of course that Jakob's inability to live his life in the present without psychologically returning to Bella is not that different from the pain of Jozef's dreams. This is further clarified as the film cuts to Jakob in bed with Michaela as Bella once again visits him in a dream to dispel the ambiguity left by her previous assertion that she has something to tell him, which was interrupted by the ringing phone. In this vision/dream, immediately after the tragic possibilities of being completely intertwined in one's traumatic past have been articulated through Jozef's

suicide, the Bella of Jakob's subjective mind explicitly tells him to "Go," metaphorically setting him free of the compulsive desire to "live with ghosts." Shortly after this, Jakob's voiceover clarifies his understanding of this command as the film shows him and Michaela deeply in love in the sunny paradise of Greece: "All the years I felt Bella entreating me, filled with her loneliness. I've misunderstood her signals. Like other ghosts, she whispers not for me to join her, but so when I'm close enough, she can push me back into the world."

Of course there are less metaphysical reasons that the film offers as to why Jakob's relationship with Michaela will succeed where it failed with Alex. Unlike Alex, Michaela's attempts at empathy with Jakob's past are clear. Rather than berating him for his "obsession" with details of the past, Michaela listens with quiet tears as Jakob describes the fugitive pieces of memory from which has tried to assemble Bella's fate after she was taken from the house. Her sensitivity towards Jakob's tragic relationship to his past is also evident when she reveals to him in a letter that she is pregnant, and that their child will be named Bella if it is a girl, or Bela if it is a boy. The film leaves little doubt by using Jakob's romantic and euphoric voiceover that for him, his life with Michaela has offered him a new beginning, which marks a notable departure from both Anne Michaels' novel and an earlier version of the film that premiered at the 2007 Toronto International Film Festival, in which Jakob is killed in an automobile accident.²⁶

Yet in spite of Jakob's undisguised joy that concludes *Fugitive Pieces*, it would be erroneous to simply equate this (Jakob's) subjectivity with the *film's* commentary on Jakob and Michaela's marriage and its symbolic status of his ability to escape his past.

²⁶ For a discussion of these changes, the reasons for them, and various responses towards them, see Marc Glassman, "Podeswa rearranges Pieces," *Playback* (April 10, 2008), <http://www.playbackonline.ca/articles/daily/20080410/pieces.html> (accessed May 12, 2010).

P4 actually offers a number of suggestions that, far from moving away from the specter of Bella, Jakob's joy with Michaela is bound in part to his wife acting as a substitute stand-in for his sister. Again, this link is not acknowledged by Jakob's perspective, but is apparent in the film's formal structure. First, just as Michaela's empathy contrasts with Alex's impatience, so too do the appearances of the two women differ starkly. While Alex is blonde and Nordic in appearance, Michaela - a Spanish-Russian character played by the Israeli actress Ayelet Zurer - bears a striking physical resemblance not only to the dark-haired Bella, but also to the Greek woman hanging clothes that reminds Jakob of his sister when he returns to Greece to bury Athos's ashes. The film also implies that Michaela is bound to Jakob's memory of Bella when they are lying in bed and he is confessing his curiosity as to his sister's fate. After telling her that he used to dream that Bella had escaped, he continues, "I also used to wonder what would have happened if I had stayed. Waited in the house instead of running away. Maybe she came back." At this moment Jakob rises slightly and gazes down at Michaela as he shifts from talking about Bella in the third-person, and links this questioning about his sister's whereabouts to Michaela in the second-person: "There's a poem... 'You're many years late. How happy I am to see you.'" By shifting from Jakob's discussion of Bella to a poem that thematically relates to his concern that "Maybe she came back," yet which articulates the ambiguous "you" as *either* Bella *or* Michaela, the film effaces a clear delineation between the two. Similarly in another instance, while watching Michaela bake, Jakob begins to imagine Bella in the kitchen with their mother. There are no instances in which the film implies a similar visual correlation for Jakob between Bella and Alex.

The most overt instance of a commentative filmic voice on the perpetual role of Bella in Jakob's present with Michaela that differs from his articulated perspective occurs in the context of his voiceover explanation of how he has "misunderstood" Bella's spectral function in his memories/dreams. To return to this voiceover briefly, Jakob reflects, "I've misunderstood her signals. Like other ghosts, she whispers not for me to join her, but so when I'm close enough, she can *push* me back into the world." Very shortly after this reflection, the film shows Jakob and Michaela climbing a picturesque cliff overlooking the sea, with her embracing him from behind at the top. She then literally *pushes* him off the cliff into the water before joining him in the water for a loving embrace. While this link between the metaphorical "push" articulated by Jakob's voiceover and the literal push by Michaela into the sea may appear to be a stretch, the juxtaposition of these two moments, combined with the other instances that imply a (perhaps unacknowledged by Jakob) correlation between Michaela and Bella, suggests that there is a commentative element to the film that suggests that the "happy ending" is possible not because of an ability to break free from Bella, but because Michaela is able to act as a stand-in for her. In this sense, Jakob has not actually broken *out* of the barrier of experience, but has appropriated Michaela *into* it, which is further implied by her suggestion to name their children after his sister.²⁷

²⁷ It is worth stating explicitly that in *Fugitive Pieces* there is a clear distinction between the *film's* commentary on Jakob's appropriation of Michaela into his barrier and Jakob's own perspective in which the connection between Bella and Michaela is missed. This is in stark contrast to *The Pawnbroker* in which the film's *mise-en-scène* mimics Nazerman's psychological equation of the Holocaust and Harlem (such as the image of shoes in a window display that is presented as an objective shot rather than from Nazerman's perspective). In this case then, the American *Pawnbroker* embodies the appropriation of the Holocaust into a setting in a manner that transcends the subjective perspective of the protagonist, thus implying the universal appropriation (or Americanization) of the Holocaust discussed by Doneson. *Fugitive Pieces* on the other hand self-consciously emphasizes that *for the film*, the barrier around Jakob persists, even if he fails to see the specter of Bella in his marriage to Michaela. This I would argue is a key difference between

Thus far this analysis has focused on how the barrier of experience functions in Canadian Holocaust films in a manner that addresses the problem of experiential distance between Canada and the Holocaust historically, as well as on an interpersonal level between those who did not experience the Holocaust through an accident of geography or time, and those who lived through its horrors. I would now like to move on to consider how this tendency is approached in other films that seek to *resolve* the barrier, either by dispersing the experience outside of the individual subjectivities of the survivors (something that *Fugitive Pieces* implicitly leaves unresolved by Jakob's relationship with Michaela that remains tied to his psychological conception of her as a sister-surrogate), or by attempting to appropriate the experiential perspective of survivors. It is only by considering how other films address the problematic articulated in those discussed thus far that the true utility of the barrier of experience as a heuristic for analyzing Canada's Holocaust cinema becomes clear.

Hollywood and Canadian representations of the Holocaust: the former erases the barrier of experience via universalization, while the latter leaves it intact as an essential historiographic problem.

Chapter Four

Dispersing the Past: Shared Loss and Painful Returns

The previous two chapters considered films that enact the problematic of the Holocaust's historical absence from Canada via an experiential barrier between those who experienced (and survived) the Holocaust and those who lack this experience. In *Children of the Storm* and *Two Men*, this barrier is articulated in sociopolitical contexts specific to Canada as a national space that lacked a direct experiential relationship to the Holocaust. *The Quarrel*, *Emotional Arithmetic*, and *Fugitive Pieces* intimate, despite their Canadian settings, that this barrier can be understood as transcending a specifically Canadian context via the traumatized legacy of the past inscribed *within* survivors. What all of these films hold in common though is that they frame the barrier of experience as a *problem*. It is because of the fact that the survivors' experiences are unshared by others that a barrier exists, and it is this barrier that renders the experienced individual isolated on his or her side of it, with the inexperienced on the other. The next two chapters consider how Canadian films address and redress the problem of this barrier on each of its two sides. The present chapter will focus on how the isolation on the "experiential" side of the barrier is addressed by "dispersing" the Holocaust experience so that it is not wholly localized in the internal subjectivity of an individual survivor. This "dispersion of experience" takes two interrelated forms: first, by emphasizing the *shared* quality of the Holocaust experience amongst a *group* of survivors; and second, by having survivors revisit the spaces of their past in what Annette Insdorf refers to as the "Documentary of Return."

At the same time, these films also reveal the limitations of this resolution by intimating that what is shared amongst the survivors, and what is ultimately exposed by the traversal of space, is constituted wholly by loss. This is not simply in the sense that the past is “lost” because it cannot *actually* be re-experienced, but that the experience shared by the survivors is one marked by the literal devastation of their past – including families, homes, and culture. These films thus make attempts to reclaim the past for the survivor – to make it present via communal suffering and/or spatial mediation – while simultaneously calling attention (perhaps unintentionally) to a barrier between the past and the present, since what is shared amongst survivors is *loss* – a “gone-ness” that is visually manifest when survivors return to the spaces in which their past *was* present (unlike in Canada where it *never* was present), yet is no longer. In short, these films ultimately reveal that the Holocaust’s historical absence remains unfilled.

Shared Loss

If we look at the two modes of dispersing the Holocaust experience – emphasizing its shared quality and travel back to the spaces of the past – their interrelationship may appear rather tenuous, linked only by the coincidence that they both happen to appear in a number of Canadian films about the Holocaust. While there are films that include one or the other – such as *The Quarrel* or *Undying Love*, which emphasize Holocaust trauma as a communal or shared quality yet do not feature geographical movement, or *Visualizing Memory...A Last Detail*, which documents the return of a *single* survivor to one of the sites where he was interned during the war – a number of them include both. Films like *The Voyage of the St. Louis*, *Memorandum*, *The*

Boys of Buchenwald, *So Many Miracles*, and to a certain extent *Emotional Arithmetic* (although the travel in this film is *to* Canada),¹ all posit a communal quality to the Holocaust experience and mobilize travel as a way to re-visit the past. Furthermore, if we frame our discussion with the contention that such films in part address the problematic discussed in the last two chapters – the barrier of experience – a more sustained commonality emerges.

When one considers the wartime atrocities that drove Holocaust survivors to Canada and simultaneously contributed to the barrier of experience, survivors can be conceived as constituting something that resembles a “diasporic” community. As Mary Chamberlain notes in a recent review in the *History Workshop Journal*, a “diaspora” requires a “forcible exile” which differentiates it from “migration,” and that the emergence of a cogent diasporic identity can be informed by “a recognition of historically shared trauma and/or homeland.”² In the case of the survivors in these films, that which is shared is clearly the former. To reiterate, race, religion, or ethnicity *cannot* constitute the defining shared quality of this particular group since, as the previous two chapters demonstrated, that which engendered the barrier of experience for survivors was not Judaism (ethnic or religious) nor other qualities of identity, such as class or national identification (real or imagined).³ In *Children of the Storm*, one of the social workers that worked with the war orphans even notes that quarrels between children often broke out

¹ I include *Emotional Arithmetic* among these, even though Christopher and Jakob actually travel *to* Canada, since it is this movement that reunites them with Melanie and thus re-ignites the bond between them derived by their communal experience in Drancy.

² Mary Chamberlain, “Migrant Myths and Memories,” *History Workshop Journal* 67 (Spring 2009): 245.

³ This is of course according to Benedict Anderson’s understanding of nationhood that emphasizes the importance of imagination in constituting a nation rather than the legal or physical boundaries that define a given country. This is an important observation since many diasporic communities are constituted by an imagined space of home that is not necessarily a “nation-state” in a legal sense, such as Palestinian or Pan-African identity. See Benedict Anderson, “Imagined Communities,” in *Nationalism*, eds. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 89-96.

due to the carry-over of nation-based animosities. The “common heritage” of these survivors is precisely the Holocaust experience that was neither shared by all the peoples of their home nations, nor shared by many members of the Jewish communities into which they immigrated after the war.

I am of course using this understanding of Holocaust survivors as a “diasporic” community heuristically, as a way to contextualize relative to the barrier of experience the shared quality of *collective* trauma that is often coupled in Canadian Holocaust cinema with a compulsion to “return.” As Robin Cohen observes in *Global Diasporas*, the conception of communities as diasporic generally depends on a certain collective self-identification as such, which stems from an “acknowledge[ment] that ‘the old country’ – a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore- always has some claim on their loyalty or emotions.”⁴ Certainly, one could argue that Holocaust survivors have “emerged” in Canada as a specific group and has recognized itself *as* a group with shared concerns.⁵ Of course, the extent to which survivors *actually* conceive of themselves as constituting a diaspora, or constituting a diasporic population in the more prolific understandings of the term as embodying a “sense of a past migration history [coupled with] a sense of co-ethnicity with others of a similar background,”⁶ is beyond the purview of this project. The figure of the Holocaust survivor as presented in Canadian films however can be considered experientially diasporic, and thus read as

⁴ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), ix.

⁵ Leslie Anne Hulse argues that “emergence” of “the Holocaust survivor” as an cogent faction within the Canadian Jewish community was largely rooted in the “rise of a neo-Nazi threat in Canada, [which] prompted the survivor to come forward and assume a new and unique position in the community; that of a witness.” See Leslie Anne Hulse, “The Emergence of the Holocaust Survivor in the Canadian Jewish Community,” (M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 1979), iii. This of course corresponds with Franklin Bialystok’s claims about the increasingly political voice of Canadian survivors in the early 1960s in response to a spate of anti-Semitic incidents (see Chapter Two, Notes 16 and 27).

⁶ Robin Cohen, ix.

constituting a diasporic community via the sense of “co-experience” that led to their exile (rather than “co-ethnicity”). Since it is precisely this sense of exile or displacement that manifests itself in the barrier of experience between Holocaust survivors and those who did not experience it in the films discussed thus far, it is logical that the commonality of the Holocaust experience affords a sense of communal identification for survivors that enables the dispersion of the past outside the subjectivity of single individuals.

The historical implications derived from the contention that the experience of the Holocaust constitutes a shared history is implicit in the dialogic testimonial structure of Maziar Bahari’s⁷ NFB production, *The Voyage of the St. Louis*, which approaches one of the Holocaust’s distinct microhistories via a group of survivors that communally experienced it. This history that Bahari’s film covers is that from which the American melodrama *The Voyage of the Damned* (Stuart Rosenberg, 1976) was derived – that of a luxurious cruise ship that received unprecedented permission from the Nazi government to depart from Munich in 1938, carrying a group of Jews hoping to flee the Nazi oppression that would soon turn to murder by immigrating to Cuba. These passengers would be eventually turned away not only by the Cuban government, but also by the United States and Canada (even though the ship never actually approached Canadian shores), before ultimately being sent back to Europe. Like *The Children of the Storm*, *The Voyage of the St. Louis* draws on a fairly large number of interviews with different survivors to explore the history of the voyage, which the film documents during a reunion cruise for the St. Louis survivors. In this sense the film is less overtly biographical in

⁷ Maziar Bahari is a Canadian journalist who would later garner significant press attention when he was detained without charge in Iran on June 23, 2009 during the election protests. He was released on October 20, 2009. See “Canadian journalist Maziar Bahair detained in Iran: Newsweek,” *Edmonton Sun*, June 21, 2009, <http://www.edmontonsun.com/news/canada/2009/06/21/9881186.html>, and “Maziar Bahari Released,” *Newsweek*, October 17, 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/218283>.

scope than some of the films dealt with below like *Memorandum*, *So Many Miracles*, or *Visualizing Memory...A Last Detail* which approach the past through a specific individual (or couple, in the case of *So Many Miracles*). Yet by capturing survivors together on this cruise who share a common experience in order to articulate the narrative of the St. Louis's voyage, Bahari's film adopts a dialogic approach to the past in which the shared quality of the ship's failed immigration saga is told and re-told by a number of different individuals in what can best be described as "group testimonies."

This dialogic approach to history is evident throughout the film, in which individual moments of testimony are complemented by collective instances in which survivors are grouped around a table or on the deck of the cruise ship, as they recall both their personal histories and that of the St. Louis' journey. These group settings, in which the frame often contains multiple persons offering multiple perspectives, thus differ from the more conventional singular testimony style of *Children of the Storm* (while there are multiple interviewees in this film, each interview consists only of a single individual), which is also favoured by organizations that are devoted to creating archival databases of first-hand testimony. For instance, in initiatives like the Fortunoff Video Archive housed at Yale University or Steven Spielberg's Survivors of the *Shoah* Visual History Foundation,⁸ each testimony is videotaped individually, specifically for the purposes of

⁸ For written transcriptions of select video interviews held in the Fortunoff Archive, see Joshua M. Greene and Shiva Kumar, eds., *Witness: Voices from the Holocaust* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000). It should be noted that in the testimonies collected for the Survivors of the *Shoah* Visual History Foundation, the interviewees are encouraged to conclude their testimony by offering a message that can be left as a legacy for future generations, and then they are united with their family on-screen. Annette Wieviorka suggests that such a conclusion works as "living proof of the Nazis failure to exterminate a people" and suggests that the Survivors of the *Shoah* project "is not ultimately concerned with constructing an oral history of the Holocaust but rather with creating an archive of survival." Yet regardless of the motivations behind the specific interview strategies used by initiatives like the Fortunoff Archive or the Survivors of the *Shoah* foundation, their purpose is to capture *individual* interviews for the purpose of database archiving, and thus differ from the dialogic approach to first-hand accounts in *The Voyage of the St. Louis*. See

being placed in a database for both research purposes, and to ensure the preservation of first-hand accounts of the Holocaust. Since the impetus of the *Voyage of the St. Louis* is the history of the ship's voyage and is less devoted to the intrinsic collection of testimony itself, the interviews lack the austere formality of those collections of individual testimonies. This informal nature is further heightened by the fact that the majority of the interviews are clearly taking place on a cruise ship, as a single survivor or group of survivors recalls the past while on a deck overlooking the ocean, or inside the ship with windows clearly showing the water outside.

The most important manifestations of this less formalized approach to testimonial history are those moments that explicitly emphasize the communal quality of the St. Louis experience, as a number of survivors combine their perspectives and memories as they talk over or correct each other. For instance, the film often cuts between a shot of one survivor speaking to a shot of another listening, evoking a shot-reverse shot structure conventional to narrative cinema but contrary to testimonial approaches where the testifier is primarily speaking to the camera. This communal quality assumes an actual dialogic structure when more than one survivor in a testimony sequence verbally contributes to a story, thus creating a literal example of collective memory comprised of multiple perspectives that counters Peter Novick's assertion that "collective memory simplifies; sees events from a single, committed perspective."⁹ In one such scene, a man recalls that while they were on the ship, they were able to hold Friday night services to celebrate Shabbat. As he recalls this small detail, his wife chimes in, "After they removed Hitler's picture, remember?" This inclusion prompts the man to clarify the

Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, trans. Jared Stark (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 114-115.

⁹ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), 4.

story by saying that the German captain had given the passengers permission to take down the *Führer's* picture before celebrating the Sabbath. In the most explicit example of this dialogic construction of collective memory, a group of survivors are on the ship's deck remembering a man who tried to commit suicide after it became clear the ship would be unable to dock in North America and would have to return to Germany. One woman recalls, "I was standing on the deck one day, sort of admiring the view, when suddenly some man rushed out with blood running down his arms and dripping onto the floor [at this moment the film briefly cuts to a shot a male survivor listening to her], and people started to scream and he ran towards the railings and jumped overboard." The film then cuts to another woman nodding, who engagingly responds to this recollection, complementing it with her own memory: "I can remember that very vividly, that's the most vivid memory of all the trip. He literally took his hands and pulled his arteries out, and he didn't want...he struggled to be saved." The first woman then clarifies this by saying, "Not to be saved," as the camera pans over to her, clarifying that these two women are standing beside each other. The second woman then absorbs this clarification into her own recollection, "Not to be saved, yes." The film then cuts to another man, and although it is unclear as to whether he is spatially connected with the previous two female survivors, his testimony suggests a continuation of the same story, saying, "And everybody was trying to do something, but we couldn't. And there were sailors jumping from higher than we were, from overboard, and rescued him."

On the one hand, this emphasis on the communal quality of historical experience may be seen as calling attention to the limitations of individual memory. Yet *The Voyage of the St. Louis* does not invoke the collective nature of memory of the voyage in order to

render *unstable* individual recollections. In this sense, Bahari's film is quite unlike Akira Kurosawa's classic *Roshoman* (1950), which is probably the best cinematic example of using multiple viewpoints to cast doubt on the validity of each individual perspective.¹⁰ The use of multiple survivors and group testimonies in *The Voyage of the St. Louis* is complementary, working to dialogically re-construct the past by acknowledging that anhistorical event is not experienced by individuals in isolation. In other words, *The Voyage of the St. Louis* disperses Holocaust experience into a group, emphasizing its shared quality rather than positing it as localized individually.

Yet *The Voyage of the St. Louis* is somewhat different from other films that emphasize the communal quality of the Holocaust experience for exiled survivors. Aside from its concluding moments that feature the St. Louis survivors at a Holocaust commemoration ceremony in Miami, the film does not emphasize the communal quality of experience as itself a source of *comfort*. While it establishes historical experience as shared through its utilization of collective memory, it does not directly consider the quality of this collectivity itself.

We have already seen examples in films like *Emotional Arithmetic* and *The Quarrel* of a bond between survivors that stems from an experience that they share that those around them do not. In these two films, in contrast to Alex in *Two Men* or for Jakob upon the death of Athos in *Fugitive Pieces*, more than one survivor populates the "experiential" side of the barrier of experience, and this communal quality offers a source of comfort. In *Emotional Arithmetic*, this sense of shared trauma assumes a romantic quality in the relationship between Christopher and Melanie – a relationship in the

¹⁰ Kurosawa's *Roshomon* is about a murder that is recounted by a number of different parties. However, each perspective tells the story with details distinct from the others. Through this strategy the film emphasizes the subjectivity, and thus fallibility, of individual perception.

present that rekindles a connection between the two as children at Drancy, even if Barzman's film leaves the extent of their romantic/sexual experiences in the camp more ambiguous than in Cohen's novel. More overt is the sexual re-awakening that Melanie experiences with Christopher, rousing her from being the object of David's almost platonic exasperation, as she must literally form the words "I love you" with his own lips. This conception of a romantic link between survivors of the Nazi genocide is also manifest in the documentaries *Undying Love* and *So Many Miracles*. The former film is comprised of a series of vignettes that feature both interviews and re-enactments that focus on couples in which both parties are Holocaust survivors. The film's emphasis on the romantic bond shared between two individuals who survived the Holocaust attempts to establish the power of this love as transcending (or at least included amongst) the Holocaust's horror. This sense of optimism is made quite clear in its opening sequence, which features a female voiceover stating that she met her husband in one of the camps. "Hitler," the voice says, "was my matchmaker." *So Many Miracles*, a "documentary of return" that I will return to in greater detail below, also features a couple that survived the Holocaust, and establishes a link between their love and their experience of the Holocaust as the woman suggests that it was their love for each other that enabled them to survive.

But despite these instances of a shared past, by which historical experience is dispersed from being localized in individuals into groups, it is important to bear in mind that this community still consists in relation to the *other* side of the experiential barrier. As a diaspora constituted by the Holocaust experience, that which marks the survivors in these films *as* a community is that they have a shared quality that is absent from others. And it is this shared quality in the face of this absence that provides a certain sense of

relief. In *Emotional Arithmetic* most explicitly, the arrival of Christopher and Jakob functions as a source of comfort for Melanie as she is able to re-visit her past with individuals that share it, rather than being ridiculed (or institutionalized) for her “obsession” by David and the surrounding community. When she takes Christopher into town to buy supplies for dinner, she confides in him a sense of frustration that presumes an empathetic relationship. After introducing Christopher to the nosy neighbor at the store by saying they knew each other from “camp,” she exclaims to the fellow survivor that nobody has even heard about Drancy, the transport camp that they were interned in, and that they are “second-rate survivors.” This conversation, which occurs immediately after her institutionalization was “outed” by the neighbour, is the moment in which Melanie attempts to mollify her frustration at having her psychological isolation mis-recognized by those that surround her by linking this “failure of recognition” to hers’ and Christopher’s shared – but often unrecognized - experience of Drancy. She is no longer alone on the experiential side of the barrier, with Québec’s Eastern Townships perched on the other. The arrival of Jakob and Christopher also affords Melanie an external justification for her obsession with “emotional arithmetic” – her collection of statistics of atrocities committed around the world – as flashbacks suggest that this particular manifestation of the past’s hold over her was not the result solely of a traumatic compulsion to repeat, but because of Jakob compelling her in Drancy to keep records of what she saw so that the statistics of atrocity would survive even if they did not. In this case though, the important link perceived by Melanie between Jakob and herself that is rooted in the somber activity of statistical collection is proven to be subject to the constraints of memory, as her former caregiver has no recollection of actually giving her

this assignment. His inability to remember that it was his instruction that has compelled her to keep these records all these years implies a sense of re-isolation as she is once again left alone to cope with the past manifest in the notebook.

While *Emotional Arithmetic*, *Undying Love*, and *So Many Miracles* emphasize in part the shared experience of Holocaust survivors via romance, other films intimate a platonic connection that binds those who survived. The seminal NFB documentary *Memorandum* stresses the importance of the bond shared amongst survivors that transcends both time and space. This film follows Bernard Laufer, a Holocaust survivor living in Toronto, who travels back to Germany in 1965 for a commemorative visit. While I will explore this geographic mediation in more detail below, for now it suffices to observe that when the film introduces Laufer and his journey, it highlights that he is traveling as part of a group of American survivors (Laufer is the only Canadian). Moreover, despite the dire circumstances that this “reunion” marks, the film’s narration frames it positively, stating that Laufer “will be meeting old friends, which is good,” even if this is tempered by the following provision, “...but will be in Germany, which is bad.” Nonetheless, many of the moments in which *Memorandum* focuses on Laufer’s group imply a joyful quality to their reunion— a luxurious dinner, joking around with other survivors, smiling photographs taken in the train station, etc.

Like *Emotional Arithmetic*, *Memorandum* also sets up the bond shared amongst survivors in relation to those who did not experience the Holocaust, namely Laufer’s son Joey who has accompanied his father on the journey from Canada to Germany (in this sense, *Memorandum* anticipates the attempts of more recent films to *appropriate* the perspective of experience, which the next chapter considers). On the one hand, this

tension between father and son is painted as a generational conflict. Laufer wants Joey to follow in his footsteps and learn a trade so that he can take over the family glass-cutting business, “but Joey wants to work with people, not glass.” Yet the film also establishes the experiential division between Joey and the survivors that surround him on this commemorative trip. While traveling on a train to Bergen Belsen, the camp where Laufer was interned, Joey articulates his inability to grasp his father’s past. He acknowledges that maybe once he actually sees the camp, he’ll “change [his] mind,” but that he is only able to judge the Germans he has met on the trip objectively thus far, and that they seem “normal.” This revelation also implicitly points to a barrier that persists between Laufer and the space of contemporary Germany, to which I will return

The importance of the bond that survivors share is stressed more explicitly in the documentary *The Boys of Buchenwald*, a film in which this friendship is as thematically important as the historical circumstances that informed it. In a manner that recalls qualities like the luxurious and informal cruise ship setting of *The Voyage of the St. Louis* and the joyful reunion of Laufer with fellow survivors in *Memorandum*, *The Boys of Buchenwald* opens with a black and white photograph of a group of children smiling, with arms around each other. It also includes scenes of happy reunions, replete with handshakes, hugs, kisses, and poring over old photographs. After the opening image of the photograph, *The Boys of Buchenwald*’s narrator (Saul Rubinek of *The Quarrel* and *So Many Miracles*) explains the historical context of this photo as a group of boys who were liberated from the Buchenwald concentration camp and were subsequently sent to a children’s shelter in France. Survivors, including Robbie Waisman – who was also interviewed for *Children of the Storm* - and the Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel,

immediately posit the memories of this period in a nostalgic manner. Wiesel says that it was in France after the war that he “rediscovered joy and affection.” Waisman indicates that it was here that he experienced a rebirth of his “soul” and his “existence” that had been ravaged by his internment in Buchenwald.

During these recollections, another photo is shown that displays the group of young people in France dancing the traditional Jewish *hora*, thus setting up the film’s focus on the important role that friendship played in this “rediscovery” – what the film’s narrator describes as an emergence “from darkness to light.” The strength and importance of the bond between survivors is palpable throughout the film. Waisman suggests that the friendship he formed with fellow Buchenwald prisoner Abe Chapnick was life-saving in the camp, offering the semblance of something “real” to counter the “surreal” quality of their daily lives. A group of Buchenwald survivors who eventually immigrated to Melbourne, Australia emphasize that not only have they stayed close, but also that they feel a strong connection with their fellow survivors who live overseas.

The Boys of Buchenwald also makes clear that the kinship between “the boys” was rooted both in their shared experience, as well as in the fact that this past was something that other people did *not* share. It emphasizes that the boys were drawn together in France since, in the words of the narrator, “people who hadn’t been in the camps couldn’t possibly understand.” Yet the film also makes explicit what is left implicit in the films previously discussed in this chapter – the friendships valued so highly by the actual boys of Buchenwald were compelled and engendered by a shared sense of horrific loss. The film suggests that even after the boys had been brought to France, the hope that their families may still be alive persisted. Judith Hemmendinger,

who was one of the workers at the boys' shelter, recalls the anxiety that the young people felt at one of their first *Seder* dinners in France, as they were unsure as to whether they should recite the prayer for the dead since they did not know if their families were still alive. Yet as the reality of their losses became more palpable, the boys became a source of comfort and friendship for each other, forming a semblance of community based on the shared experience of a traumatic loss: "Sharing a uniquely tragic past," the narrator states, "the boys were naturally drawn to each other."

Waisman captures this tension between valued friendship and loss at a number of different moments in the film. Like the other interviewees, he repeatedly emphasizes the importance of the friendship with other survivors that developed while he was in France, which allowed him to re-establish his sense of self (his "rebirth"), and to get to a place where he would be able to move on and make his way in the world. But he also acknowledges that this necessitated a certain acceptance of the past's destruction. Waisman states that when he was first liberated from the camp, he was excited to "show off" to his family that he had been able to survive. Once it became clear that he had no family left to show off to, his immediate future became much more uncertain and transitory. It is for this reason that he recalls his liberation and transition to France as "bittersweet," since it marked that he had survived and that he would be able to start his life over again, but that at the same time, "We had to realize we can't go home."

Joe Szwarcberg, one of the three survivors that the film focuses on most fully in addition to Waisman and Wiesel, further clarifies this tragic link. Like Waisman, Szwarcberg states that after his liberation, he simply assumed that he would see his parents again. As the certainty of this loss began to clarify, Szwarcberg began to

gravitate towards the rest of the boys, who themselves were also gradually acknowledging that their families were gone, and with whom he thus shared a similar sense of loss. Yet far from simply acting as a means of support upon which to build his new, post-Holocaust life, this move towards normalcy through companionship also served to painfully *remind* Szwarcberg of the familial loss that necessitated the need to establish *new* relationships. He recalls that while he and the other boys of Buchenwald were in France, they were invited to a local family's home for a dinner. It was this attempt to *recreate* a family dynamic that for Szwarcberg underscored the loss of his own. The family that had graciously invited them over for dinner, he remembers, had never lost anybody. The need to create a new familial dynamic based on a shared traumatic experience was necessary precisely because the Holocaust experience had destroyed his family. This acknowledgment of a moment in which an event tied so strongly to a nostalgic past is rendered painful in its present manifestation hearkens to the Hassidic dance that Hersh and Chaim finally remember and perform towards the end of *The Quarrel*. It is after this song and dance – which re-enact a remnant of a past that is no longer - that the loss that underscores their reunion takes them away from the theological philosophy that informs their quarrel to the realm of raw emotionality as they bid each other farewell. As such, both of these moments (Hersh and Chaim's performance and Szwarcberg's dinner) feature a confrontation with something that, on its face, evokes a sense of familiarity and comfort. Yet by intimating the pain that these nostalgic moments carry with them for Chaim, Hersh and Szwarcberg, the films also take contrasting positions on the extent to which the shared quality of the past can potentially mollify the sense of carrying this loss alone. Hersh and Chaim are offered a semblance

of resolve as they both have an understanding of what this dance means to them, even if it is not understood by the gawking crowd that gathers to applaud the ethnic performance. Szwarcberg's inclusion at a *Seder* table with a complete family on the other hand only brings to the fore the destruction of his own, leaving him unwilling to return to such a setting where this experience of loss is unshared by anyone else.

The ending of *The Boys of Buchenwald* also manifests the troubling tension between the importance of shared experience for these survivors and the fact that their friendship is rooted in loss. One of the film's final sequences shows the survivors from Melbourne, Australia gathered around a local monument devoted to Holocaust victims. As this group, who the film previously visualized around a dining table while singing and emphasizing the importance of the group's companionship for each of their lives, sings a memorial prayer for victims whose deaths are no longer an uncertainty, the pain and loss that underscores the comfort afforded by the shared experience of survivors is left unambiguous. The sense of community shared by these survivors is undoubtedly one of comfort at having an individual experience dispersed amongst others who also experienced it. Yet this shared experience that marks the survivors as a community is rooted in a painful loss that may be easier to acknowledge alongside others that have lost as well, but is not *resolved* by this sense of community.

It is thus not only the experience of the Holocaust itself, but also the related shared loss of family and home that provides the bond for these survivors as a communal group. Importantly, it is also this traumatic loss that compelled them away from their homes to pursue lives in new spaces, exiled from their pasts that were annihilated. This exile – a forced/imposed movement to a new space away from their lost homes – is the

second factor that allows us to use a diasporic heuristic in order to consider how these films address the barrier of experience by emphasizing the importance of survivor “return” to the spaces of their histories, in order to immerse themselves in a certain externalization of the past in a way that purports to counteract its localization within their individual memories.

Painful Returns

The films discussed in this chapter thus far offer a putative sense of resolution in terms of the barrier of experience by highlighting the communal quality of the Holocaust’s past amongst a group of survivors - whose romance or friendship is inextricably bound to the horror that they share. However, in these instances, this “group experience” still remains localized in the survivors themselves, even if there are more of them. This limitation is implicitly addressed in a number of the films that also feature the travel of survivors back to spaces of their past. Through this geographic mediation, survivors strive to return to their past in a way that is impossible in a space where the past never was, and where it thus consists only in their experiential memories. These sites may be the camps themselves, or perhaps the places where the survivor lived prior to or immediately following his or her deportation and liberation respectively. But what these visits - and the documentation of them in the films - hold in common is that they purport to offer reclamation of the past by traversing through space. At the same time, just as the instances of shared experience are ultimately exposed as being constituted by an irreclaimable loss, so too do the travels back to the sites of Holocaust experience visually manifest that the absence of the past cannot be reconciled by geographic meditation.

Moreover, the CBC feature “A Journey to Prague” (Dave Cherniak, 1987) from the *Man Alive* series and *Memorandum* also emphasize the persistence of the barrier of experience even as the survivor is within those spaces of the past. This chapter will thus conclude by considering this inability to reclaim the historical past by traversing space, and how this geographic mediation calls attention to an irretrievability of the past that is a function not only of space, but also of time.

The Boys of Buchenwald, *Memorandum*, *So Many Miracles*, as well as productions like *A Journey Back* (Brian McKenna, 1985)¹¹ and *Visualizing Memory...A Last Detail*, share an emphasis on survivors moving to a space where the past is dispersed into their surroundings, and thus not wholly localized within them. Annette Insdorf refers to this mode of historical inquiry as the “Documentary of Return,” which she argues has become prominent enough to constitute a “subgenre of the Holocaust film.” She also suggests that this “subgenre’s” prominence has grown expansively “as children of survivors increasingly journey with a camera into Europe, and into the past.”¹² This “second-generation” tendency is not entirely lacking in Canadian documentaries that literally revisit the spaces of the past. For instance, *Dark Lullabies* – which is discussed in the following chapter – follows the director (a child of survivors) as she visits Europe and Israel to better understand her parents’ Holocaust experiences. Yet it is far more common for Canadian documentaries of return to emphasize the travels of survivors themselves. It is for this reason that these films can be illuminated by being read as

¹¹ *A Journey Back* documents survivor Jack Garfein’s return to sites of his past in Europe, such as Auschwitz where he was interned, and his Slovakian hometown where he faces the horrific irony that the former synagogue is now an abandoned warehouse for ovens. As such, this film fits closely in with the focus in this section on return, but since I was unable to access a copy of this title I will not be discussing it beyond this reference. For a more detailed summary of *A Journey Back*, see Insdorf, 320.

¹² *Ibid.*, 300.

responsive to the barrier of experience, namely in their emphasis on survivors trying to re-capture their past by travelling from a space where that past is and has always been absent (Canada), to one where it was *once present*. In addition, since a number of these films consider the shared quality of the Holocaust experience amongst survivors, as well as travel back to the spaces of that past, I would argue that these two qualities complement each other as attempts to mollify the historical absence of the Holocaust that underlies the barrier of experience.

This sense of a desire to “return” is the second essential feature that marks the survivors in these films as a type of diasporic community. If the experience of the Holocaust and the consequential loss of family, friends, and home is what survivors share in the films discussed above, this quality is also intimately bound with the fact that this loss forced (or at least compelled) a geographic movement to new spaces. These films suggest that like other diasporic groups, the space left behind – the “homeland” – assumes an important role in what Lynellyn D. Long and Ellen Oxfeld refer to as the “diaspora consciousness.”¹³ In the case of these survivors of course, the space that is remembered as “home,” or as the spaces of the traumatic experiences that pushed them into exile are of course literal, or at least in living memory. They thus differ from more abstract conceptions of a “homeland” that may persist for members of diasporic communities that have only imagined rather than lived historical connections to it, such as the Jewish people (before the establishment of Israel as a state in 1948), or even contemporary Jews who have never been to Israel but who may imagine it as a

¹³ Lynellyn D. Long and Ellen Oxfeld, “Introduction,” *Coming Home? Refugees, Migrants, and Those Who Stayed Behind*. ed. Lynellyn D. Long and Ellen Oxfeld (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 5.

“homeland where they have never lived before.”¹⁴ A similar symbolic emotional tie exists for many African-Americans in relation to the ancestral lands of the African continent.¹⁵ Moreover, those spaces to which survivors return in these films are not necessarily those of an idyllic home, distorted to varying degrees by nostalgic memory. The sites returned to are often those of pain and loss. It is thus almost axiomatic that if a diasporic community is, by (Mary Chamberlain’s) definition, constituted by a *forced* exile,¹⁶ then for those who actually experienced this exile a return would carry with it a sense of pain rather than simple catharsis. But despite this, the sense or acknowledgement that, in the words of Robin Cohen, “‘the old country’...always has some claim on [the diasporic community’s] loyalty and emotions”¹⁷ is often coupled with a desire to return that may be retained in imagination, or manifest in physical travels, be they provisional or permanent.¹⁸

It is also important to note that the spaces that survivors return to in these films do not posit “home” as a static place, nor do they even necessarily posit the journey as a return to a “home” at all, as is the case with a survivor’s travels in “A Journey to Prague.” Given the centrality of the Holocaust experience to survivors’ exile, and given that this experience in many cases completely annihilated (or transformed) homes, the “return” may be to spaces where their homes were *before* the Holocaust, spaces where they were interned *during* the Holocaust, or spaces where they had moved to *after* the Holocaust. In other words, these films emphasize the importance of returning first and foremost to

¹⁴ Ibid. For a more focused discussion of the relationship between the Jewish diaspora and Israel (both the ancient Israel as an imagined homeland and the modern state), see Robin Cohen, 118-125.

¹⁵ Long and Oxfeld, 5.

¹⁶ Chamberlain, 245.

¹⁷ Robin Cohen, ix.

¹⁸ Long and Oxfeld., 7-13.

the sites of *experience* rather than to a singular, static place – a movement that affords a certain externalization of the past spatially, while also affording a tangible contact with its *loss*.

In their focus on the geographic return of survivors to the sites of their Holocaust experiences, films that feature a “return” tend to evoke a sense of cautious optimism. The survivors’ travels are posited as a means of confronting the past, whose lingering effects they have been unable to relegate to the abstraction of memory, and that has thus erected around them the barrier of experience. Yet this optimism is of course often tempered by a sense of anxiety about returning to the spaces of such horror. This tension is articulated most explicitly in the aforementioned introduction to Laufer in *Memorandum* in which the narrator indicates that despite it being “good” that the Canadian survivor will be meeting old friends, it is “bad” that this reunion is occurring in Germany.

These conflicting emotions of anticipation and anxiety about a return to the spaces of the Holocaust is also expressed in the 1987 documentary *So Many Miracles*, which straddles the “documentary of return” described by both Insdorf and myself. The film focuses on Israel and Frania Rubinek, a Canadian couple, who return to Poland in the mid-1980s to visit the family that hid them during the Holocaust. Their son, Saul Rubinek (who plays Hersh in *The Quarrel* and who narrates *The Boys of Buchenwald*), accompanies them on this journey. Near the beginning of the film, the family is seated around the dining room table in their Canadian home, as all three Rubineks discuss their desire to visit Sophia Branja, the Polish woman who hid Israel and Frania, before she dies. At the same time, Israel admits that he is “scared to go back” as he is “going to see everything.” This comment itself comes across as rather ambiguous as they are speaking

about returning to the space of their *salvation*. The logic of this apprehension quickly clarifies as the film then cuts to slow-motion footage of windows being broken by stones. Such imagery of course evokes the *Kristallnacht* pogrom and symbolically calls attention to the threatening circumstances that drove the Rubineks into hiding during the war.

By traveling to the spaces of their Holocaust experience in Poland, *So Many Miracles* suggests that the Rubineks are afforded an encounter with their personal histories and the opportunity to confront their past. Given that the impetus for their travels is the desire to reunite with Sophia while there is still time, interpersonal reunions are one way that the geographic mediation from Canada to Poland affords access to the *presence* of the past in a way that is precluded by the barrier of experience. In addition to the reunion with Sophia and her now-grown-up son Manek – which assumes a climactic significance as it does not actually occur until almost the end of the film – Saul’s mother shares an emotional reunion with one of her childhood friends and also discovers that her former teacher is still alive. Yet despite the importance that the film places on these reunions as moments where the past and the present meet, the Rubineks’ central confrontation with the past transcends the interpersonal, and occurs in relation to the space of Poland itself.

One of the most important qualities of the documentary of return is that it re-establishes a sense of tactility to history, which is rendered abstract by both spatial and temporal distance. It is precisely a confrontation with this tactility that Israel’s anxiety about returning to Poland anticipates. It is also the hope that Saul articulates at the beginning of the film when he states that he wants to accompany his parents to Poland not simply to meet the woman responsible for saving their lives, but to “make concrete

things that were vague in my mind,” and that in order to clarify these things it is not simply enough to ask the right questions, but to “ask the questions in the right places.”

Israel stresses the importance of re-visiting the spaces of the past while he and Frania are seated on a stone monument in Poland (the type of monument is unclear). He stretches out his arms and proclaims that “It all started right here,” while Frania ponders whether it was their love for each other that ensured their survival. The film centralizes the importance of space in rendering the past for the present in a following sequence, which features Frania as she recalls Jews being rounded up at the local church, while walking around that specific space in the present. This is a moment when the tactility of space assumes a profound and emotional importance as she crouches next to the church’s wall, weeping that it was on this very spot that people had been grouped and shot, and that it was such a miracle that her family had managed to survive when all those around them had been killed.

In addition to these moments that use actual spaces and actual people to emphasize the Rubineks’ encounters with the past, *So Many Miracles* also assumes a more formal strategy for linking the past and present by complementing its documentary focus on their story with dramatic re-enactments, not unlike those that narrativize the love stories in *Undying Love*. Yet the re-enactments in *So Many Miracles* are less formally separated from the documentary footage of the Rubineks in the present. Not only do these re-enactments often occur in the same spaces that the Rubineks are re-encountering (such as the cubby-hole in Sophia’s home where they hid), but there are times when the flashbacks literally occupy the space of the present, becoming spectral legacies of the past rather than the literal spaces of buildings or the bodies of individuals.

The most explicit example of this formal integration of past and present is actually the film's opening image of a young couple cuddled on a hill as a voiceover narrates, "When my parents were young, they survived the German occupation of Poland. During the war they were hidden for two-and-a-half years." The camera then tracks to the left and zooms to bring into focus a young man watching the couple from afar. It is important to note that although this new figure is not positioned in the same *frame* as the young couple, his spatial relationship to them is presented as though he is in the same space as them via the camera's non-cutting tracking and zoom techniques. The voiceover continues, as the young man watches, thus positing him as the voiceover's subjectivity, which will turn out to be Saul: "When I was growing up...I thought that everybody's parents had nightmares, and cried and screamed. In the night I used to overhear them and I thought that was normal...But as I grew a little older and I started to hear stories about what happened to them in Poland and where these nightmares came from, I began to understand that maybe my parents were a little special." During this latter reflection, the film cuts to the same hill that the young couple was on, but it is now occupied by an older couple, still cuddling, who are Saul's elderly parents. While these initial re-enactments evoke a sense of perhaps bucolic nostalgia, later re-enactments that feature the same actors *playing* the young Israel and Frania serve to dramatize moments of horror that Saul's parents experienced while hiding in Sophia's home. The paradigmatic example of this tendency is a scene where Nazi officers are seated immediately outside of their hiding spot (the cubby hole) as the "played" Israel and Frania huddle together in silent agony.

The placement of dramatic re-enactments within a film that is predominantly and stylistically a documentary can be rather jarring. In *Representing Reality*, a vast study of the various styles, strategies and structures that fall under the rubric of “documentary film,” Bill Nichols suggests that when documentaries incorporate dramatic re-enactments they “accept the burden of a body too many” – that is, the body of an actor whose “very presence testifies to a gap between the text and the life to which it refers.”¹⁹ Indeed, in instances like Errol Morris’ *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) the invocation of drama seeks to expose qualities of objectivity as feigned (in terms of either the documentary itself as a text that invariably has a perspective, or the action/event within the film, such as the murder of a police officer in Morris’ film). The integration of the dramatic re-enactments in *So Many Miracles* re-contextualizes the “body too many” problem as it seeks to externalize the subjective experiences of the documentary’s “real-life” actors – the Rubineks in the present. Because the re-enactments are either blurred with the present in real time (as when Saul watches his parents as young people) or performed in present spaces (the hideout in Sophia’s home), they become an important device for the film’s emphasis on an encounter with the past through geographic mediation. Far from calling into question the Rubineks’ narrative, they act as complementary to it. They formally and visually manifest that which is implied by film’s focus on the Rubineks’ travels to Poland – that travelling to the space of Poland/Sophia’s home allows a confrontation with the past *outside of themselves*. As Israel and Frania recall their romance, their hiding, their fear, and their survival, their experiences transcend the realm of memory as they are embodied in the re-enacted experiences of young “Israel” and “Frania.” This re-experience can of course assume both nostalgic memories – such as those of Saul’s

¹⁹ Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 249.

parents as a young couple looking forward to their lives together – and horrifying moments – like waiting to be discovered by Nazis. In this sense, *So Many Miracles* takes a less romanticized perspective towards the problematic of confronting the past in the present than the almost idyllic recollections of *Undying Love*.

In an interview with Annette Insdorf, Katherine Smalley (co-director of *So Many Miracles*) describes the re-enactments as “almost as though you’re going back in the memory of an individual and trying to reconstruct the imagery.”²⁰ I would argue that this is an oversimplification of how the dramatic re-enactments function in relation to the film’s documentary mode. The presence of the “young” Rubinek couple cannot simply be conceived as a psychological manifestation of the “real” Rubineks’ memories. They are not psychological “ghosts” or spectral manifestations like those of the childhood Melanie and Christopher seen (and spoken to) by Jakob in *Emotional Arithmetic*. To reiterate from the last chapter, these “ghosts” are intimated as manifestations of *Jakob’s* psyche. They exist in his own subjectivity as manifestations of his personal history that, like the other survivors within the barrier of experience, exist only for him. While “Israel” and “Frانيا” re-enact the past of the documentary Israel and Frانيا, the importance of the re-enactments is extra-“diegetic”, if by diegesis we mean the documentary world of Saul’s parents in the present. They are there to be viewed by Saul, as well as by the film itself, rather than by his parents. They *recall* his parents’ actions, but unlike Jakob’s ghosts, which are psychologically subjective, they persist outside of Saul’s parents’ memories. They thus formally allude to the diffusion of Israel’s and Frانيا’s personal histories *outside* of their subjective experiential memories, just as these memories are dispersed by the Rubineks’ presence in the spaces of their past.

²⁰ Katherine Smalley, quoted in Insdorf, 219.

A similar sense that traveling to the spaces of the past can allow for a certain tangible manifestation of one's personal history is taken up in another "documentary of return" – Naomi Kramer's *Visualizing Memory...A Last Detail*. Kramer's film differs from those dealt with thus far as its emphasis is on a survivor whose travels are unshared by other survivors. As such, the survivor in this case retains a sense of the individualized isolation that is mollified by the shared quality of survivors' pasts in films like *The Quarrel* or *The Boys of Buchenwald*. Yet *Visualizing Memory* nonetheless works to resolve the barrier of experience by bringing a survivor back to the space of his interaction with the Holocaust.

Visualizing Memory is particularly explicit in its assertion that a return to the spaces of Holocaust experience can not only offer a confrontation with an absent past, but can help re-establish an identity that has been lost or transformed in exile. The film follows survivor Peter Kleinmann as he returns to the Flossenburg concentration camp, one of three camps he was imprisoned in during the war. In the film's opening moments, a negative image shows a figure washed out and unidentifiable, although it is possible to recognize the figure is traveling in a car. Over this unrecognizable image a narrator reflects on the link between memory and experience: "Memory is the way the mind represents experience to itself." As the image gradually shifts to a positive exposure, thus granting a clearer semblance of identity, the narrator continues, "Memory is one way knowledge of the past is transmitted to others. Peter Kleinman visualizes his memories as he returns to his hometown of Mukacheve."

Through this simple visual transition, the film intimates that Peter's return to the sites of his past affords a certain reclamation of his identity, and thus of his personal

history and memory. The film expands on this motif once he arrives in Mukacheve. As the film documents him strolling around the streets of his former hometown, reflecting on what buildings used to be and where the Jewish families lived, the narrator suggests that through these instances, “the past merges with the present” for Peter. This “merging” assumes a more personal manifestation when he arrives at the Dachau concentration camp, where his father Alexander died just before its liberation, “on the same ground where Peter now stands.” While at Dachau, Peter also discovers the record detailing his father’s imprisonment, which he recites with constrained emotion while wearing a *yarmulke* as the camera films him from a slight low angle to capture the ominous remnant of a guard tower behind him: “I went in the library with Naomi Kramer. We were looking, maybe I could find some names. And awkwardly enough, miraculy [sic], whatever you can call it, I found my father’s name, Kleinman, Alexander...a Hungarian Jew who was sent from Auschwitz October 1944 to Dachau, and he died in Dachau.” This moment captures a very explicit confrontation with an aspect of Peter’s personal history in the present that is made possible by his movement to this space.

The contention that Peter’s return to the spaces of his past affords him a reclamation of an identity that was stripped by the Nazis, and then transformed once he immigrated to Canada, becomes increasingly overt as he recalls (in voiceover), “Sixty-nine years ago in Czechoslovakia my parents named me Dubert Wolfe Kleinman [transliterated from voiceover]. Fifty-one years ago in Auschwitz, the Nazis granted me 83150. Today in Canada, my family and friends call me Peter.” *Visualizing Memory* thus leaves little ambiguity that the movement into the spaces of the past that marked the destruction of his family offers Peter a sense of cathartic confrontation, and even suggests

that this confrontation can help him to re-capture a sense of identity that was stolen by the Nazis as he was reduced from a name to a number, and then altered as he became “Peter” in Canada.

At the same time as these films offer a certain externalization of the Holocaust experience for the survivors in their travels of return, this return is continuously challenged by the fact that this past is *gone* – both in terms of time, *and* in terms of space that is no longer what it once *was*. It is precisely this point that that Chaim makes in *The Quarrel* when he reflects that Bialystok now only exists “in the memories of survivors,” and is also implied in *Emotional Arithmetic* when Christopher tells David that when he returned to Drancy years after the war, he found that it had been turned into a housing estate. This “gone-ness” thus precludes these documentaries of return from offering a full confrontation with the past, and suggests that the confrontation is actually with the *loss* of the past, which thus complicates the catharsis of return.²¹

This emphasis on the gone-ness of history clarifies precisely *because* the survivor’s return carries with it the same tension as the bond shared by survivors, which was formed in reaction to the destruction of the past. In other words, that which seeks to *resolve* the barrier of experience by dispersing the experience amongst other survivors or amongst space actually *reinforces* and brings to the fore that traumatic past that

²¹ I actually had the opportunity to witness this tension first-hand while participating in the 2005 March of the Living (MOL), a Holocaust commemoration trip that I will return to in Chapter Five. Like all the groups on the MOL, ours was accompanied by a number of Holocaust survivors, including Paul and Klara Kagan. One day while on the bus, our tour guide announced that we would be making an unscheduled stop since we were so close to Klara’s hometown. When we stopped there, it was the middle of nowhere really (i.e. we did not go to her old house, but just to an area in the small town). Everyone on the tour was very excited for Klara, yet her response was muted. She did not say very much while we were there, and I was initially confused as to why she was not more excited to be back where she hadn’t been since the war. It was only after I had time to reflect on this return that it became clear that Klara’s experience was not like returning to a happy space of childhood, but a return to a space of home that had since been ravaged by pain, horror and loss. It is thus largely this first-hand *perception* of Klara’s return (of course I do not claim to know what was going on in her head or her heart during this time; I can only speak to how I perceived her external reaction) that informs my reading of these documentaries of return.

engenders (in part) the barrier in the first place. This tension is again most clearly manifest in *The Boys of Buchenwald*, when Robbie Waisman returns to his former bedroom in the French shelter that he stayed in after his liberation. As Waisman enters the room, his face manifests the same “merging” of the past and present that the narrator alludes to in *Visualizing Memory* when Peter returns to Mukacheve. “Wow,” he breathlessly exclaims as he ascends the stairs in his old home. As he enters his old room he repeats, “Wow,” and then recalls, “This is the room I slept in. Oh God. So many thoughts that I had in this room. Really it was in here that I really assessed the whole situation. My survival, the start of my life, *and all the ones that didn’t make it.*” As these recollections suggest, this moment of return is far from simple nostalgia. It also brings about a powerful realization of loss for Waisman, which becomes more overt as his emotions begin to get the better of him as he reflects on the losses that countered his survival: “Now, being in this room, really makes me think of *all that could have been, and isn’t.* All those lives that never happened. A lot of sadness.” Shortly after, the loss of Waisman’s past is given a broader scope as the film documents another return for him – to the house in Calgary that was his first home upon arrival in Canada. In these moments, which are preceded by an interview where Waisman restates his proclamation from *Children of the Storm* that his desire after the Holocaust was to “escape Europe,” as he stands outside of his former Calgary home, Waisman emphasizes his perception of the gone-ness of his European past by ruminating, “Things in Europe felt so far away; *almost as if they didn’t happen.*”²²

²² For these quotations by Waisman, I have added emphasis to highlight his repeated focus on the loss of the past, both literally in terms of “those lives lost” that he recalls in his old bedroom in France, and the more figurative loss of his European past that he reflects on in Calgary.

In spite of the emotional and ultimately joyful reunion between the Rubineks and Sophia, their gentile rescuer in Poland, *So Many Miracles* also takes pains to emphasize that this act of return calls attention to the persistence of the past's *absence*, which is manifest in the destruction that surround them as Israel, Frania, and Saul (not necessarily all together) tour around Poland. The moments where Frania is literally walking around the churchyard where her town's Jews were rounded up and shot – a massacre that she and her sisters survived amidst all of the corpses – evokes a similar sense of realization of the scope of the loss manifest in the Holocaust as Waisman's reflections in his old bedroom in *The Boys of Buchenwald*. Another instance in which *So Many Miracles* emphasizes that movement to the spaces of the past ultimately calls attention to its loss occurs as Israel comes across an abandoned synagogue after walking through the town and reliving memories of hiding from Nazis. The synagogue that Israel enters is still standing, but empty and in a state of ruin. Israel immediately makes it clear that he perceives a spectral presence of the past as persistent within this space: "I hear the echo of the prayers what was here, for hundreds of years were here prayers [sic]." Yet after this admission he acknowledges that this empty space merely calls attention to what is no longer there: "Now everything is dead. Before the war everything was alive. Now what I see here? Just four walls." He then takes this observation one step further and re-internalizes the past, clarifying his initial observation - that the prayers of the past that echo in the synagogue exist only in his memory. As he looks upon the ruined building Israel laments in voiceover, "So I said a prayer for the dead, but for me, everything is dead." It is important to emphasize that Israel's internalization of the past's absence, despite being in a space where a certain lived history of the Holocaust occurred, looks

forward to the prominence of the past's absence in the films of survivor Jack Kuper, which troubles the assumption of experience being the "property" of - and perpetually available to - those who lived through the Holocaust.

The Voyage of the St. Louis also includes moments of return that point to the loss of the past, despite the documentary's focus on the history of the ill-fated voyage that is told through a group's first-hand accounts, rather than on the individual histories themselves. The latter part of the film covers the history of the St. Louis after the Jewish passengers were turned away from Cuba, the United States and Canada, and the ship was forced to return to Europe. Some sense of reprieve awaited the anxious passengers, as they were able to secure entry to Great Britain, France, Belgium, or Holland. Of these countries of course, only Great Britain was spared Nazi occupation, and the film reveals that of the 937 Jews aboard the St. Louis when it departed Munich, the majority were eventually killed. In its last five minutes, *The Voyage of the St. Louis* turns its attention to Herbert Karliner, one of the passengers who ultimately survived and found refuge in France after the St. Louis returned to Europe. Karliner returns to the house where he and his family had lived prior to and during the initial period of the Nazi occupation. While looking in the attic, Karliner discovers photographs of his parents and then describes the last time that he saw them and his sisters.

These instances in which "return" specifically calls attention to the loss of the past invariably troubles the relationship between Holocaust survivors and the notion of "home," since "home" is highlighted as "no longer there" both in terms of the people that made it home, and those physical spaces that once marked home. In the piece "A Journey to Prague," made for the CBC series *Man Alive*, renowned Canadian media

personality Otto Lowy travels back to his former hometown of Prague, Czechoslovakia, but emphasizes that this movement to Prague is “going back,” *not* “going home.” This distinction is made clear by the contradiction that the film implies between Lowy and Czechoslovakia. On the one hand, Lowy admits that one of his reasons for this travel is that he hopes it will help him “understand” and potentially answer his son’s questions about his past. Yet as the film shows Lowy walking through the streets of Prague and touring a museum exhibit about the Jewish civilization in Czechoslovakia, it carries implication that even in this space that was once home, where his history was lived, he is still “out of place.” While on the tour of the exhibition - called “Precious Legacy” - the film formally intimates a troubling relationship between Lowy and his surroundings via the tour guide. As he tours and watches the young female guide, Lowy’s voiceover recites in an almost accusatory manner, “My presence somehow unsettles you...I am a part of that legacy...[T]hat’s what you see in my eyes and don’t understand.” Lowy goes on to describe himself as “one of these artifacts,” like those in the museum display. This voiceover suggests that his presence in this space may be an unwelcome reminder of a past that would be relegated to abstraction in commemorative displays rather than manifest throughout the contemporary culture in Prague - his former home, where at best Lowy now finds himself out of place, or at worst an unwelcome intruder bringing with him a shameful reminder of the past.

Donald Brittain and John Spotton’s *Memorandum* takes a similar approach to highlighting that – like Otto Lowy – the space to which Bernard Laufer returns is also aiming to relegate history purely to the realm of the past, thus leaving the present space largely devoid of the historical experiences that Laufer carries with him. *Memorandum* is

slightly subtler in this regard than “A Journey to Prague.” Laufer does not articulate as explicitly as Lowy a sense that he feels a disconnection to or out of place in Germany, though the film does allude to his perception of the loss of the past as he tells Joey the “official numbers” of Jews lying in Bergen Belsen are vastly underestimated and will continue to be reduced as the years go by. Similarly, a sympathetic narrator asserts, “Laufer has always cursed himself for allowing them to turn Belsen into a German garden.” Yet the commentary on the distinction (or barrier) between the past carried in Laufer and the desire to evade the past in the space surrounding him on this trip is primarily manifest not in his individual persona, but in the film’s juxtaposition of the commemorative visit of American and Canadian survivors with what Gary Evans refers to as “contemporary Germany’s obsession with forgetting.”²³ As Laufer, Joey and the rest of the group on his tour visit spaces of the past like Bergen Belsen, Brittain and Spotton emphasize repeatedly that despite the history in this space (Germany), the contemporary culture is largely one that longs to forget the nation’s past. In other words, the return to Germany does not disperse the history carried within Laufer to the space surrounding him, since the people occupying this space are so eager to forget what occurred there.

Near its beginning, *Memorandum* implies that the possibility of Germany’s historical past receding into the realm of forgotten memory is quite real. Over footage of the funeral of a local Jew in 1965, the narrator emphasizes that of a pre-war population of half-a-million, there are only about 30,000 Jews left in Germany, with “few very young.” The film further suggests a disinterest in the past by positioning Laufer’s visit and historical information about the camps and the Nazi regime “[a]gainst a backdrop of

²³ Evans 2002, 155.

contemporary preoccupation with daily trivia framed by Germany beer hall *bonhomie*,²⁴ in which 1/3 the revelers are identified as tourists, 1/3 “too young” and 1/3 “tired of the whole thing.” This contemporary desire to evade the weight of the past is also highlighted by the film’s focus on war crime trials occurring in Germany at the time for accused Nazi officers for which there seems to be virtually no sense of public interest. Moreover, these trials also indicate a failure to contend with the intricacies of the Nazi regime, as only those officers that were proven to have been *actively* involved in atrocities committed during the Holocaust are convicted, while those whose direct involvement was less clear are acquitted. It is from this tendency that the film derives its title as the narrator asks in the context of these acquittals, “And who will ever know who murdered by memorandum; who did the filing and the typing from nine to five with an hour off for lunch?” Such a reflection underscores an attempt to relegate the crimes of the Holocaust to a specific selection of individuals while ignoring the broad bureaucratic and cultural circumstances that were necessary for it to be undertaken – a point the film drives home in its final moments as the narrator observes about the death camp “Birkenau – not the work of madmen, but the product of Western civilization.”

Towards the end of *Memorandum*, there is a moment of contrition as Eric Lühte - an older German man from Munich who lived through the war - speculates (somewhat regrettably), “Perhaps we are a nation rich in military heroes, but underdeveloped in civil courage.” The film’s narrator sets up this admission by describing Lühte as a man “openly bear[ing] the burden of shame.” After this Lühte confesses, “I am one of fifty or sixty million of German cowards.” Yet despite this instance of confession, the film concludes with the narrator quoting an unnamed “old German” who laments, “We are a

²⁴ Ibid.

cursed generation... We will take our horrible place in history.” The desire to purge the past is then articulated unambiguously as the narrator continues quoting the German: “Can you just let us quietly live out our time? There is really nothing anyone can do.” The visuals accompanying this plea further underline a collective reluctance to acknowledge the specter of Germany’s “horrible” history – a beach full of canopied sun chairs act as an evasive counterpoint to the crimes that “cursed” that generation of the “old German.”

All of the films discussed in this chapter place survivors into contexts where their individual experiences are in some way dispersed outside of themselves, either amongst other survivors or by moving to the spaces where their personal histories occurred. These films simultaneously acknowledge the limitations posed by such strategies as both the bond shared amongst survivors and that which is faced upon return to spaces of their personal histories are constituted by the loss of the past. “A Journey to Prague” and *Memorandum* go one step further by emphasizing the loss of the past as perpetual as Otto Lowy and Bernard Laufer are formally and pro-filmically set apart by the willed absence of the past even in their former “homes” of Czechoslovakia and Germany respectively, where their histories occurred. These pieces emphasize that despite returning to the spaces of history, a certain barrier of experience still persists. This barrier however is no longer relegated to questions of space, but also to questions of time. It is thus no longer sufficient to read this barrier of experience purely in the spatial context of Canada as a nation physically removed from the historicity of the Holocaust, which is why the last two chapters have moved away from the specific sociopolitical concerns that informed

the analyses in the first two. As such, the following chapter explores films that more overtly feature attempts to transcend the experiential limitations of time; that is, films that feature a desire to fill the absence on the *inexperiential* side of the barrier, by appropriating the perspectives and memories of those that experienced the Holocaust for those who did not.

Chapter Five

Breaking the Barrier by Appropriating the Past: Experience as Pedagogy and “Cross-generational” Documentaries

The first three chapters of this dissertation considered how Canadian films have approached the Holocaust by delineating an experiential division between Canada and the Holocaust, and a corresponding barrier between survivors in Canada and those who did not experience its horrors. The previous chapter shifted focus towards films that purport to offer a certain resolution to this barrier in two ways: first, by emphasizing the shared quality of the Holocaust experience amongst groups of survivors that mollifies the sense of isolation conveyed in examples like the war orphans in *Children of the Storm* relative to their adoptive Canadian society or Alex’s solitary quest to pursue justice in *Two Men*; and second, by documenting the return of survivors to the sites of the Holocaust, which places them in a space where the legacy of the past is not localized only within their own experiences and memories, but also dispersed in their surroundings.

As such, this analysis has thus far been somewhat one-sided. In addition to the fact that the two tropes of “shared experience” and “personal return” both purport to disperse the past beyond the internalized experiences and memories of individual survivors, they also hold in common an emphasis on the “experiential” side of the “experienced/ inexperienced” dyad. In other words, my discussion in the previous chapter focused on how films like *The Boys of Buchenwald*, *Memorandum*, and *Visualizing Memory...A Last Detail* approach the problematic of the barrier of experience by trying to resolve it *for survivors*. I only very briefly touched on - with references to Joey in *Memorandum*, Saul in *So Many Miracles*, and also to Benjamin in *Emotional Arithmetic* in Chapter Three - an alternative approach towards the barrier adopted by

Canadian Holocaust films. This approach aims to resolve (or dissolve) the barrier of experience, not from the perspective of the survivor, but from that of the *inexperienced*. In these cases, emphasis is placed on individuals that *lack* a lived connection to the Holocaust, yet have a vested interest in interrogating the experiences of survivors either due to familial history or more general pedagogical ambitions. In the films discussed below, this interest manifests itself in a desire to *appropriate* the perspectives of individuals who lived through the Holocaust, which also constitutes an attempt to efface the barrier between experience and inexperience.¹

This experiential appropriation may function secondarily, like in *Emotional Arithmetic* or *Memorandum* where the interest of Benjamin and Joey in their parents' histories is presented in the backdrop of the films' primary focuses on Melanie and Bernard Laufer respectively. It may also function concurrently, as in *So Many Miracles*, which is as much about Saul's desire to learn about his parents' histories as it is about Israel and Frania's journey back to Poland to reunite with Sophia. However, the attempt

¹ In using the term "appropriate" to discuss this sense of passing on historical experience, I am not implying a malicious (or even benign) *theft* of the past, but am rather trying to emphasize that this process involves more than simply an acquisition of knowledge. As is explored below, in these films there is a clear sense that the past becomes internalized within the perspective of the inexperienced via his or her confrontation with it through the perspective of a survivor. For this terminology I am also drawing on Franklin Bialystok's discussion of the increasing importance of the Holocaust in defining Jewish identity for the post-Holocaust generation of Jewish Canadians: "They [the post-Holocaust generation] felt themselves to be Jewish and they were passionately Canadian, but they were hard put to define what it meant to be a Canadian Jew. Consequently, they searched for cohesive elements within the community. These included stricter religious observance, affiliation with the state of Israel, and resurrecting the historical memory of the Holocaust. *Appropriating* the Holocaust as a pillar of self-definition was not out of character in the context of Jewish history. Rather, it was in keeping with the Jewish proclivity to focus on incidents of victimization" (Bialystok, 11, my emphasis). I will return to this use of the Holocaust as a means of stabilizing a Canadian-Jewish identity in greater detail in the section on "cross-generational documentaries."

It is also tempting to perhaps invoke the term "transference" to describe this phenomenon, as Allison Landsberg does (see Chapter Six Note 1). I have opted against this in favour of the concept of "appropriation," as it lacks the specific psychoanalytic definition of psychological transference. An aesthetically-based dissertation focused on cinematic representation can simply not do justice to the clinical intricacies of this definition, and I feel that using "transference" to describe what is happening in these films would be carelessly borrowing from an external discourse.

to interrogate and epistemologically appropriate the experience of the Holocaust is often thematically central, and it is this tendency that is the focus of the present chapter.

To this end, I begin by considering the strategy of utilizing survivors in films as a way to approach the Holocaust as one inherently bound to the appropriation of experience. Such a strategy is implicit in all of the films discussed thus far that delineate the problematic of an experiential barrier via the figure of the Canadian Holocaust survivor, but is made explicit in films like *Voices of Survival, Each of Us Has a Name* (Fern Levitt and Arnie Zipursky, 1999), *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank* (Harry Rasky, 1980), and survivor Batia Bettman's *Let Memory Speak*. These films all make clear not only the importance, but also a certain pedagogical necessity of approaching the Holocaust through the testimonies of those that experienced it by emphasizing the interaction between survivors and members of a "younger" (mostly younger Jewish) generation, for whom the Holocaust is experientially distant. Moreover, these films all assert that this confrontation affords not simply an accumulation of historical knowledge, but an appropriation of experiential perspective.

After exploring this invocation of survivors to mediate the Holocaust experience for more generalized pedagogical purposes, this chapter moves on to films that employ a similar framework by which the barrier that consists between experience and inexperience dissolves, but explore it on a more microcosmic level. As an introduction to this section, I will look to the NFB documentary *Raymond Klibansky: From Philosophy to Life* (Anne-Marie Tougas, 2002), in which an unidentified narrator professes the desire to appropriate the "gaze" of the German-Canadian philosopher. More often though, this desire for individual appropriation of experience is placed in a familial context, whereby

an “inexperienced” family member (usually the child of a Holocaust survivor) strives to internalize the history of his or her “experienced” relative. This section thus focuses on films that I am electing to call “cross-generational” documentaries, insofar as they centralize the *process* of children of survivors seeking to uncover and document their parents’ pasts in order to establish a more concrete sense of self, which can in part be constituted by one’s status as a “child of Holocaust survivors,” or more controversially perhaps, a “second-generation survivor.”

The first film discussed in this regard is Simcha Jacobovici’s *The Struma* (2001), which is made by an individual with a vested familial interest in the specific Holocaust microhistory that it explores, yet is framed methodologically as more historiographic than personal. After this, the focus will shift to films in which the personal trumps the historical. Wendy Oberlander’s two films *Nothing to be Written Here*, to which Chapter One briefly referred, and *Still (Stille)*, as well as Irene Angelico’s *Dark Lullabies* are examples of cross-generational documentaries that place more concerted emphasis on the process of experiential appropriation by the filmmakers – as children of survivors - than on the specifics of their parents’ Holocaust histories. Finally, I will conclude by discussing Elida Schogt’s *Zyklon Portrait* (1999) and the animated NFB short *A Special Letter* (Bozenna Heczko, 1984), both of which cover a cross-generational relationship between a mother and daughter, but call attention to the absence of the past *even for those with a lived connection to it*. This conclusion will establish the necessary groundwork for grappling with the barrier that consists *within* experiential memory, which is explored more fully in the next chapter relative to the films of Jack Kuper.

Experience as Pedagogy

That the first-hand perspectives of those who experienced the Holocaust can act as conduits of authenticity for “accessing” the past for those who did not, thus beginning to break down the barrier between experience and inexperience, is an almost axiomatic assumption that permeates Holocaust discourse. At the most basic level, this mediation of the historical past can be framed as a pedagogical method that underlines initiatives devoted to collecting survivor testimony like the Fortunoff Video Archive or the Survivors of the *Shoah* Visual History Foundation, which I discussed above. A similar pedagogical utilization of what can be termed “the survivor perspective” operates in *Voices of Survival*, a documentary produced in 1988 by the Canadian Jewish Congress, the CBC, and TV Ontario that includes testimonies of seven Holocaust survivors - Philip Riteman, Murray Kenig, Faye Schulman, Kenny Ertl, Vera Slymovics, Vera Eden, and Paul Kagan, the husband of Klara Kagan, both of whom accompanied my delegation on the 2005 March of the Living (see Chapter Four Note 21).

The educational priority of the film is explicitly established in an opening title card that declares, “*Voices of Survival* was initiated by the Canadian Jewish Congress to further Holocaust education.” The centrality of survivors’ testimonies as well as an assertion of their historical utility for the film’s educational goals are further emphasized as the film is opened by Stephen Lewis, the former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, as he stands in Montreal’s Holocaust Memorial Centre. Lewis’ introduction serves to set up and prepare the viewer for the first-person testimonies that will comprise the remainder of the film: “The documentary you are about to see is about survivors, *Canadian* survivors, who...are *driven* to tell their stories because they want other Canadians to know, as they want the world to know, what happened. They fear that a

whole generation is growing up without knowing...And they must be told, so that no one of us ever forgets [sic]. It's a very difficult story for them to tell, as it may be a difficult documentary for you to view." The film then cuts to a series of photographs of the seven survivors as Lewis' narration continues: "There is among us a group whose voices should be heard...These people, like Philip Riteman of Halifax, are survivors of the Holocaust." It is only after this that a survivor's voice is actually allowed to speak for himself as the tearful Riteman reflects on his life as a salesman and how he may often break down in tears as he is driving, but must put on a smile for his customers.

On the one hand, this device of formally setting up and presenting the survivors sets them and their testimonies apart from the film itself (manifest in the narrational voice of Lewis), thus embodying the barrier of experience that emphasizes the past as property of those who are testifying. On the other, this opening makes clear that the purpose of this film is to try and break down this barrier by using survivor testimony as a mediatory conduit through which the legacy of the past can be passed on to a broader audience. This audience is not only implied in Lewis' introduction as "other Canadians," and more generally "the world," but is established importantly as one that is *inexperienced* as his narration carries over the survivors' photographs: "What they [survivors of the Holocaust] have experienced is almost beyond the ability of most Canadians to comprehend." This ties in to one of the most recurring sentiments articulated by a number of survivors - they feel compelled to share their stories so that, as Riteman concludes his testimony, "the world should know about this, that this [sic] should never happen to us again."

It is important to note though that the testimony in *Voices of Survival* differs somewhat from that in films like *Children of the Storm* or *The Voyage of the St. Louis* insofar as it functions less to provide detailed information about a specific microhistory within the Holocaust (like the CJC's war orphans' initiative or the experiences of the passengers on the St. Louis) than to provide a broader background and personal commentary on the Holocaust more generally. The film is divided into four sections: the first focuses on the rise of the Nazis; the second looks at Jewish life in the ghettos, resistance movements and deportation; the third explores the tragedy of life in the camps; and the last considers the final days of the war, including the death marches, liberation and the gradual process of emigration from Europe. Each of these sections is comprised of voiceover narration (also by Lewis) that gives pertinent historical information, as well as archival footage that includes photographs of the testifying survivors that complement the historical emphasis at that moment of the film. For instance, while the narration is explaining the rise of resistance movements within and outside of the Jewish ghettos, the film shows a number of photographs of Faye Schulman armed with a rifle and posed with other partisan fighters, which is followed by Schulman's own reflection on being a partisan in such groups.

There are a number of moments like this in *Voices of Survival*, which hearken its opening where Lewis acts almost as an arbiter of these testimonies. His narration throughout the film frequently works to set up survivors' testimonies in order to situate them within the context of the film's historical narrative. To return again to Schulman, immediately after she describes seeing her entire family buried (some alive) in a mass grave (accompanied by a photograph), Lewis' narration begins to describe the

vanquished Warsaw ghetto uprising of 1943, and other instances of “sabotage and pockets of resistance.” This information is presented against the visual backdrop of archival footage of German military machinery and might that would ultimately prove such attempts pragmatically futile, although idealistically courageous. He then brings the focus back to Schulman and her previous testimony about the death of her family and links this to the film’s focus on resistance movements: “Faye Schulman, her family now dead at the hands of the Nazis, decided to fight back. She would join the Russian partisans resisting German occupation.” The film cuts back to Schulman who continues Lewis’ strain of narration: “I felt that this is my responsibility, to avenge, and to show that Jews can fight if they have a chance, if they have an opportunity. That they are not cowards, and that they are not going into death like sheep.”

Instances like these, coupled with the film’s placement of the testimonies within a documentary narrative that progresses from the rise of the Nazis, through to the liberation of the camps and to the eventual emigration of survivors, suggest that for a film like *Voices of Survival*, the pedagogical utility of survivor testimony is not intrinsic to the testimonies themselves. Rather, they serve to complement the archival footage and historical information contained in the narration with personal anecdotes that lend a history constituted by mass death the individuality of human faces. The goal in this case is to use this first-hand testimony pedagogically, as a means to help illuminate a brief (the film is approximately fifty-seven minutes long), broad history of the Holocaust for the purposes of educating the inexperienced.

The invocation of survivors, and more broadly as I will discuss below, those who did *not* survive the Holocaust but offer their experiential perspectives through different

mediations like letters and diaries, are often framed in a manner that transcends the more basic pedagogical function of transmitting historical information from those who experienced the history in question to those who did not. There is an enduring sense in Holocaust education initiatives that a confrontation with this historical past is tantamount to a confrontation with the actual history itself, thus making one a “witness” by proxy. One such initiative is the March of the Living (MOL) – a commemorative march from the main camp at Auschwitz to Birkenau on *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day) – in which I participated in 2005. Over the course of this trip, the pedagogical goals of visiting sites of the past to learn about the Holocaust’s history was tightly bound to fostering a sense that by witnessing such artifacts, we ourselves were to become witnesses to history, and thus be compelled to provide our own testimony to others.

Yet the interaction with history that initiatives like the MOL purportedly offer goes beyond visiting spaces of the Holocaust, like Majdanek or Auschwitz as they exist as memorial sites today. The figure of the survivor him or herself is also absolutely central in this regard. As mentioned above (again, see Chapter Four Note 21), when I participated in the 2005 March, the bus that I was on included a number of survivors who complemented the educational material of the trip with their own personal histories, and there are survivors from around the world who travel with all of the delegations that participate in the March. According to March of the Living Canada’s website, it is precisely the act of listening to the stories of these first-hand witnesses that affords one the chance to become a witness to the Holocaust him or herself. And of course the importance of this assumption looms ever larger as the number of first-hand witnesses to

the Holocaust continues to decrease. Under the heading “Passing on the Legacy – Becoming a Witness,” the MOL Canada website states,

Sadly, with each passing year, fewer and fewer Holocaust survivors are able to take part in the two-week journey to Poland and Israel.

You are the last generation of Jewish youth privileged to listen to Holocaust survivors share their experiences – firsthand – in the places where their personal stories transpired.

On the 2010 March of the Living, you will visit the towns where the survivors and their families once lived and thrived ... you will travel to the places where some were hidden by compassionate neighbors, and others were mercilessly handed over to the Nazis. You will witness the sites of their imprisonment and torture, the camps where their friends and families perished ... and from where they were, ultimately, liberated.

As the survivors speak, you will hang on to every word describing their heroic struggle to remain alive in the face of the most evil terror humanity has ever known ... and you will vow to never forget their stories.

As one survivor and past participant in the March of the Living has said, “When you listen to a witness, you become a witness.”²

A number of independent documentaries about Canadians participating in the MOL have been produced, including *March of the Living* (Sid Goldberg, 1992) and *March of the Living 2000* (Grigori Ozerski, 2000). As Gary Evans notes in his filmography (at least about the 1992 film), instances like these seem to be intended as records of the event, possibly to distribute as a personal item for the participants themselves, rather than documentary productions intended for broadcast.³ Given the non-professional production values manifest in these films, coupled with the fact that the 1992

² March of the Living Canada, <http://www.marchoftheliving.org/mol2009/09intro.htm> (accessed June 7, 2010). It should also be noted that the MOL trip is roughly divided into two halves. The first half takes place in Poland and corresponds with Holocaust Memorial Day. This section is often emotionally devastating and consists of visiting sites of relevance to the Holocaust – such as the space of former ghettos and concentration camps. The second half of the trip occurs in Israel, and corresponds to Israeli Independence Day (*Yom Ha'atzmaut*) and Israeli Remembrance Day (*Yom Hazikaron*). In contrast to the somber quality of the Polish portion of the trip, the Israeli half has a triumphalist quality that is unapologetically Zionist in nature. Given this “narrative” progression, the MOL trip not so subtly posits the existence of Israel not only as a response to the Holocaust, but as vitally important to the continual “survival” of the Jewish people, including the members of the second-generation who actually participate in the March.

³ Evans 2011.

documentary clocks in at a lengthy 147 minutes, and the 2000 production is 84 minutes – still far too long for an hour-long slot on television - this assumption appears to be quite logical.

In 1999, Global Television produced and broadcast a documentary called *Each of Us Has a Name*, which covers the 1998 MOL by focusing on a delegation of Canadian students and the survivors who accompanied them. This film is notable not only insofar as its reach was broader than the two other *March of the Living* productions, but also for its emphasis on the central role that the participating survivors have in mediating the past for their fellow March participants. Near the beginning of the film as the group prepares for departure at the airport, one survivor emphasizes that he is “not a masochist” in wanting to take part in this trip. Rather, he echoes the almost ethical obligation articulated in *Voices of Survival*, that he “has something to tell young people.”

Each of Us Has a Name is actually more overt in its mobilization of survivor testimony as a conduit for historical pedagogy than *Voices of Survival*. The Global production unambiguously conveys the mandate spelled out on MOL Canada’s website, which suggests that the confrontation with the past afforded by visiting Holocaust sites and through interaction with survivors does not simply constitute an accumulation of historical knowledge, but marks an appropriation of historical experience as participants are encouraged to think of themselves as witnesses. One young participant states this clearly near the film’s opening, promising that after his experience on the March, he will consider himself to be a witness and contribute to educational programs for the community and friends, so that they can “become...witness[es] too.” In short, *Each of Us Has a Name* stresses the importance of Holocaust education like *Voices of Survival*,

but moves beyond the objective acquisition of knowledge into acquisition of experience and perspective, by framing the inexperienced not simply as becoming educated, but becoming witnesses.

The effacement of the barrier between those who experienced the Holocaust and the inexperienced (especially teenagers, children or young adults) is also covered in the 1980 CBC documentary *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank* by Harry Rasky (who would direct *The Spies Who Never Were* two years later), and in *Let Memory Speak*, a 1999 film by survivor Batia Bettman. And like *Each of Us Has a Name*, both of these films imply that an interaction with an experiential perspective of the Holocaust affords one the opportunity and obligation to appropriate experience and become a witness oneself. But unlike the Global production, Rasky's and Bettman's films approach this problematic of historical contact from a different angle than that which has been considered thus far. Rather than delineating a barrier between *survivors* and those who did not experience the Holocaust due to fortuitous circumstances of time or space, *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank* and *Let Memory Speak* frame the "inexperienced's" contact with history as an interaction with mediations and artifacts left by individuals, many of whom did *not* survive. If one were to adopt what Hayden White describes as "conventional historical inquiry," whereby "the 'facts' established about a specific [historical] event are taken to be the 'meaning' of that event,"⁴ it could be argued that such mediatory records offer a more authentic interaction with the Holocaust – an event whose meaning is often derived from the historical facticity of mass murder rather than fortunate liberation – than an encounter with a *living* survivor. Yet despite the clear differences between an

⁴ Hayden White, "The Modernist Event," in *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event*, ed. Vivian Sobchack (New York: Routledge, 1996), 21, original emphasis.

interpersonal interaction with a survivor and a confrontation with artifacts left by a murdered victim of the Nazi genocide, both Rasky and Bettman frame the encounter between inexperience and experience (via mediations) in a similar manner to *Each of Us Has a Name*, whereby the past is presented as perspectively appropriated by the inexperienced.

In *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank*, noted CBC director Harry Rasky's fourteen-year-old daughter Holly undertakes a personal pilgrimage to learn more about Anne Frank's life. The film situates this journey in the context of two intertwined events for Holly. The first is her reading and being intrigued – like many young people – by Anne's diary and the experiences recounted in it.⁵ The second – which is somewhat less overt in the film but illuminated by a bit of background newspaper research – was a modest proliferation of journalistic material on the man who hid Anne Frank (Victor Kugler) in the Canadian press, as he was revealed to be living in Toronto in the 1970s.⁶

In this sense, the title of the film is somewhat misleading. *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank's* focus is far less on Mr. Kugler himself than on Anne, about whom Holly gleans information not only via her diary, but also by traveling to Amsterdam, visiting Anne's home and interviewing individuals who knew her. In fact, the film conveys Mr. Kugler's function almost as an excuse for Holly's journey from Canada to Europe to begin. After revealing that Anne's rescuer now lives in Toronto, a series of

⁵ While Rasky documents his daughter's entry into the past via Anne Frank's *diary* rather than the testimony of *living* witnesses, his more ambitious 1987 documentary *To Mend the World* actually combines the approach of *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank* and eye-witness accounts as it juxtaposes survivor testimonies with the art of witnesses. I will discuss *To Mend the World* in the next chapter.

⁶ See for instance, Doreen Simpson, "The man who hid Anne Frank and her family," *The Telegram*, May 2, 1970; "Memories and Ghosts," *The Telegram* February 27, 1971; "Missing Persons: Whatever became of Anne Frank's protector?" *Canadian Panorama*, August 28, 1971; "Amsterdam mayor meets Metro man who hid Anne Frank," *Toronto Star*, May 9, 1975, B01; and "Her Dreams of the Grim Past," *The Toronto Sun*, June 13, 1979. I accessed all of these articles from the Harry Rasky collection at the York University Archives.

juxtapositions between archival footage and Holly in Amsterdam in the present is framed by the young girl's voiceover that posits this journey as a tribute to Mr. Kugler: "I'd like to think that I took this journey back for this very brave man, Mr. Kugler." Yet the film's documentation of what is ultimately Holly's education on the history of Anne makes it clear that it is *Anne's* story, available through her diary and the artifacts present where she once was, that is central. Moreover, the film emphasizes that like the confrontation with the past via visits to historical sites and interactions with survivors in *Each of Us Has a Name*, Holly's "education" consists not only in the accumulation of knowledge, but an appropriation of history that breaks down the barrier of experience. This is implied very near the beginning of the film as Holly reflects on her reading of Anne's diary, explaining that she is "a girl like me." That Holly's pilgrimage affords her certain experiential access to the past is made much more explicit in the aforementioned voiceover when she frames her trip as a tribute to Mr. Kugler. In these moments, the full text of the voiceover reflects Holly's contemplation of why she is compelled to travel to Anne's home, and the value of this trip which she articulates quite clearly as an effacement of time-space, and thus implicitly of experience-inexperience: "Maybe it's part of being fourteen, wanting to know everything that's going on. I wanted to know more about Anne's world. I'd like to think that I took this journey back for this very brave man, *to be there now, and also to be there then*" (my emphasis). Such an admission clarifies that in the world of *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank*, the journey to spaces of the past can purport to function not only as a "return" for those who lived the past in those spaces (like the survivors in the documentaries of return), but offers a chance to appropriate those experiences into the perspectives of those who did not.⁷

⁷ There is another tendency in Canadian Holocaust films that features what could be termed a "mirror-

Let Memory Speak by child-survivor Batia Bettman (who would achieve greater press attention for her 2003 play *No More Raisins, No More Almonds: Children's Ghetto Songs*, about the lives of Jewish children in Nazi ghettos⁸) is thematically similar to *Each of Us Has a Name* and *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank* in its emphasis on the pedagogical utility of eye-witness perspectives and the possibility of experiential appropriation via confrontation with historical artifacts. And like *Voices of Survival*, in Bettman's film the perspectives of those with a lived connection to the Holocaust are situated in conjunction with a narrative that covers a brief (the film is approximately 27 minutes long) history of it. Over its duration, *Let Memory Speak* progresses chronologically from the joyful simplicity of the lives of Jewish children in Europe prior to the rise of Hitler, to the effacement of Jewish liberties after the Nuremberg laws, to life in the ghettos, to the deportations, to the horrors of the camps, and finally to liberation and the uncertainty of displaced persons camps as survivors struggled to begin lives anew after the war. To conclude, the film jumps to the present to explore the "new generation" by documenting a March of the Living gathering at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

image" of this appropriation of an inexperienced past by visiting historical sites and artifacts, which is by bringing historical artifacts on tour so that people can face them in a museological or exhibition setting. The "Precious Legacy" exhibit that Otto Lowy tours in "A Journey to Prague" that pointed to the once-thriving Jewish-Czechoslovakian civilization had initially toured in Canada, which perhaps provided the impetus for the episode's conception, not unlike how the revelation of Mr. Kugler's residence in Toronto is framed as a launching point for Holly's journey to Amsterdam in *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank*. This tendency is also evident in the CBC documentary *Hanna's Suitcase* (Karen Levine, 2001). This documentary, which airs on CBC with relative frequency, tells the story of Fumiko Ishioka of the Tokyo Holocaust Education and Resource Centre, who acquires a suitcase that belonged to Hanna Brady, a Czechoslovakian child victim of the Holocaust. Ishioka eventually locates Hanna's brother George who lives in Toronto, and they subsequently tour with the suitcase, along with photos and other survivors' testimonies in order to, in the words of Gary Evans, "bring Hanna's poignant story to children who might otherwise be unable to grasp the magnitude of the Holocaust" (Evans 2011). Evans' observation implies that bringing historical artifacts to the inexperienced, rather than by bringing the inexperienced to historical artifacts, can serve similar pedagogical purposes by infusing historical representation with a sense of lived reality.

⁸ "Play brings Jewish ghettos to life through children's song," *The Ottawa Citizen*, March 19, 2007, <http://www.canada.com/cityguides/ottawa/story.html?id=8eef8971-3dde-4a07-88f4-ca1293d9c17b> (accessed June 7, 2010).

Bettman's film opens with a title card that implies an emphasis on the two qualities discussed relative to *Voices of Survival*, *Each of Us Has a Name*, and *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank* – that is, the importance of first-hand, eye-witness testimony for Holocaust education, and the acquisition of this information and consequential appropriation of first-hand experiences by a younger, inexperienced generation – which reads, “All names used in this film are those of real children who lived before and during the Holocaust. The quotations are from their diaries, poems, memoirs and testimonies. Some responses come from young people who have returned to walk in the footsteps of these children” (although it is not made clear until the last few minutes of the film, the last sentence refers to the March of the Living). The film then cuts to a series of photographs of children as a narrator introduces the film (not unlike Stephen Lewis' introduction in *Voices of Survival* which stresses the importance of survivor testimony): “You will listen to voices of children. You will see the faces of children, and look at their drawings in order to remember. We will start before the war. Let us overhear what the children were saying. Let memory speak.”

This introduction is notable since it implicitly places media representation (like drawings) on the same ontological level as verbal testimony. This not only relates to more visual representations like the drawings alluded to at this moment, and which occasionally appear in the film, but also the words left by individuals who did not survive the Holocaust which must be taken up by the “young people” whose voices substitute those of the dead. This strategy comprises the majority of the film, as archival photographs and film footage are accompanied by voiceovers of young people reading the words of those who were lost to the Holocaust as children, as one male and one

female narrator provide supplemental historical context. By asking the viewer to “overhear what the children were saying,” as the words of “the children” are actually spoken by a younger, inexperienced generation, the film implies a seamless appropriation of experience that is possible even in the face of the barrier of death.

Let Memory Speak presents the process of experiential appropriation as somewhat more axiomatic than *Voices of Survival*, *Each of Us Has a Name*, and *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank*. By this I mean that although the film enacts the appropriation of experience by having the living speak for the dead, it does not so explicitly reflect on this process as the other films. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, although the voices of the dead are “appropriated” by living persons with no physical connection to the Holocaust, such an appropriation is more inevitable than that purportedly afforded by the confrontation between young people and *survivors*. The words left by the dead (and the experiences and memories manifest in these words) *must* be taken up by the living (at least if they are to be verbalized as testimony, which is precisely what the film – *Let Memory Speak* – is presenting). At the same time though, the film strives to root the perspective of the words spoken by young people to their sources. In almost all of the instances in which written testimony is spoken, the young person concludes by stating the name, and if available, the age and place from which the living text comes. For instance, in the section on the deterioration of Jewish rights after the implementation of the Nuremberg Laws, a female voiceover reads over images of roaring fires, “‘Every day they keep issuing new laws against the Jews. Today for example, they took all our appliances away from us – the sewing machine, the radio, the telephone, the vacuum cleaner, my camera and my bicycle. Ivy said we should be happy they are taking things, not people.’ Eva, Hungary,

age 13.” This strategy of continually ascribing the words spoken by inexperienced voices to the identity of their source reinforces the barrier between the two, troubling the process of experiential appropriation. But again, this barrier is *enacted* in the film’s style rather than reflected on in its content.

Another way that *Let Memory Speak* differs in its treatment of experiential appropriation from the other films explored in this chapter is in its *blurring* of experience and inexperience. As the film progresses, it reveals that the male and female narrators are actually survivors. The “objective” historical information that they provide gradually cedes to revealing their own perspectives in the first-person. Moreover, Bettman herself provides the female voiceover.⁹ As such, by placing beside each other voiceovers of the words of the dead spoken by the inexperienced living, and the voices of the living spoken by themselves, as a film devoted to “letting memory speak,” Bettman’s work actually *embodies* the process of experiential appropriation rather than *documenting* it, like the encounters between survivors and March of the Living participants in *Each of Us Has a Name*.

Yet this tendency of self-reflexivity towards the process of appropriating experience is ultimately implicit. There is no explicit statement that these initially objective voices are actually those of survivors, and this revelation emerges very slowly. Granted, there is always a sense that these two particular voices are different from the others since when they begin speaking in the first-person, they do not include biographical information, unlike the “appropriated” voices. However, when these narrators begin to provide *their own* testimonies (rather than “objective” historical

⁹ Elizabeth Smith, “Let Memory Speak,” *All Movie Guide*, <http://www.demo-ent.mobile.msn.com/en-us/msyn.aspx?mid=51768&ft=t> (accessed June 7, 2010).

information), there is no demarcation that these testimonies are now being provided by living witnesses. As such, this shift merely lends the impression that the film is moving away from specifically identifying the sources of all the quotations. In fact, the film only illuminates that these two voices are those of survivors towards the film's conclusion when the male voiceover states, "As child survivors, we are concerned with memory and we have just begun to tell our stories," which he recites over the image of a male survivor speaking to a group of young people. But even in this case, it is not made 100% clear that *this* (visualized) man is the source of the voiceover since this moment does not include synchronized sound, but only a voice over top of the visuals of this cross-generational encounter. Moreover, the female narrator – Bettman herself - is never visualized. For all these reasons, the emphasis that the film places on attributing the testimonial words to individuals with actual "names" (from the title card) becomes confusingly clustered and the clarity of perspective muddled.¹⁰ But as I alluded to above, once one has seen the film a number of times, this confusion of perspective can be read as a strategy that embodies the process by which the delineation between the experienced and inexperienced is blurred, as the latter appropriates the historical experiences of the former and thus become witnesses themselves.

In the final moments of *Let Memory Speak*, when its focus shifts to the present, the film ultimately points to the transmission of the past from generation to generation and implies a similar sense of experiential appropriation as in *Each of Us Has a Name*

¹⁰ As Bettman is herself a Holocaust survivor, this confusion of perspective within her film also points to the precarious balance between the object and the subject of history, even when the two are comprised in the same individual (i.e. someone that experienced the Holocaust talking about their experiences during the Holocaust). In cases like these, a barrier emerges *within* experience that renders the historical past experientially distant even for someone that experienced that history first-hand, thus collapsing a clear delineation between experience and inexperience. I will consider this tendency in greater detail in the next chapter.

and *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank*. Implicitly, this is accomplished as the male narrator refers to David, a survivor whose “grandson can [now] reassure him.” At this point, for the first time in the film, the perspective assumed is that of the younger generation as David’s grandson offers words of comfort over a photograph of his grandfather embracing him as a young boy: “After we sat for awhile, I put my hand on Grandpa’s arm and told him, ‘You shouldn’t be ashamed to let people see your [tattooed] number. You didn’t do anything wrong. It’s the Nazis who should be ashamed.’” This shift to the perspective of the younger generation implies the cross-generational transmission of the past, and more importantly, of responsibility for the legacy of this history. That the acquisition of this responsibility entails an appropriation of the past, of making the past “property” of the new generation, becomes blatant as the film shifts to coverage of the March of the Living and a young male participant recalls (again in voiceover), “As I was marching towards Birkenau, I was carrying the Israeli flag. I felt that I was the bearer of Jewish memory, of what happened there.” The message in these closing moments is clear as the words of the dead (through their mediations), as well as those of survivors (the narrators) cede perspective to a younger generation – not only to *know* the objective historicity of the Holocaust, but also to be “bearers” of this memory, which necessitates an appropriation of it.

The strength of the link between the importance of first-hand witness accounts (especially survivor testimony) and the acquisition of this knowledge by a younger generation is logically rooted in pragmatic concerns about the increasingly rapid loss of first-hand perspectives that survivors are able to offer. This concern is manifest in the very foundation of initiatives devoted to archiving survivor testimony, and is spelled out

on the aforementioned quote on March of the Living Canada's website. Yet unlike Pierre Nora's discussion of a postmodern conception of history that sees the "increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good,"¹¹ leaving an irretrievable void that results in a historiography that is always already seen as representation and representation alone, Holocaust educational initiatives (including films like those discussed thus far) purport to offer a means of preventing this loss by passing on experiential memory so that a new generation actually can become historical *witnesses*, rather than simply historically astute.

"Cross-generational Documentaries"

The next chapter will return to the issue of "passing on" memory by interrogating the assumptions implicit in and the limitations of "appropriating experience." But for now I would like to shift attention to a number of Canadian films that situate the process of historical, memorial, and experiential appropriation in *individual* terms, rather than in the more collective context of the films discussed above that centralize their pedagogical motivations. This collective approach is of course more obvious in films like *Voices of Survival*, *Each of Us Has a Name*, and *Let Memory Speak*, and less so in *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank* which presents information about Anne through the journey of a single person – Holly Rasky. Yet even in Rasky's film, although Holly is an important conduit through which Anne's story is gathered and relayed, her appropriation of Anne's personal history is secondary to the information conveyed. Moreover, Holly's personal reflections often situate her as a stand-in for her a broader segment of her generation ("Maybe it's

¹¹ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7. I will return to Nora in the next chapter.

part of being fourteen”) as she goes on a journey to find out about a young girl whose words are often the first serious encounter that young people have with the history of the Holocaust. In this sense, Holly’s confrontation with Anne’s history, and her consequent education on the Holocaust, come across as almost quaint and naïve. I do not mean this in a derogatory sense, but that the film’s commentary on Holly’s own appropriation of Anne’s experiences lacks the transcendental quality ascribed to confrontations with the past that is manifest in the films discussed below.

In the films I now want to consider, the *process* of an inexperienced individual confronting and trying to appropriate a Holocaust past is as - or even more - important than the historical information conveyed. This process also assumes a greater individual significance since most of the films feature *relatives* of survivors (usually children or perhaps grandchildren) who are attempting to uncover their family’s Holocaust history that has often remained largely unspoken by an “experienced” relative, who is reluctant to speak about his or her past. But this process is not simply a journey to *know* the history, nor – importantly – to become a witness for an abstract future generation. Rather, these films present this journey towards experience as a means of inexperienced individuals coming to a greater understanding of *themselves*, of stabilizing and coming to terms with their own identities as children of Holocaust survivors, which is why I am electing to refer to these films as “cross-generational documentaries.” Even in films by relatives of Holocaust survivors and victims that focus on specific microhistories of the Holocaust - like Simcha Jacobovici’s *The Struma* or Wendy Oberlander’s *Nothing to be Written Here* - the importance of this journey towards historical information is situated relative (and subjugated) to the director’s own familial link to this history. In *Still (Stille)*

and *Dark Lullabies*, as well as in films already discussed thus far like *Emotional Arithmetic*, *Memorandum* and *So Many Miracles*,¹² the process of confronting a family member's (or family members') horrific pasts is central as a member of an "inexperienced" generation faces, gathers and appropriates familial Holocaust experiences in a deeply personal effort to clarify his or her sense of self.¹³

On the one hand, this tendency can be understood within a decidedly Canadian social framework, especially in the context of Canada's Multiculturalism Act which was passed in 1988, but was the result of a long history of federally mandated multicultural policy. This Act adopted a more proactive approach to the "official multiculturalism" instituted by the government of Pierre Trudeau in the late 1960s and 1970s, which *recognized and accepted* the multicultural fabric of Canadian society. The 1988 Act sought to "*assist* in the preservation of culture and language, to reduce discrimination, to *enhance* cultural awareness and understanding, and to *promote* culturally sensitive change at the federal level." The Act also "specified the right of all to identify with the cultural heritage of their choice" while retaining full involvement and inclusion in Canadian society.¹⁴

This process of the increasingly institutionalized promotion of the importance of cultural identity thus implicitly enshrined the necessity of markers of cultural uniqueness.

¹² As I have already discussed these three films previously, the present chapter will not include extensive analysis of them. I will however refer to them when they can serve as a useful point of comparison or contrast that can illuminate the other films.

¹³ Based on the descriptions I have been able to find, there are a number of other Canadian films that could also fit into this analytical framework, but I have been unable to locate copies to view. These include Francine Zuckerman's short film *Passengers* (2000), which Gary Evans describes as "an exploration of the relationship between a daughter and her father as she recalls his legacy including his Holocaust experience on the day of his funeral" (Evans 2011), and *Mum* (Julia Creet, 2008), in which "[t]he children of a holocaust survivor try to come to terms with her hidden past." See Internet Movie Database, "Mum," <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1358459> (accessed June 8, 2010).

¹⁴ Library of Parliament, "Canadian Multiculturalism." Prepared by Michael Dewing and Marc Leman, (Revised March 16, 2006), <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/936-e.htm> (accessed June 8, 2010), my emphasis.

In *Delayed Impact*, Franklin Bialystok situates the increasing awareness of the Holocaust in Canada during these initial decades of official multiculturalism (1960s and 1970s), and argues that it is during this period that the “post-Holocaust” generation of Canadian Jews began to “[a]ppropriat[e] the Holocaust as a pillar of self-definition.”¹⁵ More specifically, Bialystok spells out later in his study, this appropriation of the Holocaust offered an ethnic marker of identity that afforded the opportunity for this generation to re-engage with Judaism – their cultural tradition from which they had been disengaged, since “[u]nlike their parents and grandparents, they had no traditional neighbourhoods, secular organizations, or Yiddish to tie them [the members of this post-Holocaust generation] to each other and to their past.” By 1985, the year in which *Dark Lullabies* was produced, “the institutionalization of the Holocaust was an unmistakable aspect of Jewish ethnic identity.”¹⁶ Although Bialystok does not say it explicitly, he implies that this second-generation appropriation of the Holocaust - manifest in *Dark Lullabies*, and in the other “cross-generational documentaries” listed above that were produced after the institution of the Multiculturalism Act - can be understood in relation to a multicultural society where claims of cultural uniqueness are reinforced by markers of ethnic identity, especially those derived from “incidents of victimization” like the Holocaust. (Bialystok notes, “this trend [towards seizing instances of ethnic victimization as a central marker of cultural identity] has also been prevalent among some other North American ethnic minorities as well”¹⁷).

¹⁵ Bialystok, 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 11. Given this emphasis on victimization, the cross-generational documentaries come closer to the discourse of marginalization, which the Introduction discussed as looming large in Canadian film scholarship, than the films that I have concentrated on thus far. This is especially true in a film like *Nothing to be Written Here*, in which the director opts to appropriate the Holocaust by situating herself within the historical legacy of Jewish victimization rather than individually through her father’s personal

Accordingly, the efforts to appropriate familial Holocaust experiences in these films can certainly be read as responsive to Canadian multiculturalism as children (or grandchildren) of survivors try to establish a cultural link to their ethnic past as “children of Holocaust survivors.” At the same time though, it would be erroneous to argue that this tendency towards investigating familial links to the Holocaust as a means of gaining a greater sense of self is unique to Canada. For instance, the American drama *Everything is Illuminated* (Liev Schreiber, 2005), adapted from Jonathan Safran Foer’s novel of the same name, features Jonathan (Elijah Wood), a young Jewish-American man who travels to Ukraine to find the woman who saved his grandfather during WWII. Such a journey is not qualitatively distinct from that undertaken by Saul in *So Many Miracles* to meet Sophia, nor, as we will see, is it dissimilar from the journey undertaken by the Jewish-Canadian filmmaker in *Dark Lullabies* to come to terms with her parents’ history. Similarly, Francine Zuckerman’s *Punch Me in the Stomach* (1997) covers a one-woman comedy/drama show by New Zealand performer Deb Filler, a comedienne and daughter of a Holocaust survivor, which is about “her father whose story of survival was a constant factor in her youth.”¹⁸ This performance also speaks to the problematic of experiential appropriation as Filler actually plays the part of her father in addition to herself.¹⁹ Moreover, while these cross-generational documentaries are often situated at least partly in Canada (in other words they do not *hide* their Canadian context), like many of the

experiences as a Holocaust survivor. Yet despite this emphasis on ethnic marginalization that assumes its most explicit formation in *Nothing to be Written Here*, the process of experiential appropriation of the Holocaust is still central to these films rather than the fact of marginalization itself. If the final result of this appropriation is a sense of self-inclusion within a marginalized community, this marginalization still stems from the *appropriation* of an individual (i.e. a Holocaust survivor’s) or collective (i.e. historical Jewish) victimization rather than an essential quality of marginalized difference.

¹⁸ Evans, 2007

¹⁹ Although *Punch Me in the Stomach* was co-produced by Canada and New Zealand (Evans 2011), I have elected to omit further discussion of this film, as it is largely a documentation/recording of a live performance.

other films dealt with thus far, the *fact* that they are *Canadian* is far less important than their documentation (or representation in the case of a narrative film like *Emotional Arithmetic*) of an effort to appropriate the Holocaust past of a family member. In the cross-generational documentaries then, the temporal nature of the barrier of experience supersedes the spatial barrier of Canada's historical distance from the Holocaust. As such, these Canadian films actually speak to broader challenges facing Holocaust representations that persist meta-nationally, as those with a lived connection to the historical record continue to pass away.

A useful place to begin this consideration of films that highlight the process of appropriating the Holocaust experience for the purpose of gleaning a better sense of one's self is the NFB documentary *Raymond Klibansky: From Philosophy to Life*. It must be acknowledged though that this film differs in a number of ways from the rest of the cross-generational documentaries that will round out this chapter. First, although the film is listed under the "War, Conflict and Peace| Holocaust" category in the "Collections" section of the NFB website,²⁰ its subject, Raymond Klibansky - the noted German-Canadian philosopher - can only be considered a "Holocaust survivor" in the very broadest sense of the term. Although he fled from Germany after losing an academic post at the University of Heidelberg upon the implementation of the anti-Semitic Nuremberg Laws,²¹ this escape occurred in 1933, long before the Nazis' genocidal

²⁰ National Film Board of Canada, "Raymond Klibansky: From Philosophy to Life," <http://www.onf-nfb.gc.ca/eng/collection/film/?id=51105> (accessed June 8, 2010).

²¹ Ibid. This biographical information is also conveyed in the film itself. See also Georges Leroux, "Klibansky, Raymond," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0009412> (accessed June 9, 2010).

intentions became clear.²² Second, although the narrator of *Raymond Klibansky* explicitly stresses her desire to understand history and philosophy through Klibansky's perspective, her own identity remains ambiguous throughout the film. She is primarily a disembodied voice that never identifies herself explicitly by name, and has virtually no onscreen presence. In fact, the moments in which a woman who we can presume to be the narrator is onscreen merely serve to call attention to the extent of her ambiguous identity, such as brief long-shots of her reading or walking through woods, shots of her back as she ascends the stairs of the Heidelberg library, close-ups of her hands looking at old photographs, or the most obvious example of her onscreen absence, shots of her shadow. This poetic ambiguity of the narrator's identity is in stark contrast to the rest of the films dealt with below, all of which clearly spell out the relationship between the inexperienced person and the perspective that he or she is seeking. But since this documentary makes so explicit the process of, and desire for, the appropriation of a lived perspective towards the Holocaust, it can help establish what is at stake in other films in which there is no ambiguity about who the individuals searching for the past are, their relationship to the person whose perspective and experience that they seek, and why they are undertaking their search.

A significant portion *Raymond Klibansky* is devoted to information about his life and his philosophy, which illuminates his stance towards war, the Holocaust and other such "large" questions. More objective material about Klibansky's personal history is largely conveyed through fairly conventional talking heads, like Klibansky himself, his

²² It should be noted that there are historians (generally known as "intentionalist" historians) who argue that the Holocaust – that is the *systematic attempt to exterminate* European Jewry – was the Nazi's goal from the beginning of the Third Reich in 1933, even if institutionalized discrimination preceded the actual killing by a number of years. See for example Lionel B. Steiman, *Paths to Genocide* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998), 221. See also Note 35 below.

wife (Ethel Groffier), his sister (Sonja Sutton-Steiniger), and his philosopher friend (Georges Leroux, who also provides Klibansky's entry in the online *Canadian Encyclopedia* – see Note 21 above). The narrator, in contrast, offers more poetic reflections over images of photographs and footage that symbolically relate to specific aspects of Klibansky's life and humanist philosophy (such as a shot of a group of young people around a fire as the narrator observes [recalls?] “To master the darkness, touch the mysteries, the invisible; those solstice nights when you devised role-playing games with pages and fair maidens. Games of bravery: to initiate oneself into the future; to transcend the past; to learn to think for oneself; to assert one's freedom in the face of the established order; to defy conformity. From philosophy to life, a way of being.”) The film also briefly points to the inevitable demise of first-hand perspectives with a lived connection to history as the narrator situates Klibansky as part of “a generation soon to be lost.”

Yet all of the material covered in the film – including the “objective” information about Klibansky's life and philosophy and more general information about the loss of experiential perspective - is anchored to the narrator's quest and desire to assume Klibansky's “gaze” towards history, life, and the world. And I would argue that this *process* is more central to the film than Klibansky himself. For instance, before the film begins to consider the influences that shaped Klibansky's philosophy, the narrator sets up this movement towards his formative past in the context of her own search for his perspective: “I want to know the child, to find the source of this serene and confident gaze, that has nonetheless traversed a century of violence. Retrace the course of your life. Place my feet where yours once trod.”

Raymond Klibansky immediately establishes the problematic of appropriating a “gaze” as central to the film’s representational impetus as the disembodied narrational voice ruminates over the opening titles: “This gaze, this gaze containing 2500 years of history. This gaze bearing witness to memory, to knowledge, so intense and so intimate, a meeting between my quest and the void. This gaze that would fill my own, turning my life around. I love this gaze already, before I even knew whose it was. Before I even knew he existed, I’d fallen in love with a philosopher’s gaze.” Like the confrontation with the past via the presence of survivors in *Each of Us Has a Name* or the words of Holocaust victims in *The Man Who Hid Anne Frank* or *Let Memory Speak*, the narrator’s desire to approach the work of Klibansky transcends a desire to simply acquire historical and philosophical information. She seeks to appropriate an experiential perspective. Where *Raymond Klibansky* differs is in the professed utility of this perspectival acquisition. Rather than framing this appropriation of experience as a way to become a “witness” who can share the history with others and prevent the loss of a historical connection that threatens to accompany the eventual demise of Holocaust survivors, the narrator desires Klibansky’s gaze because it promises to offer a new perspective on the large questions facing humanity, and can help her to establish a stronger sense of identity as a human. In other words, the consequences of this appropriation tend towards the internal rather than the external.

This emphasis on the internal is of course implied in the grandiose language of the opening voiceover and becomes increasingly overt as the film progresses. After the title card and accompanying narration, the film cuts to Klibansky sitting in a library as his own voiceover asserts the importance of libraries, and reflects on the inextricable and

emotional bond between love and knowledge that consists in the very word “philosophy.” The female narration then establishes the existential quality of the narrator’s quest for Klibansky’s gaze. Over an image of him flipping through an enormous hard-cover book, the narrator states, “I was searching for meaning in my life, and you were the one who found me, who gave me the keys, yours.” The image then cuts from Klibansky to a literal box of keys at the Heidelberg library, from which a single key is taken, which gives the narrator access to a room holding some of the philosopher’s works. As these literal keys symbolize an entry by the narrator into the mind of Klibansky, this particular instance also sets up the link between the literal and the symbolic that persists throughout the film (i.e. the link between the literal information about Klibansky’s life and philosophy and the narrator’s symbolic journey into his perspective in order to gain a humanist understanding of “a century of violence”).

The “success” of the narrator’s quest to appropriate Klibansky’s perspective is made gradually more explicit as the film continues. In the section dealing most specifically with the Holocaust (approximately halfway through the film), Klibansky’s philosophical reflections on war are layered over photographs and film footage of WWII. For example, images of people being crammed into cattle cars are accompanied by his reflection, “Naturally war isn’t something one boasts about. You believe your adversary represents evil. So you must do your part in defeating those responsible for that evil.” The film then cuts to a shot out the window of a moving train as the narrator continues this informational trajectory as she describes (in the second-person, as though speaking *to* rather than *about* Klibansky) how in 1945, he was sent from Britain to Germany to “investigate, to question the prisoners of war, the intellectuals, the population.” The film

then shifts emphasis to the narrator's symbolic journey as she continues, "I travel through you, backwards in time," echoing Holly Rasky's comments about "being there then" by journeying through Anne Frank's past. That Klibansky's perspective is *essential* in allowing the narrator to face the horrors of the Holocaust is further clarified as the visuals cut from the train to images of a concentration camp (it appears to be Birkenau) as she states, "I plumb the depths of the human soul with you," and implores, "I need your strength to face these scenes of the apocalypse; face them and not turn away; witness them and not clamour for vengeance; just take in the evidence of evil, and never forget it." The voiceover then returns to Klibansky, over an image of the infamous *Arbeit Macht Frei* sign, who provides an implicit justification for the narrator's journey as he articulates the inextricable link between seeing and knowing, between perception and cognition: "If you haven't seen it, you can't imagine what it was."

The conclusion of *Raymond Klibansky* implies that the narrator's journey through the philosopher's gaze is ultimately successful in illuminating her search for "meaning in life." Her final reflection over a still image of Klibansky attests, "Your gaze has turned my life around and suffused my senses. With you I have finally found love; a love that is simply and profoundly human." The film then formally alludes to this successful appropriation of Klibansky's gaze as the end credits begin rolling over an image of two shadows (presumably Klibansky and the narrator) walking on a street before their feet come into the frame and the image freezes. As this is the only time these two figures are visualized together, this final image confirms stylistically (especially in the context of the narrator's final words) that she believes she has successfully acquired the subjective gaze that she has been seeking.

It is important to note that this conclusion retains the ambiguity of the narrator's identity, as well as the ambiguity of her relation to the film's subject (Klibansky). If her acquisition of Klibansky's gaze has afforded a stabilization of her sense of self, the identity of this self is still left unclear. Yet the perpetuation of this ambiguity is rooted in the narrator's emphasis throughout the film that her journey through Klibansky is a search for a meaning that is "profoundly human" rather than uniquely individual. By keeping the identity of the narrator ambiguous, the "truths" revealed to her via Klibansky's gaze are posited as applicable to humanity, corresponding to the humanist impetus of his philosophy. In this sense, the appropriation of experience by the narrator purports to assume a universal "human" identity. This generality is in stark contrast to the cross-generational documentaries that focus on the appropriation of perspective by a specific and identified individual as a mechanism to establish and/or assert, and/or stabilize an ethnic, cultural, religious or more simply personal identity via a familial connection to the Holocaust afforded by appropriating an experiential gaze.

In the cross-generational documentaries, the personal journey of a relative of a Holocaust survivor to acquire knowledge of his or her family history is often central. The object is to garner a greater understanding of one's identity through a confrontation with this inexperienced past. In other words, the actual history uncovered in this search (and thus, the history revealed by the film) is often secondary, or at least leveled with the process of the inexperienced younger relative (almost always the filmmaker him or herself) trying to appropriate a historical perspective, which the film documents. But before moving on to consider instances like these where this search is central, it is useful to point out that a similar tendency aimed at effacing a generational barrier of experience

persists even in films whose focus *is* primarily historical. For instance, Simcha Jacobovici's 2001 documentary *The Struma* is framed as an attempt to resolve what amounts to a historical mystery. The Struma was a ship carrying Jewish refugees from Romania that was sunk in the Black Sea after being unable to debark in neutral Turkey. The "official story," the film claims, was that a German submarine sank the Struma, but it posits there was an enduring possibility that either Turkey itself, or perhaps even the Allies, may have attacked it. The film documents attempts by a British diver (Greg Buxton), whose grandfather was one of those killed when the Struma sunk, to locate the ship's wreckage. Such evidence, Buxton feels, might help to further illuminate the unanswered questions about the Struma's fate.

In other words, *The Struma* is primarily a historical documentary devoted to documenting the efforts to locate the ship's wreckage, and thus uncovering what actually happened to it. Yet Jacobovici's personal connection to this history is eventually revealed and placed in the context of the film's broader historical emphasis. After the history of the ship (and the mystery of its fate) is explained and Greg (the diver) is introduced, Jacobovici establishes a link between this investigation and his own familial connection to the Holocaust. He identifies himself as the son of Romanian Holocaust survivors, and claims that the Struma is "a symbol for all the unmarked graves of the family I lost." He also alludes to the tension between his film's claims to historical objectivity (they are trying to find out what *actually* happened to the ship through an *actual* investigative search) and his own emotional connection to the pro-filmic events: "My role," asserts Jacobovici, "is to document Greg's efforts. I am not," he qualifies, "a disinterested party." In the film's concluding moments Jacobovici makes another explicit

link between his own personal history and that of his film when he finds a photo of his father on the Pan Crescent, a ship that faced similar uncertainty as the Struma after the war when it was dragged into the Mediterranean Sea from the coast of Israel before being intercepted and held in Cyprus. When Jacobovici finds this photo, he reflects on the connection between himself and Greg's quest to understand what happened to his grandfather. "I found my father," Jacobovici concludes, thus confirming what was left implicit by his earlier admission that he is "not a disinterested party" – that for him, this journey towards the truth behind the Struma's sinking was as much about finding information about his own family's past and establishing it as a personal symbol for the "unmarked graves" of those he lost, as it was about presenting information to shed light on a historical truth.

Wendy Oberlander's 1996 film *Nothing to be Written Here* maintains a delicate balance between its focus on an often-overlooked history, and the filmmaker's attempt to appropriate an experiential gaze towards this history as a means to strengthen her Jewish identity. Historically, the film's emphasis is almost identical to that of Harry Rasky's *The Spies Who Never Were*, and to a certain extent the miniseries *Haven* (although this title is set in the United States). Through the experiences of her father Peter, Oberlander's film focuses on the internment of Jewish refugees (mostly from Germany and Austria) in Canadian "camps" after British Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered the round-up and imprisonment of potential "enemy aliens." These potential enemies included former citizens of Nazi-controlled nations, under the guise that these foreigners may constitute a security threat. These putative "spies" were subsequently arrested under this order, and sent to Commonwealth nations (namely Canada and

Australia) to be held. Gary Evans notes that the film “provides a good history lesson as it articulates the obstacles they [the interned refugees] encountered,”²³ such as being imprisoned alongside Nazi POWs, the hard labour that they had to perform while in the Canadian camps, and their attempts to retain Judaic identity through ritual and dietary adherence. The film also emphasizes the bureaucratic obstacles imposed by Canadian Director of Immigration F.C. Blair that stymied their legal entry into Canada after the war.

On the one hand, *Nothing to be Written Here* is an attempt to reveal a largely unknown element of Canada’s WWII history. The film’s title implies as much, as does Oberlander’s voiceover, which asks how silence has replaced this history. Oberlander expresses a strong sense of moral indignation towards both this silence and the history of her father’s internment, which she evokes visually through the use of waves to intimate the state of perpetual limbo that the refugees faced, even after their escape to Britain from Nazi controlled Europe. The opening seconds of the film provide an ethical framework to read this motif as a male voiceover recites an allegory that tells of a man who falls into water between two shores and the people on each shore try to save him, in contrast to a man who is *pushed* into the water only to have the people on each shore hoping that he will not be rescued on *their* side. This allegory offers a clear connection to the lack of compassion that these refugees faced after being forced into a metaphorical ocean by the Nazis for being Jews, and abandoned by those able to offer them a source of rescue. This visual motif plays out a number of times in the film in which an image that is centered, taking up approximately two-thirds of the frame, is surrounded by a background of waves. These framed images include Peter Oberlander recounting his experience, as well

²³ Evans 2002, 169.

as an open *Torah*, thus implying both the literal abandonment of individuals that needed help (Peter himself) and the metaphorical abandonment of the Jewish people (via the *Torah*). That the film is seeking to bring an untold history to light is also made clear in a similar manner as Oberlander places newspaper headlines about the internment over pertinent images as concrete proof that this unfortunate microhistorical aspect of Canada's WWII history *happened* (for instance, a headline about one of the Jewish interns being robbed in the camp is placed over the larger image of a suitcase).

On the other hand, the film suggests that the blank slate upon which the text of this history is to be written is much narrower than Canada's public discourse, and is embodied in Oberlander herself. This is in part because the main perspective through which the history is told belongs to her father. In the same breath as she asks how this history has remained silent in Canada, as well as silent in her own family's history. But the film goes even further than simply suggesting that Oberlander is trying to find out what happened to her father during a time that he has only recently begun to speak about. *Nothing to be Written Here* is more than an investigative journey to uncover the historical factuality of Oberlander's father's internment. It also constitutes her attempt to appropriate this experience in order to reassert her Judaic identity.

After the opening voiceover that describes the metaphor of the drowning man, and following the image of the title card that reads "NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN HERE," Oberlander's own voice emerges on the audio track and implies that the story to be told is a remedy to the absence of her *own* story: "In the beginning was the word. When I was a child, my father recited the Greek translation of the story. My story is different. In the beginning was silence. The pages are blank except for one pair of

quotation marks. They protest the silence.” As the film progresses it clarifies that the silence that constitutes Oberlander’s story (“My story”) derives from her father’s reluctance to share this aspect of his past with her. Accordingly, this investigative journey to fill the blank (or silent) pages of the past is framed as one that can locate her own story through that of her father. This tendency towards experiential appropriation is evident when the film begins to describe Peter as a young boy in prewar Austria, and it is Oberlander’s voiceover that articulates this story in the first-person. “I am in Vienna. It is April 1938.” Later in the film’s first half, her voiceover again suggests that this film’s documentation is not merely of her father’s story, but of her own “entry into this history,” and more importantly, her appropriation of it. As she describes the archival work that has begun to illuminate this aspect of her father’s past that he is hesitant to share himself, she frames this not as a simple accumulation of historical facts, but as the effacement of distance between herself and this history: “The distance, between here and there, my father and I, began to shrink.” Oberlander also points to a less abstract and slightly clumsier connection between herself and her father’s experiences as she juxtaposes his reflections on the uniform he wore in the camp (blue denim with a large red dot on the back and red stripes down the legs to deter escape) with her own blue jeans as a teenager.

At the same time, *Nothing to be Written Here* is careful to spell out the limitations of this attempt to appropriate Peter’s experience. After reflecting on the shrinking distance between herself and her father, and following the assertion that declares “I locate myself in this story,” Oberlander adds the proviso, “but privilege places me in a world so different from my father’s.” The distinction that prevents her unequivocal immersion in this history becomes even more explicit towards the film’s end when she admits, “His

memory is not mine, his loss is not mine, and I can't erase the ocean." Yet this admission does not constitute an *abandonment* of her journey to discover her father's past, but an acknowledgement that that her ability to make herself *a part of that past* transcends her generational connection to it through his (reluctant) memory. In this sense, the "fashion" allegory that links Oberlander's blue jeans to her father's uniform – an allegory referred to above as "clumsy" – may actually function self-consciously to expose the challenges of approaching the past through her father's perspective alone. It implies that such an approach threatens to be futile at best (i.e. she will be unable to *actually* grasp his memory) or superficial at worst (i.e. the only meaningful connection that she can make is between the clothes that he wore in the camp and those she wore as a teenager). For Oberlander, the film suggests, the appropriation of her father's experiences can thus not solely come through himself and his memories, but requires the collective intermediary of her Jewish faith.

Halfway through the film, Oberlander's voiceover explains the Jewish holiday *Tisha B'av*, which marks the "exiles and destruction endured throughout history [by the Jewish people]."²⁴ The unspoken implication is that the expulsion that her father faced is merely a recent example of this long history of exile, as images of the destroyed (and rebuilt) temple in Jerusalem are followed by an image of a model boat over an open *Torah*. The voiceover then makes clear that an immersion into Judaism affords one a personal connection to this history of exile in which each event becomes "transtemporal, linking Jews across the millennia." While the film retains its concern with Peter's personal history, from this point it places a greater degree of emphasis on Oberlander's

²⁴ This quote is taken from Oberlander's film. For a more detailed discussion of *Tisha B'Av*, see Union for Reform Judaism, "Tishah B'Av: A Brief History," http://urj.org/holidays/tishabav/?syspage=article&item_id=21945 (accessed June 14, 2010).

connection to this past via Judaism. For instance, after her father's voiceover reflects on the racial discrimination faced by Jews (many of whom did not even consider themselves to be Jewish) under Nazi control, and the desire to pass oneself off as non-Jewish, Oberlander recalls instances in her own life where she faced anti-Semitism. At this moment, she is visualized wearing an orthodox hat and cloak, thus implying her own embracement of Judaism almost in defiant response to the previous reflections on not wanting to draw attention to oneself as Jewish for fear of racist reprisal.

The centrality of Judaism to Oberlander's appropriation of her father's history is clearly established in the film's concluding moments. In response to her father's voiceover question, "What can you learn...from silence?" she replies, "That by listening, I see myself, as in a mirror." The images over this voiceover are an open *Torah* on a black background as Oberlander's face, looking at the camera, is slowly superimposed over the book. This device is essential to understand the film's emphasis on the link between Oberlander's Judaism and her ability to appropriate the past since it recalls the visual juxtaposition of *Torah* (Judaism) and boat (symbolic of her father's history) in the section on *Tisha B'av*, which marks the film's movement towards a greater emphasis on Jewish faith and exile.

After describing the research into her father's story through archives, Oberlander admits that much of his past is still out of reach. This absence, she claims, "becomes a fixation," as she devotes herself to "fighting the silences and the erasure of history." She then links this desire to fight the disappearance of the past to the localization of herself within this history: "I find myself looking in the mirror, trying to read the words." After these words, an image of Oberlander's face turning towards the camera fades in from a

black background. It is this visual device that is replayed at the end of the film as we once again see Oberlander self-reflexively looking towards the camera, as one would look towards a mirror. But this time rather than fading to a black screen, her face is placed over the image of a *Torah*. This visual juxtaposition acts in conjunction with her earlier impetus to “[fight] the silences and the erasures of history” that depends on finding herself within history (i.e. looking into the mirror) not simply as the daughter of Peter, but *as a Jew*. In other words, although it is left much more implicit than in *Each of Us Has a Name* and *Let Memory Speak, Nothing to be Written Here* places the responsibility for remembering – i.e. fighting the historical erasure of - the Holocaust, all of its associated microhistories, and more broadly the “transtemporal” history of Jewish exile, into the hands of the “next” Jewish generation. This fight against the erasure of history finds a literal, albeit secular, counterpoint in the concluding moments of *Emotional Arithmetic* when Melanie’s sopping wet diary – a symbolic collection of history in the form recorded statistics of historical atrocities, which began with her internment in Drancy – is rescued by her son Benjamin. As Benjamin gently dries the pages with a hair-dryer, at this moment he stands as the guardian of history, ensuring that the past will not be “washed away” by the eventual loss of first-hand witnesses to the Holocaust.

Curiously, Oberlander’s 2001 film *Still (Stille)* moves away from framing the appropriation of the past via her immersion in a “transtemporal” Judaic identity, as well as from *Nothing’s* emphasis on its own status as a work of historiography (meant to shed light on the internment of Jewish refugees in Canada during WWII). *Still* does however retain the intergenerational quality of Oberlander’s earlier film, and documents her

attempts to locate her story (again articulated as “my story”) in that of her relatives with a lived connection to anti-Semitism in pre-war Europe. In this case, rather than seeking a patriarchal connection via her father’s internment, *Still* considers her maternal history by focusing on Oberlander’s mother and grandmother. This is not to say that *Still* contains no fragments of the Judaic and historiographic concerns of the earlier work. The opening minutes of the film detail how her mother and grandmother tried to hide their Jewish identity in prewar Germany (“There were Christmas trees, Easter eggs, but no *matzah* balls, no Theodor Herzl, no Hebrew school”), which echoes the tension articulated in *Nothing* between the importance of retaining one’s ethnic and religious identity in the camp with the mortal risks associated with being identified as “Jewish.” Related to this, the film also offers a brief historical narrative that describes her mother and grandmother’s experiences in prewar Germany, which ultimately compelled them to flee for the United States in 1938. Where *Still* differs notably from *Nothing* though is that the former film retains the emphasis on the intergenerational connection to the past through her mother and grandmother (hereafter referred to just as “mother” since she becomes the central figure in this regard), which the latter film ultimately “abandons” in favour of a communal religious appropriation.

Although *Still* adopts a fragmentary and abstract style, which I will return to below, Oberlander’s desire to link herself to her mother’s past is central. Near the beginning of the film, over home movie footage of children playing with their mother, her voiceover offers the ambiguous observation, “One knot ties two stories,” and asserts “I travel somewhere between comfort and ruin, looking for my place in the story.” She then sets up the section that illuminates her mother’s story of persecution in and flight

from Germany, but again offers an indication that the barrier between her own story and her mother's is to be effaced: "My story of her story sounds like this." This correlation of historical experience is pushed further in a manner that replicates the cross-generational geographic mediation of both *Memorandum* and *So Many Miracles*, as Oberlander and her mother travel back to Berlin at the invitation of the city senate.

Yet this consideration of Oberlander's desire to appropriate her mother's past only scratches the surface of *Still*'s treatment of history. While the film's emphasis on the cross-generational appropriation of experiential perspective (of her mother's "story") may seem contradictory to the admission from *Nothing* that her father's memory is his own and not hers, *Still* manages to avoid simplifying this journey by adopting a consistently abstract style. As Gary Evans observes, the details of her family's memories are presented in a fragmentary "visual/verbal collage,"²⁵ played alongside images of home movies, documentary footage from the period, and repeated images of amusement park rides whose significance (even metaphorical significance) is left ambiguous. It is also essential to note that these images are never temporally delineated. The film leaves it unclear as to whether images of the young girl chasing around her mother are indeed post-war footage of Oberlander as a child, or childhood footage of her own mother. Similarly, footage of a family is visualized alongside a verbal discussion of the Oberlanders being discovered *as* Jews in Nazi Germany. Yet since the family in the footage is not recognizably Jewish, appears to be quite happy and does not seem to be facing any immediate threats, two important questions are left unanswered: 1) is this footage actually of the Oberlander family? and 2) is this footage functioning as documentary material relating to the dangerous (for Jews) period in Nazi Germany, or

²⁵ Evans 2011.

home movie footage from an indeterminate time that may be entirely unrelated to the exposure of the Oberlanders as Jews? This instance thus not only places the personal on the same ontological level (granted, a very ambiguous one) as the archival, but also leaves the temporal link between the audio and images nebulous.

More importantly as Evans observes, this juxtaposition of fragmented information about her family with temporally ambiguous images works to create “an imagined time and place”²⁶ that follows in a similar transtemporal framework as *Nothing*, even if this framework in *Still* lacks the emphasis on *religious* transtemporality. In this sense, *Still*’s refusal to delineate a clear temporal order to the material comprising its “visual/verbal collage” suggests that the “knot” that ties her story to her mother’s cannot be literalized. This is further evident in the fact that while the film “features” Oberlander and her mother returning to Berlin, replete with images of Berlin, there is virtually no documentary footage of them walking around, touring the sites of her mother’s past. In fact, there is only one brief shot of the two of them together. And since this shot is a close-up, and given the temporal fragmentation of the film’s content, there is no indication of whether or not this shot is actually meant to be in Germany. In this sense, while thematically *Still* evokes a similarity via cross-generational geographic movement to *So Many Miracles* and *Memorandum*, by refusing to document their return to the sites of her mother’s history, Oberlander’s film leaves the ontology of what consists in the past (or what is left of the past – if anything – in the present) as nebulous. This ambiguity of course contrasts starkly with the powerful tactility of space articulated and confronted by the Rubineks and by Bernard and Joey Laufer. *Still* actually alludes to this conception of linear time and space as imaginary, stating at two points that the purpose of her mother’s

²⁶ Ibid.

travels to Berlin is *not* to “remember,” but to “visit,” implying that she refuses to relate the literal space of the past to her memories.

This temporal fragmentation can most clearly be explained by a more careful consideration of how Oberlander, as a member of the post-Holocaust Jewish generation, frames *Still*'s personal reflection not as an attempt to uni-directionally internalize her mother's past, but to “*find my place in the story.*” While the other films dealt with thus far in this chapter attempt to efface the barrier of experience by trying to make the historical past the memorial property of the inexperienced (i.e. moving it from “then” to “now”), *Still* works in multiple directions, a tactic that destabilizes chronological time. There is still the sense that she is seeking to appropriate her mother's story, given that she states “My story of her story sounds like this.” Yet in addition to trying to internalize her mother's story within herself, she is attempting to inject herself *into* her mother's story. The most overt instance of this occurs when she describes them visiting her mother's former home in Berlin. Oberlander professes a desire to dig in the yard in hopes of finding a “page from a book that might have been mine.” And although the film is stylistically abstract, it self-reflexively acknowledges that this cinematic manifestation of a personal reflection gives Oberlander the opportunity (and power) to formally manipulate the experiential barrier of time as she declares over the cheerful image of a family on the beach, “This is my privilege; to reach back and perform a conversation between people who will never meet.”

Irene Angelico and Abbey Jack Neidik's 1985 documentary *Dark Lullabies* falls closer to the less formally abstract strategy of *So Many Miracles* and *Memorandum*, insofar as it documents Angelico's literal journey from Montreal to Germany and

eventually Israel in an effort to understand and absorb the experiences of her parents, both of whom are German-Jewish Holocaust survivors. Yet the process of historical appropriation by the “inexperienced” child of Holocaust survivors in *Dark Lullabies* is more overt than in the story of the Rubineks and the Laufers, since Angelico is forced to undertake this journey without her parents, as the past is still “too painful” for them to speak about.

Dark Lullabies follows Angelico as she takes two separate journeys – one to Israel and one to Germany - through which she tries to understand her legacy as a member of the “second generation,” a child of Holocaust survivors. Throughout the film Angelico provides off-screen narration, as well as a frequent on-screen presence that underlines the film’s more conventional investigative style that contrasts with the poetic reflections of Oberlander’s films. Moreover, this embodied, on-screen presence points to the literalness of these travels for Angelico, rather than the more symbolic journey of archival research intimated in *Nothing* or the non-visualized journey to Germany taken by Oberlander and her mother in *Still*.

The opening minutes of *Dark Lullabies* establish the centrality of her parents to the film, and more importantly to the journey Angelico will undertake, as the first images are photos of them, introduced by Angelico’s voiceover. Immediately after, she delineates an emotional barrier between her parents and herself that derives from their Holocaust experience, which she does not share: “I never really understood what had happened until recently, when my father gave me a manuscript he had written about his experiences.” Although she shortly thereafter indicates that while growing up, despite her parents reluctance to talk about their past, she “incorporated their experience into her

own,” she acknowledges that she was only able to see an unclear image of this history, “through a veil of memory that was not mine.” Through its invocation of her father’s manuscript, the film posits her father’s perspective as a conduit through which Angelico is able to access the past. After she mentions the manuscript - over a photograph of her father - the audio shifts to a male voiceover (presumably her father, or a voiceover meant to be her father) that recites from it (“I hear the ground [sic] of machine guns. From time to time, a distant roar of cannons. I am lying on the fourth tier of the bed of boards. I am cold. I think of food and then with indifference, that this is perhaps the last day of my slavery, or, of my life...”). During this recitation, the visuals shift to a shot of the empty Dachau concentration camp (where Angelico’s father was interned), taken at dusk through the surrounding barbed wire fence. The film then cuts to Angelico on a train, peering out the window as she travels towards Dachau as her voiceover clarifies this act of symbolic return (symbolic since she was never actually *in* Dachau) as an effort to interrogate the barrier between herself and her parents. As the train pulls into the station clearly marked Dachau, she reflects, “35 years later, I am on a train in Germany, trying to understand the experience that separates me from my parents.”

From this point, the film shifts in focus, going back in time to consider the process of discovery that has brought Angelico to this moment – a process that began with her father’s manuscript, but one that she is unable to complete without confronting the challenge of inherited history that is larger than herself as an individual child of Holocaust survivors. As the film shows her on the train to Dachau, Angelico explains, “Before going to Germany, there were many things I had to learn.” She also emphasizes at this point that her journey to understand her parents’ histories could not come through

them and their perspectives alone, as “the Holocaust was still too painful to speak about with my parents.”²⁷ The film then cuts to Angelico in an interview with Chaim Rosen, a former member of the Jewish brigade for the Allied forces, in *preparation* for her journey. Rosen provides her with his own memories and listens to her emotional questions about bystanders, and her relationship to a theoretical child of a Holocaust *perpetrator*. This latter reflection points to the universal sense of the cross-generational legacy of the Holocaust that characterizes the main body of the film, in which the focus on Angelico herself begins to incorporate a reflection on the collective nature of inherited history for “a generation possessed by a history in which we played no part.”

The film’s focus on collective inherited history functions by situating Angelico in relation to two groups with whom she shares a cross-generational legacy: 1) children of Holocaust survivors; and 2) children of Holocaust perpetrators. As the film begins to document the path that brought Angelico to the Dachau train station, it follows her participation in a conference in Montreal for children of Holocaust survivors, where others with stories similar to hers share their memories of knowing only sporadic details of their parents’ Holocaust experiences. One man speaks to the issue of historical appropriation as he admits that he used to wish he could transfer the tattooed numbers from his mother’s hand onto his own, which would symbolically help him to capture the history so that he could then pass it on to his own children and so forth. The second section is Angelico’s trip to Israel for the first international gathering of Holocaust

²⁷ Anne Marie Fleming’s recent animated NFB short *I Was the Child of Holocaust Survivors* (2010) similarly explores the importance of the Holocaust experience for a child of survivors, whose parents do not wish to speak about their past. This film however is an animated *adaptation* of Bernice Eisenstein’s illustrated memoir of the same title. As such, Fleming’s piece lacks the explicit autobiographical impetus of the cross-generational documentaries I am considering in this chapter, in which the *films themselves* act as a means for experiential appropriation by the filmmakers, who are themselves children of Holocaust survivors. While Eisenstein’s book could possibly be considered through a similar autobiographical lens, I have thus decided to refrain from further discussion of Fleming’s film.

survivors and their children. In this section, the film documents Angelico gathering *other* individuals' histories – those of survivors and those of children of survivors where she “learned how children were accepting the legacy.”

After this section, Angelico admits that she still had questions about *how* the Holocaust was able to occur, and is determined to travel back to “the source” – Germany, albeit not initially to Dachau. When Angelico arrives in Germany, the film's universal conception of inherited past clarifies, which was intimated earlier in the interview with Rosen in which she reflects on her connection to a child of perpetrators. Especially notable in this regard is when Angelico is accompanied in Germany by German filmmaker Harald Lüders, whose own film *Now...after All These Years* (1981, co-directed with Pavel Schnabel) documents his attempts to track down Holocaust survivors who now live in New York.

While Lüders is neither a child of Holocaust survivors, nor Jewish, his reasons for being drawn to this history are not dissimilar from those professed by cross-generational documentary filmmakers. Like the lack of information offered by survivors that underscores the investigations in *Nothing to be Written Here* and *Dark Lullabies*, not to mention Benjamin's lack of knowledge of Melanie's history in *Emotional Arithmetic*, Lüders claims that his interest in the Holocaust “stemmed from his frustration that the subject was being evaded.” In a manner that echoes the concern with passing on historical knowledge to a younger generation that is framed by Stephen Lewis in *Voices of Survival* as one growing up “without knowing,” Lüders was compelled to take up the topic when he conceived that “young people know so little about it.” More importantly, Lüders also suggests a sense of inherited history that pushes him to document the

Holocaust because, in his words, “I’m German” and that “whenever he asked a German about the Holocaust, the answer was always that someone else had been responsible.”²⁸ As *Dark Lullabies* continues, Angelico interviews children of actual perpetrators who are wrestling with their own irreconcilable memories of loving fathers and grandfathers that were thrown into emotional disarray by the subsequent realization of their actions during the Holocaust.

Gary Evans observes that this dual focus on children of survivors and children of perpetrators implies a universal sense of inherited victimization that necessarily shifts focus away from the Judeo-specificity of the Holocaust, as both groups “are portrayed as bits of wreckage strewn across the film landscape.” Accordingly, once the film becomes concerned with the notion of shared inherited history, it moves away from its focus on the Holocaust specifically, and towards a documentation of “an individual’s search for personal meaning.”²⁹ While Evans uses this quote to critique the film’s appeal to universal rather than uniquely Jewish suffering,³⁰ I would argue that such an analytical framework overlooks three essential qualities that inform the film’s treatment of the cross-generational appropriation of the Holocaust.

First, the film goes out of its way on numerous occasions to undermine any sense that the legacies of inherited history shared between Angelico and children of perpetrators exist on equal levels of ethical meaning. This resistance towards simple moral relativism becomes clear in the film’s most uncomfortable moment in which the Jewish Angelico interviews youthful members of a neo-Nazi group that brazenly dismiss the Holocaust as a Hollywood product and profess an admiration for blind adherence to

²⁸ Insdorf 205-206.

²⁹ Evans 2002, 158.

³⁰ Ibid.

authority. In this particular example, Angelico's incorporation of *German* cross-generational relationships to the Holocaust exposes the limitations of what Hayden White refers to as "conventional historical inquiry," which presumes an axiomatic link between historical facts and historical meaning (see Note 4 above), by providing a commentary on the mutability and potential bastardization of history that troubles a singular *Judaic meaning* of the Holocaust that Evans, and many others, seek.

A less overtly malignant sense of sympathy towards the perpetrators of the Holocaust in "second-generation" Germans is evident when Angelico speaks to Sylvia, the publisher of a brochure called "A Biography of the Third Reich," who agrees to the interview "on the condition that we wouldn't ask anything negative about Germany's history." As Sylvia shows Angelico photos of Hitler in the brochure, she emphasizes that her favourites are the ones of him with children, which "give you the idea how Hitler was private, he was normal man, man like million others too [sic]." In this interview, Sylvia embodies a more benign tendency than the neo-Nazis towards the white-washing of history, as she also emphasizes over a photo of Hitler reading a newspaper at a table that he does not look like "a monster" - a sentiment she repeats a number of times - and suggests that he has been demonized by a one-sided perspective towards the Holocaust and Germany's history.

Even in interviews with more sympathetic members of the post-war German generation, the film does not suggest that all inherited history is to be placed on the same level of ethical meaning. For instance, in an interview with Angelico and Lüders, a woman whose father was a Nazi officer claims that she is always trying to break free from his prejudice, which "represented everything that I rejected," yet must continually

wrestle with his influence that she sees manifest in herself as she is “not completely free of prejudice towards Jews.” After this interview, Lüders summarizes this qualitative difference for Angelico between the cross-generational relationship to the Holocaust as a Jew, and his as a German, and frames this distinction as one rooted in contradictory approaches towards the appropriation of history, or attempts at historical propinquity: “For you, or I guess for all younger Jews, especially for children of survivors, you can go into the past, and it will make you closer to your people. But I think...for some Germans, it’s the other way around.”

The second way in which the film challenges Evans’ critique of its appeal to Angelico’s personal search for the Holocaust’s universal meaning, which effaces the event’s Judaic historicity, is its subjugation of Angelico’s personal story for the main body of the film. Moreover, the film ultimately leaves the resultant *meaning* of her journey ambiguous once it is finally completed. As I alluded to above, when the film’s trajectory enters its “main” body – that is, Angelico’s involvement in the gatherings in Montreal and Israel, and her visit to Germany and interviews with members of the “second German generation” - the emphasis on her own personal history, or an “embellish[ment] of the person telling the story,”³¹ fades somewhat. This is not to say that Angelico as a figure is placed on the sidelines. As the film reveals the stories of survivors, of children of survivors, and of second-generation Germans, Angelico is frequently onscreen, and often an active participant in this informational journey. Yet even when the film returns to Angelico arriving in Dachau – returning to the personal focus that *opens* the film with her reflections on her father’s manuscript and images of her on the train to the camp – at this moment, the film leaves open what precisely the

³¹ Evans 2002, 158.

personal meaning of this trip is for her. Once she arrives at the actual camp, her voiceover - which has been largely ubiquitous throughout the film - cedes to the haunting sounds of Brahms' lullaby, as the images show her standing in the camp, and a first-person camera tracks through the barracks.

When Angelico undertakes the second part of her "return" – to the house where she was born – the voiceover returns, but a sense of ambiguity remains as the film concludes with a freeze-frame of her looking at the house from outside its surrounding fence, thus stopping short of actually documenting her entry. This moment of halted return stands in stark contrast to the closing words of her father's manuscript that describe her birth, spoken by Angelico, as the visuals show her approaching the house: "When I look at her it seems to me I see my mother, my sister, my little niece. I see a reflection of myself. She has come into the world because I did not perish in the camps, and one link has given hand to another." Through the tension manifest in the contradiction between that which is implied in her father's manuscript (i.e. that Angelico embodies those that were lost in the Holocaust) and that which is implied by the fact that the film leaves her outside of this space of the past where her own and her parents' Holocaust experiences are most closely tied in spatiotemporal terms (i.e. that Angelico is left *out* of that past), the film refuses to clearly ascribe a resolution to this journey, or even allude to whether or not it granted her the greater understanding of her parents' pasts that she sought. This ambiguous conclusion ultimately points to the challenges and even irreconcilability of cross-generational historical appropriation.

This ambiguity relates to my final point regarding Evans' resistance towards *Dark Lullabies'* movement from Angelico's *Jewish-victim* cross-generational connection to the

Holocaust, towards what can be considered a connection to it via a more universal, and thus abstract, meaning (Evans suggests that the film leaves it unclear as to what this universal meaning actually is: “the power of empathy, of love, of being female?”³²). In short, my contention is that this ambiguity works to downplay the importance of whether or not Angelico is able to actually access the past that she seeks in her journey. Indeed, it suggests that the journey itself is more important than the (potential) destination. To return briefly to *Nothing to be Written Here*, the transtemporal religious connection to the Holocaust that Oberlander invokes is mobilized in response to her perceived inability to internalize her father’s history through his singular perspective as an individual conduit of mediation. In *Dark Lullabies*, the sense of a painful inherited past shared between children of survivors and children of perpetrators functions in a similar manner. The challenge of Angelico confronting history (i.e. her parents’ pasts, whose experiences she ultimately seeks) is insurmountable in the individual sense due to her own inexperience (i.e. like Oberlander, the past is property of her parents and not herself). As such, her inclusion in larger groups (children of survivors *and* children of perpetrators) that are wrestling with the weight of cross-generational connections to the Holocaust - and its contradictory elusiveness derived from inexperience - is an essential part of the quest to approach the history inscribed in her parents, even if this history is ultimately inaccessible. In other words, Evans is actually quite right to observe that *Dark Lullabies* is less a film about the Holocaust *per se* than about the process that it documents – Angelico’s quest for “personal meaning” that begins and ends with her familial

³² Ibid. Evans’ reflection that the personal search in *Dark Lullabies* may be for the meaning of being female would be an extremely useful entry point for a consideration of gender in this film – as it was produced by the National Film Board’s “women’s studio,” Studio D (see Evans 1991, 211-212) - and into the cross-generational documentaries more generally, as the majority are made by women filmmakers. Such an approach however is beyond the purview of the current project.

connection to the Holocaust (as the film begins and ends with Angelico at Dachau), but cannot consist *only* in this link. And it is precisely this quality that *Dark Lullabies* shares with the other “cross-generational” documentaries - the *process* of experiential appropriation is as important, if not more so, than the historicity *of* that experience. This is stressed at the conclusion of the film when it returns to the “present,” with Angelico’s arrival at the camp at Dachau. While the historical content of her parents’ Holocaust experiences is ceded in the film’s substantial “middle” section, by book-ending the film with the personal, the film’s main body functions more as a documentation of Angelico’s preparation for and the process of this symbolic return than a textbook examination of the importance of universal humanity.

The films discussed in this chapter all hold in common the problematic of transmitting historical experience to those who did not live through it. In the “pedagogical” documentaries, this challenge is framed by articulating the importance of educating a younger generation on the horrors of the Holocaust by placing them in contact with survivors, thereby allowing them to become “witnesses” who can continue the tradition of testimony after the eventual demise of the survivors themselves. The “cross-generational” documentaries adopt a more personal stance towards the appropriation of history by emphasizing the process by which children of Holocaust survivors are compelled to interrogate their parents’ or grandparents’ experiences in order to gain a better understanding of their own family history, and a more stable sense of their (religious, cultural, personal) selves.

Within these dual approaches to the transmission of the past, there exists a shared assumption about the ontological status of historical experience and first-person memory of it – that historical experience is somehow a tangible *thing* that is permanently available to those who lived through it, and must be *accessed* by those who did not. This assumption is manifest in the films themselves, but is exposed in Elida Schogt's *Zyklon Portrait* and Bozenna Heczko's *A Special Letter*. Like the documentaries of Wendy Oberlander, the former film shies away from footage of the present, even as it features an off-screen conversation between a mother (a Holocaust survivor) and her daughter (Schogt herself). This conversation opens with the daughter telling her mother that “we didn't talk about your experiences,” to which the mother replies “You can't even find the words.” This admission echoes Elie Wiesel's Preface to the 2006 translation of his seminal Holocaust autobiography *Night*, in which he explains the futility of language to convey the reality of the camp experience: “It became clear that it would be necessary to invent a new language. But how was one to rehabilitate and transform words betrayed and perverted by the enemy? Hunger – thirst – fear – transport – selection – fire – chimney: these words all have intrinsic meaning, but in those times, they meant something else.”³³

Zyklon Portrait formally manifests the inability of Schogt's mother to describe her experiences of the Holocaust by refusing to employ any archival images of the camps themselves. Rather, her family is represented in photos and home movie footage of happier times, as her mother discusses rather banal details of the past (how her father had one brown eye and one blue eye, for example) rather than the tangible reality of the

³³ Elie Wiesel, Preface to the New Translation, *Night*, trans. Marion Wiesel (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), ix.

“experience” that her daughter seeks. Moreover, the film places this conversation against a scientific explanation of Zyklon B, the gas found by the Nazis to be the most efficient at killing mass numbers of individuals quickly. This voice is as impassive as a narrator from an educational video shown in any high school chemistry class, as images of bugs and chemical compounds highlight the utility of Zyklon B as a disinfectant and poison. This clinical rather than emotional approach to the Nazi gas chambers is further underlined by the film’s inclusion of words from Auschwitz Kommando Rudolf Höss’s diary, which describe the orders for mass extermination and his relief that Zyklon B offered a “cleaner” way to kill than shooting and worked faster than carbon monoxide. The most disturbing entry by Höss that the narrator reads is, “I must admit openly, the gassings had a calming effect on me. In the near future, the mass annihilation of the Jews was to begin. Now I was at ease. We were all saved from these blood baths, and the victims would be spared until the last moment.” This reflection underscores what Evans refers to as the film’s “avoidance of the pornography of violent images”³⁴ (i.e. its decision to move away from visceral treatment of the Holocaust’s horrors and its acceptance of the mother’s inability to verbalize them), and its adoption of a perspective that corresponds closely to Hannah Arendt’s political-philosophical approach towards the Holocaust through a conceptualization of the “banality of evil.”³⁵

³⁴ Evans 2002, 171.

³⁵ As Chapter One Note 14 briefly alluded to, Hannah Arendt’s study *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* stresses the banality, both of Eichmann’s character and of the factors that drove him to act on behalf of Hitler’s regime, as opposed to painting the high-ranking Nazi as a synecdochic embodiment of an ideological evil that transcends his person. She undermines any conception that posits that Eichmann’s actions, as monstrous as they might have been, were inspired by a desire to reach some sort of predetermined end – that is, the genocidal elimination of a particular people. For example, she points out that in the first stages of National Socialist Jewish policy, Eichmann, along with many others in the Nazi party, viewed Zionism as an appropriate movement given an initial Nazi focus on *expulsion* (to Palestine, as well as other nations) rather than extermination. See Arendt, 58, 252. This conception is in stark contrast to “intentionalist” Holocaust historians like Lionel B. Steiman (see Note 22 above) who

In this regard, *Zyklon Portrait* evokes Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*'s focus on the logistics of mass genocide, rather than attempting to either represent the reality of the concentration camp experience, or ascribing to the Holocaust a universal meaning that transcends the systematic process that made it possible on such a massive scale. The brevity of *Zyklon Portrait* (it is approximately 13 minutes long) and its decision to subjugate a personal, cross-generational dialogue about the Holocaust to a scientific discourse on Zyklon gas, imply a textual acceptance that even for Schogt's mother, capturing some sort of intrinsic "meaning" of the Holocaust experience is impossible, and its history can only be approached through scientific facts whose meaning is ultimately ambiguous.

A Special Letter is an animated short film that also features a daughter's reflection on her mother's Holocaust experiences, but calls attention to the irretrievability of the past - even for the *experienced* - in two essential ways. First, the first-person narration provided by the daughter (the film's director) intimates a generational barrier between her and her mother, but also reveals that *both* of them were in a concentration camp together. The film opens with the elderly mother sitting in rocking chair, asking her daughter who is washing dishes to read her a letter. The daughter is frustrated, and tells her angrily, "I can't right now. I'll come as soon as I can!" Her mother replies sadly in her chair, "It's so difficult for the old people. Nobody has any time for them." The film then cuts to a "close-up" of the daughter's face as her voiceover reflects, "I shouldn't be angry with

argues, "The fall of Poland eventually brought over three million Jews under German control, and the resettlement of Jewish populations in selected areas was undertaken immediately. In these ghettos Jews began to die slowly of 'natural causes' like hunger, disease, cold and exhaustion. Although some historians argue that ghettoization and even mass shootings remained consistent with the goal of a territorial solution to the Jewish question, it seems clear that the Germans regarded ghettoization only as a provisional measure. *Extermination was their goal from the start.*" See Steiman, 221, my emphasis.

her. I remember when I was a child in a concentration camp.” Over this reflection, the film’s visuals begin to change from pastel colouring to a yellowish tone, which features images of them both in the camp. This “flashback” emphasizes how in the camp her mother took care not only of her, but of others as well. When the film returns to the present, the generational barrier is mollified as the daughter begins to read to her mother, reciprocating her mother’s role of caregiver. The film thus features the challenge of a generational barrier – similar to that in films like *Dark Lullabies* or *Nothing to be Written Here* – but without framing it in relation to a barrier of experience, since the experience is one that mother and daughter share. This dual emphasis also echoes the subjective nature of individual experience that persists in films like *Children of the Storm* or *The Boys of Buchenwald* that caution one against a monolithic conception of “Holocaust survivors,” their experiences, and their conceptions about their experiences.

The second way that *A Special Letter* calls attention to the challenge of retrieving an experienced past is that the film – which is made *by* a Holocaust survivor who *possesses*, according to assumptions implicit in the “pedagogical” films and the cross-generational documentaries, the Holocaust experience and for whom it is thus *accessible* - is fully animated. The reflections on the experiences of mother and child in the camp are visualized neither through re-enactments nor told alongside photographic archival footage, but through simple drawings and a calming yellow hue that lends the images within the camp (barbed wire, prison uniforms, etc.) a sense of tender nostalgia. I would argue that this shift away from the indexical nature of the photographic image calls attention to the problem of representing the past, even for those like the daughter/director of *A Special Letter* who lived *through* it.

As the next chapter discusses, Elie Wiesel emphasizes that this representational challenge persists even at the level of language (including literature of course, as he uses his Preface to establish the challenge of translating his experiences into a manuscript). But this challenge becomes even more pronounced in a mimetic medium like film since language is inherently a symbolic abstraction. Because film *shows* things, it poses obstacles to the process of transforming the intangible memory of an experience into an indexical image. Granted, an educated third-party viewer may understand the *referent* of this index. For instance, a viewer familiar with the “Holocaust film” genre may *recognize* that a set constructed to look like a concentration camp is *meant* to represent a concentration camp. However, the filmic image’s feigned visual literalness invariably distorts, skews or misses entirely the tangible reality of the *actual* camp/Holocaust experience carried by the perspective of a survivor with a living memory of it. Certainly Heczko’s actual *decision* to present her and her mothers’ stories in an animated form may have nothing to do with the limitation that film’s indexicality poses to visualizing personal experience. But since this film assumes an *extra* level of mediation despite the fact that the experiences of the filmmaker would seem to require *less* (i.e. one would be justified in assuming that the Holocaust experience would be “closer” for her than someone who did not live through it, and thus require less mediation for her to convey), it opens up the possibility of considering the barrier *in* experience rather than a barrier *of* experience.

It is precisely this barrier that consists within experiential memory,³⁶ which precludes the lived past from simply being accessible property of survivors, that is

³⁶ “Experiential memory” in this case means the memory of something that an individual *actually* experienced, as opposed to the “appropriated” memory that the inexperienced seek to acquire in the

implied in both Schogt's mother's inability to articulate her personal history in *Zyklon Portrait* and in *A Special Letter*'s animated style that adds an extra level of mediation to Heczko's memories. The following chapter expands on these questions of historical mediation in order to consider the films of Jack Kuper, a Canadian survivor who has himself produced a number of films about the Holocaust. As a survivor who has also written two autobiographical novels about his wartime and post-war experiences, one might expect Kuper's films to adopt an, if not identical, at least a similar tone. Yet his films shift away from this autobiographical reflection, and tend to focus on "others" experiences, such as those of his fellow survivors in *Children of the Storm*, or those embodied in the artistic works of individuals who either lived through or were killed in the Holocaust, thus providing similar layers of mediation to *A Special Letter*. As such, a consideration of the mediation constructed in films by a Canadian Holocaust survivor is not only useful, but also essential in shifting the focus away from the barriers between Canada and the Holocaust, between the inexperienced and the experienced, and towards more universal questions about the perpetual absence of history. The overt mediation of the past in the films of Kuper can thus point towards an increasingly concerted reflection on how historiography can mediate this *absence*, rather than trying to prevent the loss of history by feigning representation of a past that is perpetually inaccessible..

pedagogical and cross-generational documentaries (i.e. the "memory" of something that one did not actually live through). The next chapter discusses these appropriated memories in the context of Alison Landsberg's concept of "prosthetic memory."

Chapter Six

The Barrier *in* Experience: The Films of Jack Kuper

The chapters that have comprised this dissertation to this point have charted a process whereby barriers to the Holocaust gradually shrink, but remain present at increasingly microcosmic levels. I began by considering barriers between Canada and the Holocaust that derived from the perceived inexperiential historical relationship between the two, which in turn provided a context to read interpersonal barriers between survivors and their surroundings in post-war Canada. I then shifted attention to films that aim to mollify these barriers, but ultimately leave them entrenched. Following in this vein, I want to conclude by considering the ultimate containment of such a barrier that persists *within* the Holocaust experience itself. For this the present chapter focuses on the films of Jack Kuper, himself a survivor who immigrated to Canada in 1947, which frame the historical past as perpetually absent, always already (to borrow Jacques Derrida's term that he uses to describe continual ontological deferral) unavailable to the present rather than authentically localized in the "experienced."

At first glance, Kuper's Holocaust films are notably distinct from those discussed thus far. With the exception of *Children of the Storm*, which Chapter Two explored, his films - including *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto: A Birthday Trip in Hell*, *Shtetl*, *Who Was Jerzy Kosinski?*, and *The Fear of Felix Nussbaum* - do not thematically approach the Holocaust via a barrier of experience. On the one hand, this departure could be seen as indicative that since Kuper *has* a lived connection to the Holocaust, he can approach it directly rather than through the conduit of an experiential barrier. After all, it is precisely this "direct" approach to his personal past that Kuper takes in his autobiographical novels

Child of the Holocaust and *After the Smoke Cleared*, to which Chapter Two also briefly referred. In this regard, the decision to conclude a dissertation on experiential barriers in Canada's Holocaust cinema by discussing films by a Canadian Holocaust survivor that do *not* evoke such barriers may certainly appear inconsistent.

On the other hand, while Kuper's films do not tend to invoke interpersonal barriers derived from the Holocaust experience, they also lack the overtly autobiographical imperative of his novels, and approach the Holocaust instead from a perspective that can be described as "external." Even *Children of the Storm*, which features Kuper offering testimony about his assimilation into Canadian culture, assumes such a perspective by positing a representational barrier between the Kuper *in* the film and the film itself, to which I will return below. This externalized gaze towards the Holocaust is even more explicit in Kuper's other films. With this external perspective in mind, I want to conclude this dissertation by framing Kuper's Holocaust film oeuvre as *embodying* a representational barrier between the films themselves and their historical objects. By considering this barrier in films that are the products of a Holocaust survivor, Kuper's cinematic work points to a barrier *in* experience that renders the Holocaust specifically, and history more generally, perpetually absent *in spite of direct, lived experience*.

This chapter begins by providing a theoretical context for the external perspective of Kuper's films, and challenging a conception that posits memory and the personal experience of history as static objects that are "possessed" by those with a lived connection to that past. I will argue that such an approach, which is implicit or explicit in many of the films discussed thus far, aims to construct the past as *available* in a way that

has been undermined by both philosophical and historiographic frameworks that conceive the Holocaust as constituting a historical *break* that renders the past perpetually absent. Moreover, I will look to literature on *trauma* that troubles the notion of a “historical witness” to an event like the Holocaust. Such literature has framed the traumatic experience as posing a barrier between the witness looking back upon him/herself in the experience (such as the Holocaust experience, which has become central in scholarship on trauma) and the self *being looked back upon*. In other words, the legacy of trauma marks a collapse of the delineation between experience and inexperience.

This leads to the second section of the chapter, which shifts attention to Kuper specifically. This section begins by interrogating in more detail the distinction between Kuper’s autobiographical literature and his non-autobiographical films. It then expands on the assertion raised in the previous chapter regarding the animation of *A Special Letter*, and argues that the mimetic nature of cinema is better able to convey the irretrievability of the past than literature as it challenges the possibility of disguising the barrier between historical experience and representation of that experience, which is afforded by the abstract signification of the written word. In this context, and in light of the trauma scholarship dealt with in the first section, I will analyze Kuper’s films that manifest such a barrier in experience, including *Children of the Storm*, *Who was Jerzy Kosinski?*, as well as his avant-garde film *Run!* (1961). While this latter piece does not speak to the Holocaust per se, its explicit invocation of a divided self can aid in reading the same theme in his Holocaust-related films.

If the division of the self can be considered the “cause” of the barrier in experience, the third section of this chapter examines what might be called its

“symptom.” This section explores Kuper’s films *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto: A Birthday Trip in Hell*, *The Fear of Felix Nussbaum*, and *Shtetl*, all of which approach not the Holocaust itself, but mediations of it, including photographs and paintings which convey *others’* perspectives towards it. These films adopt explicitly external and mediated stances in relation to the Holocaust, and thus emphasize a division between the filmic perspective and that conveyed by the films’ historical objects.

Kuper’s films can thus be read as containing historical barriers towards the Holocaust within a single individual, while still emphasizing their persistence which renders the past irretrievably absent from the present despite an experiential relationship to it. With this in mind, the chapter concludes by considering how Kuper’s films both embody and point towards a historiography that is governed by, manifests, and seeks to interrogate the *absence* of the Holocaust, rather than positing it as *localized* (i.e. present, even in an invisible form) within survivors as individuals or a group. Such a historiography is constituted not by attempts to represent the past for the present by reconstructing it “as it was” – thus purportedly making the past *present* – but rather by the persistence of barriers which render the past experientially and cognitively removed from and irretrievable for the present, except via mediation that can be deceptively *hidden*, or made explicit as it is in Kuper’s films. And it is precisely this gone-ness of the past that such a historiography of absence must continually negotiate.

The Irretrievable Past

In their construction of experiential barriers, a common assumption persists in the films that have comprised the majority of this dissertation’s body. Put simply, this

assumption is that the Holocaust experience is the personal property of those who experienced it. In Chapters Two and Three, this assumption forms the basis of the interpersonal barriers between survivors and their surroundings, as the past is internalized within the former, with which individuals in the latter are unable to either recognize or adequately empathize. In Chapter Four, the “possession” of the Holocaust is disseminated onto a group, and although many of the documentaries of return that this chapter considered ultimately point to the *gone-ness* of the past in a literal sense, this absence merely works to reinforce the notion that the past is internalized *within* survivors. Most explicitly, the films discussed in the previous chapter that mobilize first-person testimony or personal artifacts for pedagogical purposes, as well as the cross-generational documentaries, approach Holocaust experience and memory as something that can be appropriated via the perspectives (in various forms) of those who lived through it, thus allowing one to be a “witness” to an inexperienced past.

Yet as Elida Schogt’s mother suggests in *Zyklon Portrait* when she states “You can’t even find the words,” and is intimated by the animated mediation of *A Special Letter*, such an approach towards historical experience erroneously treats memory as static, almost like a database whose information is permanently available when required. To use terminology put forth by Alison Landsberg, such a conception of the past corresponds to a social shift towards a collective “prosthetic memory.” For Landsberg, “prosthetic memories” are those that derive not from a person’s lived experience, but from the public circulation of a memory that becomes “part of one’s personal archive of experience, informing one’s subjectivity as well as one’s relationship to the present and

future tenses.”¹ Dominick LaCapra addresses a similar tendency in his discussion of “commodified experience,” whereby individuals are encouraged to think that a confrontation with a historical representation constitutes an “authentic” experiential identity, such as “being a Club Med South Sea Islander for a week, getting an identity card (and presumably identifying with) a survivor at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, or even watching *Schindler’s List* as a nonsurvivor who is moved by the experience.”²

LaCapra’s notion of a more general tendency towards commodified experience is lent a Holocaust specificity in “Who Owns Auschwitz?”, an essay written by survivor, author and Nobel Laureate Imre Kertész. In this piece (and indeed in its very title), Kertész articulates the perception that the Holocaust is the “property” of survivors, and spells out the limitations of this assumption in his first sentence: “Holocaust survivors will have to face the facts: as they grow weaker with age, Auschwitz is slipping out of their hands. But to whom will it belong? Obviously, to the next generation, and to the one after that – as long as they continue to lay claim to it, of course.”³ Yet while these introductory words imply precisely the “race against time” that underlies initiatives like the March of the Living which seek to place a younger generation in contact with first-

¹ As an illustration of this tendency, which connects to the question of experiential transmission, Landsberg points to the denouement of *Schindler’s List*, which features the *actual* Schindler Jews accompanying the actors that portrayed them in the film as they pass Schindler’s grave. Just like the interactions between survivors and teenagers in films like *Each of us Has a Name* or in a personal journey like in *Dark Lullabies*, for Landsberg this moment in *Schindler’s List* enacts “the transference of memory from the body of a survivor to a person who has no authentic link to this particular historical past. At this final moment of *Schindler’s List*, when the authentic comes into contact with the inauthentic, when the survivor touches the actor, the possibility emerges for memory to be transferred across temporal and geographic chasms.” Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 25-26, 112.

² Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 46.

³ Imre Kertész, “Who Owns Auschwitz?” trans. John MacKay, *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14.1 (2001): 267.

hand witnesses while still possible, the body of Kertész's piece moves away from the assumption that this commodified history can be "passed on." Far from the sentiments of *Each of us Has a Name* or *Let Memory Speak*, which stress a continuance of *authentic* historical perspective as the younger generation becomes "witnesses" via contact with survivors, Kertész argues that the demise of survivors *should* engender the demise of historical representations that feign "authenticity" in their treatment of the Holocaust. It is for this reason that Kertész excoriates Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* for striving to convey "the authentic reality of a Nazi concentration camp" when "the American Spielberg...wasn't even born until after the war." More explicitly, Kertész frames his distaste for Spielberg's film by highlighting the authenticity of Holocaust experience as a tangible possession that *Schindler's List* aims to steal: "Yes, the survivors watch helplessly as their only real possessions are done away with: authentic experiences."⁴

At the same time though, Kertész identifies what he sees as a resolution to the inevitable demise of first-hand witnesses in the form of Roberto Benigni's "Holocaust fable," *Life is Beautiful* (*La vita é bella*, Italy, 1997). The strength of Benigni's film, Kertész argues, is its *inauthenticity* that "moves us with the power of the oldest kind of magic, the magic of fairy tales,"⁵ rather than striving to reconstruct the Holocaust via the *material* authenticity of *Schindler's List* – a goal impossible for both Spielberg who was born after the war, and Benigni, "the creator of [*Life is Beautiful*, who] was born in 1952."⁶ In other words, for Kertész, Benigni's fabulist approach to the Holocaust purports an *acceptance* of his representational limitations as an individual lacking "authentic experiences," which Spielberg's docu-dramatic approach aims to gloss over.

⁴ Ibid., 269.

⁵ Ibid., 271.

⁶ Ibid., 272.

As we can see, this assertion by Kertész offers a mirror image of the assumption evident in a film like *Each of us Has a Name*. Whereas the latter identifies the transmission of experience as a way to redress the eventual dearth of first-hand witnesses, the former advocates acknowledging that experience *cannot* be transferred and that post-survivor representations should thus tend towards self-reflexively acknowledging their own inauthenticity. But what these share in common is the conception that the historical past is “property” of the survivor, and that once the remaining survivors pass away we are threatened to be left with an adulterated relationship to history – either feigned authenticity or “fairy tales.”

Yet as Janet Walker stresses in her 2005 study *Trauma Cinema*, such a framework takes a very cursory stance towards the relationship between historical experience and memory. “Just because eyewitnesses and intact brickworks still exist,” Walker writes, “is no reason to assume that we have a hold of history. Just because we often lack concrete evidence and eyewitnesses is no reason to assume we cannot comprehend history.”⁷ Moreover, the emphasis on the demise of experiential perspective runs contrary to the central role that the Holocaust has played in challenging the conception of a linear relationship between the past and present, which views the past as something that can be reconstructed as historians narrate “how it actually was” (“*wie es eigentlich gewesen*”).⁸ It is precisely this framework of a perpetually *available* past that the scope of the

⁷ Janet Walker, *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 188.

⁸ Here I am invoking the terminology of 19th century historian Leopold von Ranke who emphasized a strictly empirical approach to history that viewed the past scientifically, as a static object waiting to be illuminated by an objective historian. See Robert Eaglestone, *Postmodernism and Holocaust Denial* (Cambridge UK: Icon Books, 2001), 23.

Holocaust called into question by destabilizing historical approaches that viewed the relationship between the past and present as one constituted by a linear narrative.

One of the most well-known (and oft-cited) considerations of this paradigmatic shift is Jean-François Lyotard's postulation of the "Postmodern Condition" as a "crisis of narratives," or an "incredulity towards metanarratives" that read human history as a linear progression towards a pre-determined (usually utopian) end. A central "metanarrative" that Lyotard identifies is the "Enlightenment narrative, in which the hero of knowledge works towards a good ethico-political end – universal peace."⁹ And it is this specific metanarrative that Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno intimate was destroyed by the atrocities of WWII in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which made its first appearance under the title *Philosophische Fragmente* in 1944, as the Nazi gas chambers and crematoria were operating at full capacity. In this work, the Frankfurt scholars attempt to grapple with "why mankind, instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism."¹⁰ In short, this invocation of the Enlightenment narrative as being destroyed by the Holocaust ("a new kind of barbarism") implies the titanic failure of an ardent faith in human rationality. Lyotard himself underlines the iconic centrality of the Holocaust to this transformation in theorizing the relationship between the historical past and present when he writes, "I use the name Auschwitz to point out the irrelevance of empirical matter, the stuff of recent past history, in terms of the modern

⁹ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiii-xxiv.

¹⁰ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), trans. John Cumming (NY: Continuum, 1993), xi.

claim to help mankind emancipate itself. What kind of thought is able to sublimate Auschwitz in a general...process towards a universal emancipation?"¹¹

In other words, the Holocaust has been read as constituting a historical rupture that violently and irrevocably undermined a linear or narrative relationship between the past and the present.¹² Pierre Nora expands on this conception of a historical rupture that has rendered the past perpetually absent from the present in his discussion of *lieux de mémoires*, or sites of memory. According to Nora, the "entire tradition [of history] has developed as the controlled exercise and automatic deepening of memory, [seeking] the reconstitution of a past *without lacunae or faults*."¹³ However, the contemporary (perhaps postmodern) perception of an "increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good,"¹⁴ as is intimated by Lyotard and Horkheimer and Adorno, and thus cannot actually be reconstituted *by* representation, has resulted in a historiographical crisis with "history's discovery that it is the victim of memories which it has sought to master."¹⁵ For Nora, this postmodern fissure that renders the past "gone for good" has resulted in an increased attention towards the "history of history,"¹⁶ a symptom of which is the effacement of the putative distinction between (objective and

¹¹ Jean-François Lyotard, "Defining the Postmodern," *Postmodernism*, ed. Lisa Appignanesi (London: ICA, 1989), 6.

¹² This notion of a historical break is manifest in the title of Roberto Rossellini tragic film about the life of a young German boy in post-war Germany, *Germany Year Zero* (1948), and is taken up by Anton Kaes in his essay "Holocaust: The End of History." In this piece, Kaes reads Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's 1977 film *Hitler: A Film From Germany* as exemplary of a postmodern approach required for Holocaust representation, in part because of its refusal to appeal either to linear narration or a singular perspective in its treatment of the personage of Hitler. A similar resistance to singular perspective is evident Kuper's non-narrative and multi-perspective treatment of the Warsaw Ghetto in *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto: A Birthday Trip in Hell*, which is discussed below. See Anton Kaes, "Holocaust and the End of History: Postmodern Historiography in Cinema," in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution*, ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 209-211, 214-218.

¹³ Nora, 9, my emphasis.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

reliable) history and (subjective and less reliable) memory (which invariably contrasts with the empirical historiographic tradition of Leopold von Ranke – see Note 8 above).

Ironically, it is this perception of an “increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good”¹⁷ that fosters the necessity of preserving the present in sites of memory, or *lieux de mémoires*, as evidenced by such phenomena as a contemporary obsession with archiving even the most banal of details in an effort to ensure these details of the present are not forgotten in the inaccessible chasm of the past.¹⁸ One could certainly argue that events like the March of the Living or initiatives that are devoted to documenting as many first-hand testimonies of Holocaust survivors before it is too late constitute such *lieux de memoire* as they seek to capture first-hand records while they are still available. Yet as Nora notes, these sites capture *the present* rather than reconstituting the past. In the cases of the March of the Living or survivor testimony, these *lieux* offer a gaze towards the past that does not *reconstitute it*, but presents it as always already mediated, which is made inevitable by the collapse of the binary between objective history and subjective memory. In other words, while such initiatives seek to prevent the slippage of the present into an irretrievable past, they also *embody* this slippage. The problem arises when these *lieux* are conceived to be conveying the past in an *authentic, present* manner rather than acknowledging their own mediation (the difference, as Kertész sees it, between *Schindler’s List* and *Life is Beautiful*). It is precisely this *misrepresentation* of *lieux de mémoires* as what could be called *lieux d’histoire authentique* that posits a catastrophic break from our access to the Holocaust once survivors are gone.

¹⁷ Ibid., 7.

¹⁸ Ibid., 13-14.

What Lyotard, Horkheimer and Adorno, and Nora all point towards then is the sense that the past is always already *gone* from the present, available only via subjective mediation that bears the mark of the *present* as much as or more than the past that it seeks to represent; and one cannot isolate this emphasis on historical rupture from the Holocaust as the event that so violently destroyed any semblance of progressive linearity. Moreover, this rupture must not simply be conceived as an axiomatic temporal distance that invariably demands subjective mediation, but as a *barrier* that undermines the very *possibility* of such linearity. Christopher Browning makes just this point by drawing a distinction between historians who did not experience the Holocaust trying to write about it, and historians writing about other historical events that necessarily require mediation from an inexperiential perspective given the fact that – simply – they happened long before any living historians were born. While Browning suggests that the challenge of writing Holocaust history is one characterized by experiential shortcomings, noting that “[h]istorians of the Holocaust, in short, know nothing – in an experiential sense – about their subject,” he frames this obstacle not as a methodological problem for the individual historian, but as inherent to the event’s resistance to cognitive rendering. The experiential shortcoming that historians of the Holocaust face, Browning argues, “is quite different from their not having experienced, for example, the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia or Caesar’s conquest of Gaul.”¹⁹

Browning further underlines this representational barrier, which precludes cognitive access or awareness, by emphasizing that it is actually inscribed within the experience of the event itself, stressing that “[i]ndeed, a recurring theme of [first-hand]

¹⁹ Christopher R. Browning, “German Memory, Judicial Interrogation, and Historical Reconstruction: Writing Perpetrator History from Postwar Testimony,” in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the ‘Final Solution’*, ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), 25.

witnesses is how ‘unbelievable’ [the Holocaust] was to them even as they lived through it.”²⁰ Child survivor and noted psychoanalyst Dori Laub, to whom I will return in greater detail below, spells out this cognitive division in a reflection on his own status as a child-witness to the Holocaust: “[I]t was...the very circumstances of being inside the [Holocaust] that made unthinkable the very notion that a witness could exist, that is, someone who could step outside of the coercively totalitarian and dehumanizing frame of reference in which the event was taking place, and provide an independent frame of reference through which the event could be observed.”²¹

The historical rupture inscribed in the Holocaust thus exists not only in an abstract historical/philosophical sense, but also can be (and has been) understood as leaving an indelible mark on those who experienced it, constituting a break on an individual level between *past* and *present*; in other words, this rupture resembles a microcosmic manifestation of the macrocosmic rupture of linear history. Dominick LaCapra implies this connection by using similar terminology of historical breakage to reflect on individual traumatic experience, “notably...the deferred recognition of the significance of traumatic events in recent history, events one might well prefer to forget.”²² Here LaCapra is referring to the diachronic nature of traumatic recognition, whereby the traumatic event cognitively registers for the victim only belatedly, which draws on Freud’s concept of *nachträglich*, or the deferred nature of trauma. In her study *Trauma: A Genealogy*, Ruth Leys explains that Freud understood trauma as being “constituted by

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Dori Laub, “Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle,” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 66.

²² Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). While the Holocaust constitutes only one of these recent, traumatic events (which Hayden White would refer to as ‘modernist events’ [White 1996, 20-21]), its influential epistemological role in shattering certain paradigms of temporal continuity has been explored from a number of perspectives, some of which I discussed above.

a dialectic between two events...and a temporal delay or latency through which the past was available only by a deferred act of understanding and interpretation.”²³ This deferred quality manifests itself in phenomena such as the traumatic nightmare or post-traumatic flashbacks,²⁴ which have found their aesthetic counterpart in cinematic treatments of traumatic events that employ flashbacks as one of the most effective strategies to quickly convey a damaged psyche, like Sol Nazerman in *The Pawnbroker*.²⁵

A traumatic event thus cannot be conceived as simply being written upon the memory of someone that experienced it, readily available for cognitive comprehension. In fact, for Cathy Caruth, who is probably the most notable writer who uses trauma as a heuristic framework in the humanities, the quality of cognitive inaccessibility is *central* to trauma: “Perhaps the most striking feature of traumatic recollection is the fact that it is not a simple memory,” which informs “the inability to have access to [the traumatic past].”²⁶ Related to this is LaCapra’s assertion that traumatic events, such as living through the Holocaust and witnessing the destruction of one’s home, culture and family leaves its mark not only on a victim’s *memory*, but also on his/her *sense of self*. For victims of trauma, LaCapra argues, the consequential “lapse or rupture in memory...breaks continuity with the past, thereby placing identity in question to the point of shattering it.”²⁷ What this lapse or rupture in identity entails then is a cognitive division between the individual who lived through the Holocaust and that same individual looking back upon his/her experience in the present, or a splitting of the self that renders

²³ Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 20.

²⁴ For discussions of post-traumatic flashbacks, see Ibid, 241-242.

²⁵ For a discussion of the cinematic flashback specifically as a formal manifestation of PTSD in *The Pawnbroker*, see Hirsch, 85-110.

²⁶ Cathy Caruth, “Recapturing the Past: Introduction,” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 151-152.

²⁷ LaCapra 1998, 9.

the historical subject (the individual looking back on history) as *external* to the historical object (the history being looked back upon). Moreover, Leys actually emphasizes that this division of the self has always been central to a clinical understanding of trauma: “[F]rom the beginning, trauma was understood as an experience that immersed the victim in the traumatic scene so profoundly that it precluded the kind of specular distance necessary for cognitive knowledge of what happened. The subject was fundamentally ‘altered’...because it was ‘other.’”²⁸

It is precisely this “othering” of the self that Laub alludes to as he points to the cognitive barrier between himself and his Holocaust experience by calling into question his own status as a historical witness. Laub begins his essay “Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle” by stressing the *clarity* of his memories of his experiences during the Holocaust: “I have distinct memories of my deportation, arrival in the camp, and the subsequent life my family and I led there...They are not facts that were gleaned from somebody else’s telling me about them. The explicit details...which I remember so vividly, are a constant source of amazement to my mother in their accuracy and general comprehension of all that was happening.”²⁹ Immediately following this reflection though, Laub adds a proviso that posits himself in the present as external to these memories:

But these are the memories of an adult. Curiously enough, the events are remembered and seem to have been experienced in a way that was far beyond the normal capacity for recall in a young child of any age. It is as though this process of witnessing was of an event that happened on another level, and was not part of the mainstream of the conscious life of a little boy. Rather, these

²⁸ Leys, 9. Here Leys’ use of the term “specular distance,” which is derived by the traumatic experience, refers to the effacement of a narrativized and continuous semblance of identity, as the identity is *ruptured* (as per LaCapra), thus rendering the self that experienced the event and the self looking back on the event as qualitatively *distinct*, rather than in a simple diachronic relationship.

²⁹ Laub, 61.

memories are like discrete islands of precocious thinking, and feel almost like the remembrances of another child, removed, yet connected to me in a complex way.³⁰

Now it must be stressed that Laub's latter qualification does not necessarily call into question the *accuracy* of the memories described in the former statement.³¹ Rather, he emphasizes that these recollections are memories viewed from a perspective of distance that establishes a cognitive barrier between Laub the "rememberer" and Laub the "remembered," which embodies Leys' description of trauma precluding the possibility of "cognitive knowledge of what happened." Laub further explains that this barrier in experience assigns a quality of what can be termed "unknowability" to the Holocaust by re-contextualizing first-hand testimonies as a *process for the testifier* rather than simply a transmission (or transference) of historical information that is able to craft new "witnesses." "There is, in each survivor," Laub writes, "an imperative need to *tell* and thus to come to *know* one's story, unimpeded by the ghosts from the past against which one has come to protect oneself."³² In other words, and as is intimated in the title of his article, the *process* of testifying is intrinsically valuable for the testifier, despite the ontological accuracy or inaccuracy what is being presented as memory.

Also notable in this regard is Caruth's discussion of trauma as "unclaimed experience," which postulates the deferred quality of traumatic recognition that separates

³⁰ Ibid., 62.

³¹ This is an important distinction to make, as I am certainly not suggesting that survivor testimony is necessarily inaccurate on the factual level. Toby Perl Freilich points out that there is a stark contrast in how survivor testimony has been almost fetishized as authentic in "the popular history of the Holocaust" (such as, I would argue, the March of the Living and Spielberg's oral history foundation), and has been viewed as marginal by professional "Holocaust historians" who have tended to conceive first-hand testimony as "the most unreliable form of evidence." The writing of theorists like Laub, himself a survivor, seems to advocate a middle-ground approach, which acknowledges the historical value of survivor testimony, while not ascribing to it the status of an authentic encounter with the historical past. See Toby Perl Freilich, "Historic Shift," *Tablet: a New Read on Jewish Life*, July 22, 2010, Arts and Culture section, <http://www.tabletmag.com/arts-and-culture/books/40086/historic-shift/> (accessed August 9, 2010)

³² Laub, 63, original emphasis.

the “rememberer” and the “remembered” as a mode of reframing traumatic history not as irrevocably lost, but as a history “that is no longer straightforwardly referential (that is, no longer based on simple models of experience and reference).” Through the notion of trauma Caruth argues, “we can understand that a rethinking of reference is not aimed at eliminating history, but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, of precisely permitting *history* to arise where *immediate understanding may not*.”³³ For Caruth then, history *happens* precisely when a cognitive barrier to the past prevents full “understanding” or knowability of a traumatic event. Such a departure from a “referential” contextualization of history points to the intrinsic value of survivor testimony that transcends questions of historical authenticity or accuracy, whereby the testimony becomes, to borrow from Laub, an essential process of *trying* to know the past.

In addition to Laub, whose writing is explicitly self-reflexive as his theorization is derived from his own experiences, memories and perceptions,³⁴ the split within the self that renders traumatic experience cognitively separate from the subject trying to remember it has been taken up by a number of scholars in different ways, including LaCapra’s linking of traumatic memory to a rupture of identity. In a manner that more specifically relates to Laub’s observations, Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer invoke the term “sublime” to describe the Holocaust as an event that is rendered unavailable to knowledge because even though a victim experienced the event, “she was

³³ Cathy Caruth, “Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History,” *Yale French Studies* 79 (1991): 182, original emphasis. Caruth would later expand this conception of trauma in her full-length study, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996).

³⁴ A similar, albeit un-acknowledged self-reflexive revelation of the division between historical subject and historical object is manifest in the figure of Dr. Robert Krell in *Children of the Storm*. While, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, Krell is a child survivor like Laub, in Kuper’s film he is presented as a third-party commentator on the Holocaust experience, talking about *other* Holocaust survivors, but not establishing himself *as* a survivor.

not fully conscious at the time of its occurrence.”³⁵ This disjuncture between the sublime event that one sees and one’s inability to articulate that which one sees manifests itself in the “twin impulse of speech and its failure...in which the ‘self’ that remains in the camp or ghetto is at odds with the self who has survived to tell the tale...[T]he silences or stutters in [survivor] testimonies are a result of this battle.”³⁶ Similarly, in Caruth’s first Introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (the book is comprised of two sections – “Trauma and Experience” and “Recapturing the Past,” both of which have an introduction), she specifically refers to Laub in order to (cautiously) extrapolate his observations about *Holocaust* experience to traumatic experience more generally. To this end, Caruth points to Laub’s emphasis on “the inability fully to witness the event as it occurs, or the ability to witness the *event* fully only at the cost of witnessing oneself.”³⁷

What these emphases on the splitting of the self in the wake of a traumatic experience hold in common is that they situate the subjective rememberer as external to that which he or she is remembering. The two are placed in a complicated, non-linear relation, as Laub spells out when he writes that his memories are the “remembrances of another child, removed, yet connected to me in a complex way,” and is implicit in Caruth’s discussion of “non-referential history.” In other words, such a reading of traumatic disassociation with the self constitutes a collapse of experience and inexperience within a singular individual, as a cognitive barrier separates (or to paraphrase Leys’ term, “others”) the witnessed (experiential) self from the witnessing (inexperiential) self.

³⁵ Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer, *Between Witness and Testimony: The Holocaust and the Limits of Representation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), xii.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, xi.

³⁷ Cathy Caruth, “Trauma and Experience: Introduction,” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 7, original emphasis.

It is this notion psychological separation that is manifest in the films of Jack Kuper, which emphasize overtly or implicitly this barrier in experience, between memory in the present and that which is remembered. As I will discuss below, it is through what Caruth refers to as the necessary cessation of witnessing oneself in order to witness the event that Kuper's films offer an externalized commentary on the Holocaust, and point not to the mollification or effacement of the barrier of experience that the films of Chapters Four and Five evoke, but to the always already present barrier to the past that consists within historical experience.

Whose story is it? *Children of the Storm* and *Who Was Jerzy Kosinski?*

In contrast to the first-person narration of his autobiographical novels *Child of the Holocaust* and *After the Smoke Cleared*, Kuper's films adopt external perspectives toward the Holocaust that can never simply be referred to as "his own," even in his films that contain glimpses of the autobiographical. In other words, Kuper's filmic work adopts a perspective that embodies what I am referring to as the barrier *in* experience. As mentioned briefly above, such a barrier is evident in Kuper's films in two different ways that can be loosely placed in a cause-symptom relationship. The first mode by which Kuper's films address the irretrievability of the past for the experienced is by delineating a split between himself as the subject looking back on his own history through film, and the self *of* that history that is being looked back upon. This sense of a divided self is evident in *Children of the Storm*, the film that began this dissertation's consideration of interpersonal barriers of experience, as well as in *Who Was Jerzy Kosinski?* Kuper's non-Holocaust-related avant-garde film *Run!* also serves to elucidate this psychological

split. Such a division can be understood in the context of the literature on trauma explored above that emphasizes a splitting of the self that often accompanies traumatic experience, which renders that past cognitively unavailable to or distant from the historical subject looking back upon it (i.e. a Holocaust survivor looking back to their own past, trying to locate themselves within that history).

This splitting of the self that precludes an experiential availability of history, to which Kuper himself alludes as is discussed below, can thus be read causally as the *source* of the mediated distance that emerges symptomatically in his films that approach the Holocaust through explicitly mediated perspectives. In these “symptomatic” works, the film itself is posited as separate from and outside the past that that is being represented (or the film’s historical object[s]). For instance, in *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto: A Birthday Trip in Hell*, the horrific and mundane quality of daily life in the infamous and tragic ghetto is explored via a series of photographs taken by a Nazi officer and the words of diaries written by Jews living within the ghetto. *The Fear of Felix Nussbaum* and *Shtetl* approach history through the paintings and perspectives of the artists Felix Nussbaum and Mayer Kirshenblatt respectively, the former having been murdered in the Holocaust and the latter having escaped his Polish town well before the outbreak of the war and whose paintings thus evoke a sense of idyllic nostalgia. While the perspectives in these films are not monolithic, they hold in common an externalized look *in* towards Holocaust history that relies explicitly on conduits of mediation.

Before getting to Kuper’s films specifically though, it is both useful and necessary to consider the differences between Kuper’s autobiographical literary work and his non- (or less-) autobiographical filmic work. If I am arguing that Kuper’s films embody an

externalized perspective towards the Holocaust that derives from, to borrow Laub's terminology, the impossibility of a historical witness to the Holocaust and the consequential splitting of the self into two distinct entities - historical subject and object - his literary work would seem to complicate this. As Chapter Two mentioned, Kuper's novels *Child of the Holocaust* and *After the Smoke Cleared* are distinctly autobiographical and explore in significant detail his experiences as a child on the run in Poland during the war (*Child*) and his immigration to Canada and eventual reunion with his father (*Smoke*). As such, my assertion that Kuper's films embody an "external" approach to the Holocaust, and my decision to read this approach in the context of trauma literature may appear presumptuous. After all, if Kuper can approach his own past in literature, why can he not in film?

My contention against this criticism is two-fold. First, I must emphasize that my reading of Kuper's films is not an attempt to psychoanalytically "diagnose" him as an individual. I am not arguing that Kuper's films are the way they are *because* of the traumatic nature of his Holocaust experiences, and consequently because of these experiences his films could *only* be made the way they are (i.e. from an external perspective). Rather, my assertion is that given that Kuper is himself a Holocaust survivor whose films view the Holocaust from such a perspective, by considering this externalization they can productively illuminate precisely the focus of this dissertation – approaches to the Holocaust in Canadian films that emphasize barriers towards the past, including those derived from the delineation between experience and inexperience that can be read as collapsing into a single subjectivity in Kuper's films. In other words, to put it perhaps crudely, I am invoking Kuper's "status" as a Holocaust survivor as a

heuristic framework through which to *read* his films (and situate them in the context of Canada's Holocaust cinema) rather than as an end-point that tries to read *Kuper* through his films diagnostically.

At the same time, the differences between Kuper's literature and his films can actually illuminate the barrier *in* experience. More specifically, my contention is this barrier poses challenges to the representation of an *individual historical experience* in the visual medium of film that can be glossed over in the written form of literature. As such, and as I discussed briefly in the Introduction, film is a *better* medium than literature for explicitly considering the barrier towards the past that consists *within*, and in spite of, experience. To again invoke Lyotard, if the Holocaust underlines a postmodern break with a conception that views history as linear and thus accessible, Kuper's films more overtly correspond to this paradigm than his literature by "*put[ting] forward* [i.e. making explicit] the unrepresentable in presentation itself...to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable."³⁸ Like the subtlety of Alex's self-perceived isolation within the synagogue in *Two Men* that is cinematically revealed, Kuper's tendency away from purporting to offer "direct" access to the Holocaust in his films serves to make *present* the *absence* of the past, which the visual mediation of cinema is able to more explicitly convey than the linguistic mediation of literature that can disguise this absence via the abstraction of language.

Literary theorist Wolfgang Iser identifies this abstraction inherent in language by suggesting that the delineation between "fiction" and "fact" in writing is a "feigned" distinction. According to Iser, the binary relationship between "fact" and "fiction" is a moot point when discussing representation, since "[w]henver realities are transposed

³⁸ Lyotard 1984, 81, my emphasis.

into the text, they turn into signs for something else, which indicates that their original determinacy has been outstripped.”³⁹ As such, while an autobiographical reflection on one’s experiences during the Holocaust can be considered “factual” insofar as it is based on things that actually happened, the transformation of this “factual” experience into literature entails a process of fictionalization in the very process of mediating “realities” into the written word. In a similar vein, Elie Wiesel points out that there is an inherent challenge in transforming the tangibility of Holocaust experience into language (for instance, how does one convey the meaning of “chimney” in the camp vs. the meaning of “chimney” in a home?)⁴⁰

In this sense, as a signifying system, written language has an inherent ambiguity that affords the ability to narrate experience in a manner complicated by the indexical quality of the cinematic image that bears a trace of that to which it refers – which is not necessarily the experience that the filmmaker wishes to *signify* by the image, but that which is photographed in the film itself. In his 1974 study *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, film theorist Christian Metz describes this cinematic quality through the framework of a “paradigmatic axis,” whereby an individual shot invariably constitutes a choice to show one particular, specific image at the expense of infinite others. For instance, in a literary work one could refer to “humankind” or, to use an example from Metz, “a house” without worrying about the literal specificity of what these terms signify. In a film however, as soon as you show one or several (black, white, male, female, fat,

³⁹ Wolfgang Iser, “Feigning in Fiction,” in *The Identity of the Literary Text*, eds. M.J. Valdes and Owen Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 205.

⁴⁰ Wiesel, ix.

thin, etc.) humans, or a specific (black, white, big, small, brick, wood, etc.) house, the images show only *this* or *these* humans or *this* house at the expense of infinite others.⁴¹

While Metz actually makes a similar point regarding cinematic representation as Wiesel and Iser make about the written word in his later book *The Imaginary Signifier* (originally published in French in 1977), when he says that “Every film is a fiction film,”⁴² his earlier comments acknowledge that cinema nonetheless offers a more *perceptually immediate* form of representation than literature. This is exactly what Thomas Martin argues in *Images and the Imageless* when he writes that “film’s immediacy becomes its superior edge. It does not rely on abstract word patterns as does, for example, the novel. For most, this offers greater impact.”⁴³

The problem when considering Kuper’s transmedia Holocaust representation in this regard is that, as Laub’s comments above suggest, the Holocaust experience - which invariably informs these representations - may itself not be immediately available for survivors as a static object to access as memory or convey as representation (either via language, as Wiesel suggests, or in images). To reiterate Laub, the traumatized subject is separated cognitively from the experience that traumatized him/her. In a *Toronto Star* article, Kuper actually alludes to precisely such a cognitive split with language that is strikingly similar to Laub’s reflection on the division between his present, adult self and the memories of his childhood incarceration. In this piece, Kuper discusses his reaction upon his return to the town of Gilzew - the last town where he hid during the war - while

⁴¹ Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 114-116.

⁴² This quote of course implies that like the inherent mediation of transforming “facts” into literature, the very act of *recording* something into a cinematic *image* invariably carries with it a sense of mediatory fictionalization. See Metz, “Identification, Mirror”, 801.

⁴³ Thomas. Martin, *Images and the Imageless: A Study of Religious Consciousness and Film*, 2nd ed. (Cranbury: Associated University Press, 1991), 121.

shooting *Who Was Jerzy Kosinski?* “We were there for three days,” Kuper writes, “and I can’t describe my emotions. *I felt like a man looking back at someone who was me at one time, a child who no longer exists.*”⁴⁴

With this subjective division in mind, the autobiographical quality of Kuper’s novels, which stands in stark contrast to the explicitly mediated distance from the Holocaust in his films, suggest that the literary mode offers him a more appropriate means by which to try to represent his personal experiences than the visual. I would argue that this is because, as Martin suggests, literature lacks the perceptual immediacy of film, just as the Holocaust experience is not immediately available for the traumatized victim. The signification of the written word carries with it an inherent ambiguity that provides an inevitable media-specific split between the subject (Kuper) and that which he is trying to represent (his experience), which formally doubles the cognitive division between the two that Kuper and Laub both identify.

Kuper even implies that he sees this subjective distance as inherent in literature when he describes the distinction between his written and filmic approaches to the Holocaust. While he stresses that his written work is “based on *my* reality” (i.e. his own experiences and perceptions of this reality that of course inform the autobiographical nature of his novels), Kuper also suggests that in literature he perceives his role to be that of an objective, external documentarian. When I asked Kuper about the differences between his literature and films, he indicated that he views his writing as “based on reality; it’s not based on my imagination [but on] things that actually occurred...Basically, it’s a record. When I wrote those books [*Child* and *Smoke*], it was

⁴⁴ Jack Kuper, “Travelling [sic] to discover other cultures,” *Toronto Star*, June 16, 1999, G16, my emphasis.

to record what had transpired, and so I would be very reluctant to take liberties with that, and dramatize them in a way that would be exciting to a reader...So it [his writing] tends to be more pedestrian.”⁴⁵

For Kuper then, the written word is a record, an archive, something *objective* – from which he strives to exclude the messiness of his imagination. This conception falls strictly in line with what James Chesebro writes in *Analyzing Media: Communications Technology and Symbolic and Cognitive Systems*: “As a knowledge system, the written mode allows for a sense of objectification in which the human being is cast as and understood independent of the environment and its controls. Importantly, the context-free nature of the written world invites deduction, abstraction, rationality.”⁴⁶ In other words, the written mode that Kuper adopts in his novels affords him the possibility of giving some sense of rationality and order to an irrational experience only because he is removed from it by the abstract signification of literature.⁴⁷ The written word is thus the perfect medium for keeping his “imagination” out of his narration of the factual “record,” as literary signification can avoid entirely how his *imagination/memory* interferes with his experiences and makes them unspeakable.

To clarify this point by using an example, words written on a page that state “when I was a child in Poland...” do not immediately and intrinsically convey perceptually any semblance of the experience of being in Poland as a child. The words are just symbols that ultimately evoke nothing. Case in point: the symbols “kiedy byłem

⁴⁵ Ibid., my emphasis.

⁴⁶ James Chesebro, *Analyzing Media: Communications Technology as Symbolic and Cognitive Systems* (New York: Guilford Press, 1996), 118.

⁴⁷ Historian Hayden White argues that one of the most valuable features of the narrativized historiographic form is specifically that it enables one to give a sense of order (even if it is imaginary) to the chaotic matrix of the historical past. See Hayden White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” in *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 24.

w Polska” or “когда я был в Польше” mean *nothing* to anyone who does not read Polish or Russian. Yet the *image* of a child in a half-destroyed Polish ghetto – regardless of whether the child is an actor or not – will evoke pain and suffering to pretty much anyone who watches the images. This can perhaps illuminate why Kuper opts not to make films about his personal experience; because film is too close *perceptually* to the experience to account for the “messiness” of imagination or traumatic memory, which can be glossed over in literature’s abstraction.⁴⁸

A more pragmatic example from Kuper’s career that can illustrate this distinction between the abstract signification of literature and the immediate perceptual signification of film is his reluctance – once he had established himself with sufficient financial freedom to say “no” to certain opportunities – to transform the experiences written in *Child of the Holocaust* into a narrative feature film. According to Robert Fulford, Kuper had written six drafts of a screenplay for a movie version of his book, and was scheduled to begin production during the tax-shelter boom of the early 1980s. However, as the production began to approach, Kuper “drew back [because he was] convinced it would be done badly.” The production was again on-track in the mid-1980s through Norman Jewison’s production company, with the noted Canadian director – a close friend of Kuper’s – acting as executive producer with Kuper himself directing.⁴⁹ But even in this case, with Kuper now attached to the project in the director role, there were still pragmatic limitations that challenged the process of transforming his personal experience

⁴⁸ That literature can easily gloss over the split between experience and mediation is implicit in the review of *Child of the Holocaust* referred to in the Introduction, whose title implies not the spectral legacy *left* by experience, but rather “the immediacy of experience.”

⁴⁹ See Robert Fulford, “Insistent voices kept telling him to be a witness,” and Sid Adilman, “CTV putting up big bucks for Canadian programs,” *Toronto Daily Star*, November 19, 1985. Both of these articles are available in the Jack Kuper collection at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.

into a visual medium in a manner that was suitable to him. For instance, Kuper notes that there were offers for financial support from companies in Hungary, France, and Yugoslavia - but these offers came with the stipulation that the film be shot on-location in these nations. Kuper visited these locales in anticipation of the film, but ultimately refused these financial incentives since “the locations were wrong...It had to be shot somewhere in Poland, or Eastern Europe.”⁵⁰ The significance of this refusal must not be understated since financial support was a key aspect to getting the film made, and as Kuper indicates, he and Jewison were within \$1,000,000 of the required budget. As such, although financing was clearly a stumbling block towards production, Kuper was unwilling to compromise what he felt a Polish or Eastern European location could convey by reconstructing the space of his experiential memory in a substitute locale (not unlike the clearly studio-based, stagy backdrops of the CBC production of *Sun in My Eyes*).⁵¹

Of course, this challenge of reconstructing a locale is a moot point in Kuper’s novels, in which he can refer to his Polish childhood town by name without worrying about conveying an immediate perceptual signification of this experiential past that is cognitively unavailable to him. As such, Kuper’s decision to turn down financial support for the adaption of his novel because the use of non-Polish locations would be “wrong” can be understood as a decision to avoid *feigning* a perceptual representation whose immediacy is too intimately bound to that which it is showing (“*this*” town), rather than that which Kuper wants to, but cannot, represent (the “Pulawy” of his memory).

⁵⁰ Kuper, Interview with author.

⁵¹ I do not wish to speculate on whether Kuper “liked” the CBC production of *Sun in My Eyes* or not. However, I would argue that the fact that this autobiographical literary piece (this time a play rather than a novel) was *adapted* for television by a third party (Harvey Hart) lends further credence to my assertion that the visual treatment of the past for Kuper necessitates the adoption of an external perspective. Regardless, as I alluded to above, by the time Kuper was in talks to bring *Child of the Holocaust* to the big-screen, he had the luxury of refusing an adaptation that he felt “would be done badly.”

If the trauma of the Holocaust experience is situated in the imagination, which Kuper aims to keep out of his writing in order to provide an objective account, literature thus allows him to (or at least he perceives it to) circumvent the messiness of subjective traumatic imagination/memory. If film then, as a medium, offers representation that is too immediate to treat an experience that is cognitively distant (or non-immediate), it is unsurprising that in his visual representations, Kuper *adds* a distancing layer by approaching the past through *other* peoples' perspectives, which mimics at the level of *content* the distance that is inherent in the *media form* of the literary mode.

At this point I must again stress that nowhere does Kuper explicitly suggest that his Holocaust representations are bound to the nature of his experiences, which *demand* certain types of treatment in specific media. I am certainly not implying that it would be *impossible* for Kuper to make an autobiographical film on his Holocaust experience. At the same time though, I would argue that the perceptual immediacy of the filmic medium alluded to by Metz and Martin, Kuper's own comments about the cognitive split between himself in the present and the "child who no longer exists", and the positioning of himself as an objective/external agent in his literature, imply that the abstraction of language provides an inherent representational barrier that doubles what I am opting to call the barrier *in* experience. In the perceptually immediate medium of cinema on the other hand, Kuper must *construct* explicit mediatory distances that position him as authorially external to the Holocaust by approaching the past through the perspectives of a third-party. As such, while Kuper suggests that in his films he is willing to allow the insertion of his imagination, the fact that he is unable (or at least to this point unwilling) to visually approach the Holocaust without invoking a third-party mediator suggests that the

immediacy of visual signification poses challenges to his using the cinema as an autobiographical tool that are not an issue in his literature.⁵²

More importantly, it is through the construction of these *thematic* (or perhaps diegetic) distances in his films - as opposed to the “media-representational” distance inherent in writing – that Kuper sees an opportunity to “comment on it [the Holocaust]”⁵³ in a manner precluded in his novels by his desire to provide only objective accounts that are intimately bound to his *own* experience. Put simply, the explicit distance manifest in his films’ adoption of third-party perspectives provides a representational barrier between Kuper and the Holocaust, and allows him to move beyond simply narrating “things that actually occurred,” and reflect more broadly on the Holocaust with a focus that transcends his personal history.⁵⁴ This ability to “comment on [the Holocaust]” when he approaches it through an external perspective, which is precluded when dealing thematically with his own history in literature, is precisely what Caruth refers to when she stresses “the inability fully to witness the [traumatic] event as it occurs, *or the ability to witness the event fully only at the cost of witnessing oneself*.”⁵⁵ This of course suggests that witnessing the event is possible only through witnessing oneself witnessing the event. There is a separation – one that is inscribed in writing, but not in the immediacy of film. That is why it is appropriate and understandable that Kuper opts to *create* additional distance created through a third person narration in his films.

⁵² This is not to say that Kuper has a less emotional connection to his films than his novels, or that he is unconcerned with their historical accuracy since they do not tell *his* story. For instance, even though his film *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto: A Birthday Trip in Hell* lacks the autobiographical impulse that a film version of *Child of the Holocaust* would have, in his interview with me, Kuper explained that he refused to donate *Warsaw to Yad Vashem* when he saw the disorganized quality of the room in which he was to leave the print. Put simply, he did not want to leave the film in a setting where he felt it would be, to use Fulford’s words, “done badly.”

⁵³ Kuper, Interview with author.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Caruth, “Trauma and Experience: Introduction,” 7, my emphasis.

Saul Friedlander makes a similar observation by pointing to the synergistic quality of the Holocaust by which “this event, perceived in its totality, may signify more than the sum of its components.”⁵⁶ Friedlander expands on this by pointing out that “for most historians a precise description of the unfolding of events is meant to carry its own interpretation, its own truth.”⁵⁷ Yet it is precisely such an axiom that is precluded by the Holocaust’s synergy. If Kuper’s own personal history, as narratively written in his literature, is only a single microhistory of the Holocaust derived from “what had transpired” in his “own reality,” then the ability to comment on or provide an “interpretation” of the Holocaust (not necessarily in its “totality” but in a manner that moves beyond what Friedlander refers to as the “simplest factual level,”⁵⁸ or as Kuper puts it, the “pedestrian”) necessitates a move away from the constraints of this personal experience. And this is what Kuper does in his films by establishing himself in a position external to the Holocaust by framing it through explicitly mediated, third-person perspectives.

This strategy of establishing a perspectival barrier between himself and that which his films seek to document (broadly speaking, the Holocaust) clearly manifests the sense of the psychoanalytic split that Kuper alludes to - between himself as a grown man arriving back in Gilzew and his childhood self that he perceives as “someone...who no longer exists.” While this semblance of a subjective division is not necessarily foregrounded explicitly in his Holocaust films, my contention is that such a split *is* implicit in their mediated treatments of the historical past. Moreover, in addition to the

⁵⁶ Saul Friedlander, “Introduction,” in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution*, edited by Saul Friedlander (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), 3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

trauma literature that referred to above that provides a theoretical context for considering the externalized perspective that Kuper adopts in his Holocaust films, a similar emphasis on a split identity *is* explicit in his independent avant-garde film *Run!* from 1961. While at the level of content, *Run!* has nothing to do with the Holocaust, this piece provides a useful *textual* point of entry for considering Kuper's films that *do* approach it, since their external stance mimics *Run!*'s reflection on the divided nature of the self.

The content of *Run!* is rather rudimentary, particularly when considered relative to Kuper's later films on the Holocaust. Put simply, it features a man in a white suit running through a metropolitan city. His reason for running is initially unclear, but his distress is palpable in a pained expressions and sweaty demeanor. He hides against buildings while peering around corners and becomes increasingly disheveled as he pushes his way through crowds. He eventually stops in front of a mirror with a sign saying "smile" on it, which he manages to do only after popping some pills. He then looks over his shoulder, and the image cuts to two legs wearing dark pants, also running. The white-suited man then takes off again, as his journey becomes increasingly precarious, taking him onto the roofs of buildings as the man in dark clothes gazes at him in a long shot. By this point it is clear the man in white is running from a threat that is embodied in the dark-outfitted man. The chase finally concludes with the man in white collapsed on a beach. His pursuer finally catches up to him, takes off his sunglasses, and reveals himself to be his double before pushing the white-suited man off of a cliff. In other words, the pursuer and pursued are the same individual. In addition, a third man dressed as a lumberjack who has the same face as the pursuer and the pursued witnesses

this interaction, pointing to an even greater fragmentation of identity.⁵⁹ In other words, this film highlights the existence of multiple selves existing within a singular identity.

While in *Run!* this device functions as a dramatic “twist” rather than historical commentary, a similar invocation of a split subjectivity appears in Kuper’s Holocaust film oeuvre, particularly in the blurred ontology of experiential memory in *Who Was Jerzy Kosinski?* as well as in the explicitly mediated stances towards the past in *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto*, *The Fear of Felix Nussbaum* and *Shtetl*, all of which are discussed below. An especially clear correlation can be found between *Run!*’s ahistorical reflection on the divided nature of the self and the barrier between historical experience and the representation of that experience in *Children of the Storm*. As Chapter Two mentioned, the focus of *Children* is on war orphans brought to Canada by the Canadian Jewish Congress after WWII. I also mentioned, albeit briefly, that Kuper himself was one of these orphans and is one of the survivors providing first-hand testimony in the film. However, since Kuper-the-testifier and Kuper-the-filmmaker are never pro-filmically linked, the film posits a barrier between the two that hearkens the split self of *Run!*

In his review of *Children of the Storm*, Alex Strachan alludes to this barrier by framing the film as non-autobiographical. *Children*, he argues, “is free of Kuper’s personal imprint. The film relies on the personal reminiscences of grown men and

⁵⁹ While one could draw a connection between the film’s threatening chase and Kuper’s experiences highlighted in *Child of the Holocaust*, which saw him continually pursued across the Polish countryside, such a reading would be at best metaphorical. Kuper suggests that the film is a commentary on the alienation derived from modernity (Interview with author), which the film signifies via visual cues like bright lights, congested city streets, and an amusement park. This concept of modern alienation is of course a vast area of discourse. However, a particularly useful consideration of this phenomenon that relates to the context of *Run!*’s use such frenetic imagery is Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, translated and edited by Kurt H. Wolff (New York: The Free Press, 1964), 409-424.

women looking back on often dark childhoods illuminated by brief flashes of joy.”⁶⁰

Strachan however fails to explicitly emphasize that Kuper acts as one of the testifiers in his own film, which is key to the film’s split between itself and its historical object – the war orphans, including Kuper. *Children of the Storm* refuses to highlight Kuper-the-testifier as Kuper-the-filmmaker, and as such the film embodies a division between the subject and the object of history. This strategy constitutes a similar distant-but-connected relationship between the two as that between the pursuer and the pursued in *Run!* The subject of this history – Kuper, the maker of this film – does not provide the history.

Rather, the historical material is presented as property of *others* – i.e. a selected group of the CJC war orphans – of which Kuper is *one*. Take for example a moment where Kuper is shown onscreen, lightheartedly recalling his first experience watching a hockey game at Maple Leaf Gardens: “I couldn’t understand why a bunch of grown men would be dressed in uniforms chasing a puck. I said, ‘Why couldn’t they give them all a puck and they wouldn’t have to fight for it.’” In this case, the “I” of the testimony is distinct from the subjective “I” of Kuper as the filmmaker, who is present (invisibly, according to Strachan) only outside the text. The “I” of the pro-filmic Kuper – that is, the Kuper describing hockey – becomes a historical object viewed from the perspective of the extra-filmic, authorial Kuper. This pro-filmic Kuper is thus, to again use Leys’ term, “othered,” afforded the same object status as the “I” of any of the other survivors.

I would argue that by moving away from a singular autobiographical approach, *Children* is able to bring together the individual stories (microhistories) of the war orphans in a manner that conveys a larger, more collective history. As was stressed in Chapter Two, this is not to say the film presents the group as monolithic, but rather

⁶⁰ Strachan, D8.

emphasizes commonalities (such as the challenges of post-Holocaust immigration and assimilation) in order to stress that each individual microhistory constitutes a larger historical whole. This device thus corresponds to Caruth's assertion that sacrificing the witnessing of oneself is necessary "to witness the *event* fully," as well Friedlander's invocation of the Holocaust's synergistic quality that renders the event larger than the sum of its microhistorical components.

Strachan also notes as a comparison that Kuper's earlier film *Who Was Jerzy Kosinski?* bears much more explicitly than *Children* the mark of the director's "personal imprint."⁶¹ As *Jerzy* is primarily focused on the enigmatic Jerzy Kosinski - the author of the Holocaust novel *The Painted Bird*, which was initially portrayed as an autobiography before being exposed as fraudulent fiction - the film is in a sense biographical, not unlike *The Fear of Felix Nussbaum* and *Shtetl* which explore the lives of the artists Felix Nussbaum and Mayer Kirshenblatt respectively. But unlike these films, *Jerzy* quite overtly blurs the line between biography and autobiography by approaching Kosinski via Kuper's own friendship with him in the late-1960s and early 1970s.

In contrast to the representational barrier between Kuper-the-filmmaker and Kuper-the-testifier in *Children*, *Jerzy* functions much closer to an autobiographical account in which the subjective perspective of the film and the object of that perspective are the same, i.e. the film is explicitly about Kuper reflecting on Kuper. At the same time, while the narratorial authority in the film is clearly established to be "Jack Kuper," the actual narration in *Jerzy* is provided by Shawn Lawrence, which again posits a certain representational distance between Kuper-the-filmmaker and the Kuper within the film, which is further embellished by the fact that Kuper is never clearly visualized onscreen.

⁶¹ Ibid., original emphasis.

That being said, *Jerzy* assumes a more explicitly autobiographical form than *Children* by identifying both the film's narrational subjectivity and one of the objects of the film's thematic focus as "Jack Kuper." This revelation of "Kuper" as the narrator is initially implicit as the film opens with a shot looking out a car windshield as the vehicle drives over a bridge while the narration invokes the first-person to reflect on Kuper's initial encounter with Kosinski:

On a visit to New York in the late 1960s to meet the people at Double Day, who were about to publish my book, *Child of the Holocaust*, I was told that another book on a similar subject – *The Painted Bird* by Jerzy Kosinski – had just been published and instantly acclaimed. Although written in a different style, the story was not unlike my own – an abandoned little boy in World War II roams a nightmarish landscape occupied by poor, superstitious peasants.

While at this point one may be unable to identify this subject without knowing that Jack Kuper is the author of a book called *Child of the Holocaust*, the identity of this "I" is named shortly thereafter as the narrator subject – Kuper – recalls looking up Kosinski's address, calling him from the downstairs intercom, and identifying himself by saying "I'm Jack Kuper."

Kuper's authorial perspective is omnipresent in *Jerzy*, as the same narrative voice appropriates a slightly raspier and more nasal quality to mimic Kosinski and other individuals as the narrator verbally re-enacts conversations, even as supplemental information about Kosinski is provided by interviews with people who had worked with him during his career as a writer and performer. In other words, the film leaves little ambiguity about the fact that the filmic perspective is that of Kuper himself, who offers a commentary via the film on his relationship with Kosinski.

As Kuper's narration provides a detailed history of his friendship with Kosinski, including intricate descriptions of experiences that they shared, like attending a gathering

that turned out to be an S&M (sodomasochism) party and an uncomfortable brunch where Jerzy informed Kuper that he had once killed Polish children by grinding metal shavings into their food, this verbal representation is not dissimilar from the fact-based narrative accounts of “what...transpired” that are found in Kuper’s novels. Yet the film embodies a split between the words of this narration and its visuals, which implies a reluctance or inability to translate these narrativized memories into an *imagistic* representation. The film accomplishes this barrier by mobilizing “subject-less” visuals, which complement and perhaps allude to the corresponding information provided in the narration, *but do not represent it*. For instance, during the aforementioned narration about the S&M party, the camera tracks around an abandoned apartment with various S&M paraphernalia scattered about. But since the apartment is empty, the visuals notably break from the sense of frenetic and sexualized energy of the party that the narration describes. Similarly, the images that accompany the brunch story are close-ups of omelets being cut, which correspond only to the most banal part of the story being told – that they ordered omelets at this brunch - rather than on Jerzy’s bizarre admission of murder.

This “subject-less” visual quality even persists in moments when *people* are shown onscreen, since their presence functions to complement the verbalized narrative rather than acting as images standing in for it. For instance, as the narrator reflects on the uncertainty of Kosinski’s ethno-religious background, the camera focuses on a Jewish man in traditional Hassidic clothing walking on the street. While the iconography of this man’s appearance speaks to the question of Kosinski’s Judaic identity, this figure does not address the camera in any way. He is not identified in any manner and thus functions more as an element of the *mise-en-scène* of a New York street than a specific individual,

and certainly not as a representational stand-in for the actual, secular Kosinski. In other words, with only one very important exception that I will discuss below, the visuals of the film, even when they include shots of people, lack any semblance of subjectivity. These subject-less images thus complicate a clear representational link between the words providing the film's narrative and its visual representation.

The autobiographical clarity of the film is also complicated by its dual focus on Kuper *and* Kosinski, through which it seems to function as both autobiography and biography simultaneously. Moreover, in spite of the film's emphasis on the relationship between the two men, and its introduction to this relationship by pointing to the similarity between *Child of the Holocaust* and *The Painted Bird*, the film repeatedly stresses *differences* between the two in a manner that places Kuper - the film's subjective voice - as cognitively external to Kosinski - the film's *other* primary object - *despite* the narrator's assumption of Kosinski's voice.

The film's opening narration immediately stresses the distinction between Kuper and Kosinski that betrays the superficial similarity between their books. To contrast the shared narrative qualities of "an abandoned little boy in World War II" living in a "nightmarish landscape occupied by poor, superstitious peasants," the narrator states, "But that is where the similarity ended. Whereas my account concerned itself with survival and identity, Kosinski's dwelled upon brutality, sex and perversion." As the film continues to highlight the development of their friendship, further differences between himself and Kosinski continue to crop up in Kuper's narration - instances which posit him as external to Kosinski's life: "How I envied Jerzy. He was worldly, and drank everything the fountain of life had to offer while I lived a dull existence in provincial

Toronto, concerning myself with the dandelions invading my lawn.” After the dissolution of their friendship, this sense of a distance persists even more explicitly. Over images of bright spotlights, limousines, and brightly lit marquees, the narration recalls, “Occasionally, Kosinski’s name would crop up over the years in conversation, and quite often in print. Finally, he himself popped up in the film *Reds*. He was a best-selling author, had become a movie star, was appearing on the Johnny Carson show, and cavorting with the likes of Zbigniew Brzezinski, Warren Beatty and Henry Kissinger.” To underline Kosinski’s lifestyle as what can be crudely referred to a “celebrity Holocaust survivor,” the film then cuts to Beverley Slopen, a literary agent who recalls seeing Kosinski dining at the Russian Tea Room with Brzezinski. To contrast this sense of glamour, the film then cuts to a push-lawnmower as the narrator reflects on the comparative banality of Kuper’s existence: “I, on the other hand, had ended up making mindless TV commercials to support a wife and four children.”

Given these distinctions between the bacchanalian Kosinski and the provincial Kuper, it is tempting to read the film’s construction of their relationship through a “Jekyll and Hyde” lens, whereby the two purport to share a similar Holocaust experience which binds them, but enact the ramifications of this shared experience in vastly different ways, both in terms of their literary styles and the lifestyles that derive from this experience. Such a reading would certainly correspond to my assertion that Kuper’s films can be read as embodying a division in subjectivity that posits Kuper the subject as external to his own past, like the division between filmmaker and testifier in *Children*. However, the distinction between Kuper and Kosinski invariably differs from that between Kuper and Kuper in *Children*, since the “other” of the Kosinski/Kuper dyad in *Jerzy* is *actually*

another other human being rather than an “other” constituted by a division within the self, like in *Children* and in the Jekyll and Hyde analogy. In other words, the film’s positioning of Kuper as external to Kosinski’s experiences cannot be read, on its own, as embodying a subjective split which positions the former as external to his own past. Like any biographical account, which *Jerzy* certainly is at least in part, the subjectivity of the individual writing the account is invariably posited as external to the biographical object (the individual that the biography is *about*).

At the same time, as the film progresses, the relationship between Kosinski and Kuper (and the relationship between their putatively similar historical experiences) moves to precisely such an end – that is, to confuse the perspective towards the past as the clear distinction between Kosinski’s history and Kuper’s history pales, as the question of “whose story is it?” begins to occupy the film’s (and narrator’s) attention.⁶² Of course, the media mythos that surrounded Kosinski during his life and the related skeptical questions that proliferated in the media regarding the veracity of his own history and that of the protagonist in *The Painted Bird* point to this very question (“Whose story is it?”), and this enigmatic, almost spectral quality of the author’s identity is alluded to in the very title of Kuper’s film, *Who Was Jerzy Kosinski?*⁶³ But what is important in the present

⁶² As this question comes into play right as the distinction between Kuper and Kosinski begins to become unclear, it can also be used to consider the perspective of Batia Bettman’s *Let Memory Speak* – another film made by a survivor discussed in the previous chapter - that “muddies” when the distinction between the appropriated and first-person experiential narration begins to fade. When it is no longer clear whether the voices in Bettman’s film are non-survivors speaking the words of Holocaust victims or those of survivors themselves, it is precisely the question of “whose story is this” that emerges. Is it the story of the victims, or has it become the story of those that have experienced an encounter with the victims via their words and experiences?

⁶³ In the film, the narrator refers to a “murderous” article in the *Village Voice* that accused Kosinski “of the most unimaginable of machinations,” and claimed that “*The Painted Bird* had been written in Polish, with the translator receiving no credit. As well, there were those that insisted they were the authors of parts of his other books, or at least collaborators who never received any recognition. Others called him a liar, a cheat, a fraud, an imposter.” While the film does not identify the authors or title of this article specifically,

context is less the accuracy of Kosinski's story and identity than how the film complicates the relationship between *The Painted Bird* and *Child of the Holocaust* in a manner that places Kuper as external to his *own* history. In other words, what is implicitly suggested by the subject-less quality of the film's images becomes explicit as the narrator begins to reflect on the ontological stability of his cognitive access to his own memories.

As mentioned above, while *Jerzy* begins by identifying the thematic similarities between *The Painted Bird* and *Child of the Holocaust* - both being about an abandoned child in WWII - the narrator quickly begins to highlight *differences* between himself and Kosinski, both in terms of their present lives and in terms of the experiences dealt with in their respective books. In the second half of the film however, after the narrator has detailed rather ambivalently the gradual and benign demise of his relationship with Kosinski, the similarity of the two books is again centralized as the possession of the historical past is thrown into confused disarray.

The moment in which *Jerzy* begins to most seriously call into question the historical veracity of Kosinski's novel is when the narrator recalls a conversation that he had with an English professor whose mother, a survivor, claimed that Kosinski's real name was "Chaim," that he was a relative of theirs, and that *The Painted Bird* was actually loosely based on the experiences of Roman Polanski (with whom Kosinski went to school in Poland). After detailing this conversation, Kuper describes seeing the paperback of *The Painted Bird* on his bookshelf and deciding to revisit it for the first time in a number of years. Over images of a desolate farmyard, whose abandoned quality continues the subject-less nature of the empty apartment and omelet close-ups, the

it is most likely referring to Geoffrey Stokes and Eliot Fremont-Smith, "Jerzy Kosinski's Tainted Words," *Village Voice*, June 22, 1982.

narrator describes reading the book and getting to a passage about the brutal killing of a rabbit, “which made me gasp.” His surprise is then explained with the assertion that Kosinski had stolen this story from *Kuper’s* own experiences: “This was *my* story! This had happened to me and it was in *my* book. ‘He stole it from me!’ I concluded, ‘But how?’ Not only that, how was it that I didn’t remember the rabbit incident when I originally read *his* book? Surely I’d have been just as shocked then.” The narration then states that Kuper initially explained this incongruity by assuming that the rabbit passage had been added after Kosinski had read *Child of the Holocaust*, in between the publication of the hardcover and paperback editions of *The Painted Bird*. Yet when Kuper recalls excitedly locating the hardcover edition, with “visions of headlines, interviewers breaking down my door, courtroom scenes, and finally, the fraudulent Jerzy Kosinski stripped of his disguise and revealed for what he truly was,” he reveals, “my eyes fell upon page 89. There, to my great horror, was the rabbit story.”

In desperate confusion, Kuper then describes scanning the pages of his own book, “back and forth, page by page” for the rabbit incident, only to find that the “rabbit had disappeared from my pages, and found a home in Kosinski’s book.” After this he recalls pleading with his wife and children to repeat back to him the story of the skinned rabbit, which he was convinced he had told them before, only for them to reply that they were unaware of such a story. The film finally explicitly establishes this confusion as constituting a crisis of identity for Kuper as this discovery not only blurs line between his own past and Kosinski’s, but also calls into question the ontological stability of his personal history – i.e. Whose story is it? - as the narrator asks, “Never mind who was Jerzy Kosinski? Who was I, really?”

This confused perspective towards the past, within which Kuper's and Kosinski's histories collapse, is further emphasized by the only instance in the film in which an image implies a *visual*, represented subjectivity. As I mentioned above, there is a single exception to the film's tendency towards subject-less images. This exception is a young boy who is occasionally shown in fields and around a farm as Kuper reflects on the veracity of Kosinski's experiences. In the aftermath of Kuper's confusion regarding the rabbit sequence, the narrator recalls questioning Kosinski about where he hid during the war. Over the narrator's recollection of this conversation, the film features an image of this young boy hiding behind a bale of hay in the countryside, implicitly suggesting that this is a representation of a young Kosinski. However, an image of this boy re-appears shortly thereafter, this time overlooking a field with his back to the camera precisely when Kuper's narration contemplates, "Never mind who was Jerzy Kosinski. Who was I?" This visual and verbal correlation thus throws into uncertainty as to whether this boy stands in for Kuper or Kosinski. In other words, the only time the past is visualized via an individual subject that is representing *someone* simply serves to call into question the identity being represented, as a clear delineation between self and other (Kuper and Kosinski) pales. This ambiguity is again highlighted in the film's closing credits, which list this character simply as "The Boy" (played by Rafat Swierczynski) rather than "Kosinski as a child" or "Kuper as a child." The presence of this child, and the confusion of whom he stands in for as a representation, thus *visually* embodies the barrier that precludes a simple connection between (or visual representation of) Kuper and his past, which is established *verbally* by the narration in regards to the rabbit incident.

As this explicit consideration of the ambiguity between Kuper's and Kosinski's personal histories only begins approximately thirty-five minutes into the film's fifty-three minute duration, one could argue that I am overstating its significance. However, *Jerzy's* final sequence firmly establishes the question of "whose story is it?" as central to its investigative impetus. After the narrator reveals Kosinski's eventual suicide, the film cuts to a shot of a magazine rack as the camera slowly zooms into a cover of *New York* magazine that features a black and white photo of the deceased writer. As this is the only instance in the film in which either Kuper or Kosinski is ever overtly *visualized*, occurring only after Kosinski's *death* is established, this moment implies precisely the problematic of absence that looms large in visually conveying the authenticity of the past.

More importantly, Kuper's narrated reflection on the accompanying article on Kosinski's life re-emphasizes the blurred delineation between the two former friends. From the magazine cover, the film cuts to a close-up of the magazine's pages flipping, again without showing the hands of the individual turning them not unlike the visually subject-less images of omelets being cut from earlier in the film. "Inside was a lengthy article," states the narrator over the flipping pages. "It was illustrated by many photographs, a surrealistic self-portrait, Kosinski floating on water in a meditative pose in Switzerland...Another portrayed him being mobbed by fans on his return trip to Poland in 1989." At this point, the narrator's stance moves from descriptive to contemplative as focus shifts again towards the blurring of Kuper and Kosinski:

That was all, except for one black and white one that sent a chill through my body. It was of a woman in a bathing suit holding onto a frail young boy wearing bathing trunks held up by suspenders. She was dark-haired with obvious Semitic features, a most charming smile, and sad Jewish eyes. Both beamed with happiness, looking directly into the camera. 'With his mother in

Poland,' read the caption. The boy was unmistakably Kosinski, but the mother looked strangely like my own.

As the narrator reflects on this photograph and his own reaction to it, the camera slowly pans up the magazine page to reveal the photograph. After the narration ceases, with the eerie reflection on the similarity between Kosinski's and his (Kuper's) mother(s), the camera stays on this photograph as the audio track becomes silent. This image remains on the screen for approximately fourteen seconds, fostering an uncomfortable and anticipatory quality, implying that a further verbal qualification is to come. It does not. After these fourteen seconds, the image fades to black as the closing credits and music begin, thus leaving the blurring of Kuper and Kosinski, and the confusion of "whose story is it?" as the film's final contemplation.

In this regard, *Jerzy* is ultimately less concerned with establishing a cogent biographical explanation that answers the question posed in the film's title about Kosinski himself, than with using Kosinski's story as a means to reflect on the ontological instability of Kuper's individual historical memory. Indeed, while the film grapples with the question of who was Jerzy Kosinski via interviews, the anecdotal reflection on Kuper's conversation with the English professor, and reference to various magazine articles on Kosinski, the film stops short of postulating its *own* answer, leaving a sense of ambiguity regarding the extent to which *The Painted Bird*, Kosinski's ethnic heritage, and his Holocaust experiences were *actually* fabricated.

As such, while *Jerzy* is Kuper's film that comes closest to an autobiographical reflection - as it is, at least in part, Kuper's own story⁶⁴ - it approaches this history indirectly. It does not look to Kuper's past (that which is narrated in the first-person in

⁶⁴ Kuper, Interview with author.

Child of the Holocaust) as an object in its own right, which would entail an effort like the stymied adaptation with Jewison. Rather, *Jerzy* approaches this history through *another* piece of literature. Moreover, this approach towards his personal history through the mediation of another individual serves not to simply illuminate this past, but to call into question its very ontology, thus placing Kuper outside of it, almost as a non-partisan observer to experiences which he can no longer claim unequivocally as his own.

Kuper adopts a more overt externalized perspective towards the past in his films that approach the Holocaust explicitly through the mediated perspectives of others, which more clearly posit a division between historical object and filmic perspective than the implicit distinction between Kuper and Kuper in *Children* and the confused ambiguity of identity in *Jerzy*. If the “sublime” quality of the Holocaust experience (to use Bernard-Donalds and Glezjer’s term), which renders the event perpetually inaccessible to cognitive awareness and direct representation, is thus enacted on the *personal* level in these two works, Kuper’s other films - *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto: A Birthday Trip in Hell*, *The Fear of Felix Nussbaum*, and *Shtetl* – embody this cognitive distance at the *textual* level by aesthetically delineating a barrier between the perspectives of the films themselves and their historical objects.

Mediated Perspectives: *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto: A Birthday Trip in Hell*, *The Fear of Felix Nussbaum* and *Shtetl*

Of Kuper’s films that assume an explicitly mediated position relative to their historical objects, the distanced relationship between history and film is most subtle in *A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto: A Birthday Trip in Hell*. The reason for this subtlety stems from two main factors. First, the media representation featured in the film is a series of

photographs taken by Wehrmacht Sergeant Heinz Joest as he walked through the ghetto on his birthday in 1941. The photographs that comprise the film's visuals in their entirety convey many images familiar to those with even cursory background knowledge of the Holocaust, such as skeletal bodies gazing blankly at the camera, people dressed in rags sprawled on filthy sidewalks, and piles of emaciated corpses that look more like stick figures than people. As such, these photographs evoke the semblance of an objective glance into the film's history (life in the Warsaw ghetto) more so than the drawn recollections in *A Special Letter* or the paintings of Nussbaum and Kirshenblatt in *The Fear of Felix Nussbaum* and *Shtetl* respectively. Second, in addition to the photographs, *Warsaw* includes the narration of diary excerpts written by individuals who were living in the ghetto, which supplements the visuals by conveying a greater sense of lived reality within its walls. For instance, over a photograph of a thin man holding a violin in playing position, a violin plays on the soundtrack as a young female voice narrates, "During the morning hours, Professor Kellerman of the Leipzig Conservatory often comes here to play the violin... I often close my eyes and imagine that I'm attending a concert of some great virtuoso, discretely accompanied by a distant orchestra. But his playing is often interrupted by the noises of pieces of hard bread and the coins thrown down to him." Moreover, unlike the diary narration in *Let Memory Speak*, the voices that narrate excerpts from ghetto diaries do not identify whose words these are.⁶⁵ *Warsaw* thus lacks the sense of experiential distance that is constituted by the distinction between narrator and narration in Bettman's film.

⁶⁵ The sources of the diary excerpts are of course listed in the closing credits, but even with this identification, one would be hard-pressed to figure out which voices go with which source, save for the gender distinctions between male and female voices.

But despite these qualities that lend the film a semblance of historical propinquity, and despite the fact that Kuper *does* have an autobiographical connection to the ghetto itself, having lived in it briefly,⁶⁶ *Warsaw* still takes a decidedly external perspective towards the past that calls attention to the mediated distance between history and the film itself. Kuper constitutes this distance primarily by book-ending the film's photographic essay with the perspective of Officer Joest. The film opens with an explanatory title card that explains how Joest revealed the negatives of these photographs to an editor of the German magazine *Stern* on his death-bed in late 1982, before the image changes to a map of Warsaw that conveys the extent of the city's pre-war Jewish population by black dots, and the size of the ghetto within which this population was eventually confined. The visuals then cut to a close-up of Joest's cherubic face before zooming out to reveal him in full military uniform. Over this image the film's narrator gives a brief background of Joest - that he was a hotel owner whose German military unit was stationed near Warsaw. The audio then cuts to a new voice with a German accent that is clearly meant to be Joest, which explains how he came to photograph the images within the ghetto: "On my trips to the city, I observed many dead bodies lying outside the ghetto walls. On September 19, [1941], my 43rd birthday, I was given the day off and decided to see what went on within those walls...I wandered around the streets. Although it was against regulations, I photographed what I saw."

While the perspective and voice specifically ascribed to Joest eventually cede to the photographs themselves (and the diary entries that accompany them), this introduction implicitly posits him as an outsider whose presence in the ghetto was new (he wanted to "see what went on within the walls") and whose actions there (taking

⁶⁶ Kuper, Interview with author.

photographs) were expressly forbidden. At the film's conclusion, after a series of horrific images of emaciated corpses, the accented voiceover meant to be Joest returns, once again over his photograph, and underlines the epistemological distance that he tried to construct between his perspective and the reality of life that he witnessed within the ghetto: "In my letters home I didn't say anything about what I'd seen. I didn't want to upset my family. I didn't tell my army comrades anything either. I thought, 'What sort of world is this?' Later on too, when they deported the Jews and burned down the ghetto, I looked on, in silence."

In addition to framing its body via Joest's "outsider" perspective, the film also aestheticizes the history conveyed in the photos by emphasizing them *as photos*, as artifacts of mediation. The opening title card, in conjunction with the opening voiceover of "Joest," sets up these images specifically as photographs collected by an outsider to the ghetto. This externalization is somewhat mollified by the diaries that lend the photographs an experiential perspective in the details that they provide. Yet these diary entries too are posited explicitly as mediation. After the "Joest" voiceover explains his entry into the ghetto, the unidentified filmic narrator introduces the use of diaries that will complement the film's images: "Inside the ghetto, a few individuals kept secret diaries, recording the events of the day."

If this "objective" narrator can be considered the closest that *Warsaw* comes to assuming a *filmic* perspective, it is clear that this perspective is distinct from those of both Joest and the diaries, which actually provide the primary informational lens into the life of the ghetto. This device thus places the film's perspective outside the history of the ghetto itself, especially since the main purpose of the film's narrator is not to provide

information throughout the film, but to simply introduce Joest and the diaries, the film's two conduits of mediation. This is not to say that the film implies the photographic mediations of Joest or the literary mediations of the diaries convey historical falsehoods or inaccuracy (just like Laub does not suggest that the cognitive distance between himself as an adult and his memories of being in the camp as a child render the memories *fabricated*), but that *Warsaw* as a film implicitly separates itself from the history it seeks to document by framing this past through mediated artifacts that are explicitly identified as such. In other words, *Warsaw* does not approach the history of the ghetto "the way it was," but rather creates an aesthetic that can be more accurately referred to as "the-way-it-was-ness," constituted not by a backward glance to the past, but by a look towards mediations that themselves contain their own backward historical glances. Put more simply, the external perspective of *Warsaw* does not present the past, but rather a "presentation of a presentation" of the past, or to invoke Lyotard, foregrounds the "unpresentability" of the past in its "presentation" (see Note 38 above).

When I asked Kuper about what drew him to these photographs as a subject for one of his films, he replied that he "wanted to show how resilient people were there [in the ghetto], because Jews are always accused of having been cowards, they didn't fight back, and so on...Some incredible things happened in that Warsaw ghetto. Jews were learning Greek, and Esperanto while they're being set up to be butchered. Jews looked after the poor, they had theatre and concerts." On the one hand, *Warsaw's* approach to the Holocaust through an aesthetic of overt mediation may seem to imply an ahistorical quality to the film that contrasts with this articulated goal of using this collection of photographs to convey the vitality of life in the ghetto. Yet I would argue that the film's

aesthetic that emphasizes mediation actually works to convey this vitality by downplaying the presence of a singular source of authorial narration.

In terms of the perspectives identifiable in the film, there is the filmic narrator whose presence is largely negligible, Joest's perspective which only book-ends the film and which, as was mentioned above, is itself an externalized perspective, and those of the diary writers who are never identified. Corresponding to this lack of a singular narrational authority, neither the photographs nor the diary entries form a singular narrative. Images and words of horror yield to images of banality, and images of banality yield to images that may appear relatively benign, lacking entirely the *horrific* aspects of the ghetto. What the film contains then is a non-narrative *bricolage* of photos and words whose lack of a singular perspective conveys precisely the complexity of Jewish existence within the ghetto. For instance, towards the film's conclusion, a photograph of a schoolhouse is accompanied by a female voiceover that provides reflection on an event so benign it could have taken place anywhere: "Today I was on duty at the exhibition of the work of our school. Most popular are the still-lives. The spectators feast their eyes on the apples, carrots, and other food-stuffs so realistically painted." The image then cuts to a wagon full of corpses, as a well-dressed man in an overcoat and hat glances disinterestedly over the abject scene and a male voiceover narrates from a diary, "There is a marked, remarkable indifference to death which no longer impresses. One walks past corpses with indifference. It is rare for anyone to visit the hospital to inquire after a relative. Nor is there much interest in the dead at the graveyard." This juxtaposition of contrasting photographs and spoken words, derived from a multiplicity of perspectives, works to convey the irony of life in the ghetto as a prime space where, to borrow from

historian Christopher Browning, the line between normality and abnormality had blurred.⁶⁷

Moreover, by opting for a collective, non-narrative bricolage of mediation rather than a single perspective, the film is able to take liberty with how the history is presented as it is not tied to an individual experiential narrative – including Kuper’s own history within the ghetto. In this sense, *Warsaw*’s non-narrative arrangement can be conceived as Kuper’s commentary, which uses the film’s mediated stance to paint a dynamic matrix of contradictory experiences comprising ghetto life that corresponds more closely to Raymond Williams’ conception of a “structure of feeling”⁶⁸ of existence within, rather than a historical narrative of, the Warsaw ghetto. The external perspective thus affords Kuper the opportunity to allude to a meaning of the ghetto that transcends the narrative sum of simply “what...transpired” within – a limitation of single-perspective linearity that he feels constrained by in his autobiographical literary work.⁶⁹

While *The Fear of Felix Nussbaum* moves away from the multiple perspectives of *Warsaw* as it approaches the past primarily via a single individual, this film also takes an overtly mediated stance towards the Holocaust. *Felix* approaches history through the paintings of the exiled German artist Felix Nussbaum who (along with his entire family) perished in the Holocaust, and emphasizes how these paintings depict Nussbaum’s perspective of the increasingly threatening conditions that faced him and his family as

⁶⁷ While Browning is writing about the Holocaust more generally, an event in which “abnormality had become exceedingly normal,” this dictum precisely articulates the synergistic sum of *Warsaw*’s multiplicity of perspectives that is able to convey the contradictory banality and horror that constituted lived reality within the ghetto. See Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), xix.

⁶⁸ Raymond Williams refers to the “structure of feeling” as “the culture of a period: it is the particular living result of all the elements in the general organization.” Such an approach to history, Williams contends, exposes the limitations of historiographies that try to isolate a singular aspect of a culture (art, for example). See Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 48.

⁶⁹ Kuper, Interview with author.

Jews over the duration of the Nazi regime. Like *Warsaw*, Kuper's perspective is largely absent in the film, or at least invisible, and *Felix* actually goes further in positing a representational distance between the film itself and its historical object (Nussbaum and his paintings). Rather than the photographic images of the Warsaw Ghetto which purport to show "the way it was," Nussbaum's paintings lack this indexical quality that can feign an objective account, and imply instead how the *artist* perceived the world around him, and rendered these perceptions into subjective painted images. This distinction can also be explained in part by the different emphases of the two films: *Warsaw*'s historical focus is on how the photographs can illuminate the ghetto itself, whereas *Felix* is a biographical historiography that uses Nussbaum's paintings as a way to approach the artist's life and perspective. And it is appropriately the perspective of this specific individual through which the film frames the Holocaust.

It is also useful to note that by emphasizing Nussbaum's experiences *through his paintings*, Kuper's film evokes a similar sense of experiential mediation as that which is conveyed in the animation of *A Special Letter*. In fact, this distance assumes an even greater significance in *Felix* as a representational barrier since the autobiographical media forms within the film (i.e. Nussbaum's autobiographical paintings *as they are represented in Kuper's film*) are framed *biographically* as opposed to the animation of *A Special Letter* which functions at the level of the film itself as an *autobiographical* mode of mediation.

Yet the experiential distance between film and historical object transcends *Felix*'s focus on the paintings themselves. The paintings are used to illustrate Nussbaum's shifting perspective towards life under Nazi rule. While I will consider the film's

exploration of this perspectival shift shortly, it is important to first emphasize that this “narrative” is presented not simply through the paintings and supplementary historical information provided by a narrator and interview subjects like Wendelin Zimmer (art critic), or Peter Junk (librarian). Rather the film enacts a journey through Nussbaum’s work by positioning itself as a participant on a guided tour of the Felix Nussbaum *Haus*, a museum devoted to his work in Nussbaum’s hometown of Osnabrück, Germany. In the opening minutes of the film, an off-screen voice (that of the narrator who will provide pertinent historical background information throughout the film) positions itself as a tour guide for the museum, stating, “Ladies and gentleman, I welcome you to the Felix Nussbaum *Haus* of the Cultural History Museum in Osnabrück. For the next hour I will accompany you as you walk through the permanent exhibition of the work of Felix Nussbaum.” As the film continues, the filmic “tour” makes its way through the museum, giving spatial instructions for the “tourist” (i.e. the viewer) in addition to information on the paintings themselves, such as, “Please continue to the painting on the end wall of the room.” It should also be noted that in these tour scenes, the camera is positioned amongst *actual* tourists in the museum, which adds another layer of mediation, as the film documents not only the paintings on the *filmic* tour (i.e. the tour narrated for the film), but documents actual tourists confronting the paintings.

This strategy evokes Otto Lowy’s participation in the museum tour in “A Journey to Prague,” who articulates via voiceover his perceived separation within the tour group, and also within Czechoslovakia, which he no longer considers “home.” Yet the filmic perspective of *Felix* assumes a more overt semblance of distance than this since Lowy’s reflection on his own sense of “out-of-place-ness” is an autobiographical one. *Felix*, on

the other hand, is continually on the outside looking in to the life of Nussbaum, thus implying a division between film and the perspective of the art it features as opposed to “Journey,” whose perspective (even if it *is* of distance) is Lowy’s.

With this division of perspective in mind, the narrator/guide in *Felix* assumes the status of a mediator, separating the object of the film’s historical focus (Nussbaum and his work) from the film itself, not unlike the role of Stephen Lewis in *Voices of Survival* that sets up and introduces the survivor testimonies. Both the narrator in *Felix* and Lewis act almost as a carnival barker (“C’mon in ladies and gentleman!”) that posits an explicitly and passively *external* gaze onto the film’s representational object (survivor testimony or Nussbaum’s art). The rest of *Felix* progresses in precisely this manner, whereby the filmic perspective is positioned as passively external to Nussbaum’s art and perspective, with the artist’s life and work providing the chronological framework for the film’s historical focus. In other words, *Felix*’s perspective is dictated by its historical object rather than vice versa.⁷⁰

The film’s style corresponds closely to (or perhaps more accurately, given the passivity of the film’s external perspective, is shaped by) the narrative manifest in its historical object - Nussbaum’s life under Nazism and his reflection on it through his art. The opening shot of the film is a close-up of water in a small pond as upbeat Klezmer music plays on the soundtrack. The camera then slowly pans up to reveal the Felix Nussbaum *Haus* as the narrator/guide extends his symbolic welcome to the guided tour

⁷⁰ This passive approach differs somewhat from Kuper’s initial proposal for the film which framed the project as “Part detective story, part profile, the documentary will answer these questions [questions about how Nussbaum’s paintings were recovered after decades of obscurity after the war] through an artful blend of interviews and images.” See Jack Kuper, Letter to Gail Dexter Lord of Lord Cultural Resources Planning & Management, June 30, 1998. I located this resource in the Jack Kuper Collection at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.

with an ostentatious expression of excitement that contrasts conspicuously with both the fate of Nussbaum, and the increasingly dark and ominous qualities of his paintings as the threat of death became increasingly clear.

The first ten minutes of the film's fifty-two minute duration follow in the light-hearted vein set by the opening music and excitable narration. The paintings featured in this section are relatively benign. The narrator/guide directs attention to paintings of Nussbaum's family, as well as to one of a synagogue interior. This particular painting features Nussbaum himself, dressed in a prayer shawl and looking straight out of the canvas, indicating a certain religious affiliation with Judaism despite the narrator's proviso that synagogue attendance for the Nussbaum family was rare. In addition to these early Nussbaum paintings, a number of the interviewees as well as the narrator/guide offer biographical information on Nussbaum and his family's comfortable life in 1920s Germany and his increasing acclaim in the Berlin art scene. The narrator emphasizes specifically the care-free nature of Nussbaum's paintings during this time, and suggests this quality perhaps led to his success: "Whether due to his father's connections or because his art corresponded to the current mood, the Berlin public and critics embraced Nussbaum's cheerful pictorial world of funny little people, childlike and happy in their untroubled naiveté."

This is not to say that the film implies Nussbaum's early paintings were simplistic. For instance, in the context of the synagogue painting the narrator reads the self-portraiture of Nussbaum gazing out of the canvas as conveying the artist's tendency to use his "art as a mirror – what I am, how I am reacting," and that this tendency would follow him throughout his career. However, the "reflections" shown by the mirror of

Nussbaum's art would begin to change along with his life circumstances, especially due to the restrictions placed on him and his family under Nazism. In his earlier paintings the images are, as I mentioned above, benign. Even in works that move away from explicitly autobiographical subjects towards social commentary, this commentary is vague and lacks any semblance of the existential threats manifest in Nussbaum's later art. His painting "The Radio Tower" for example, which the narrator/guide directs us to "on the other side of the room" (from the synagogue painting), features a radio tower – a mechanism designed to facilitate communication – that is surrounded by three individuals so occupied in their own activities (a woman walking a dog, a man reading a newspaper, and a man standing with his back to the other two) that they are oblivious to the presence of each other. This juxtaposition of course implies a critical commentary on the de-personalizing quality of modern communication, but does not convey this communication breakdown as a malignant threat.

Nussbaum's paintings, and thus the film itself, begin to move away from this benign tone as the focus moves to the increasing threat of Nazi totalitarianism as it began to weigh more heavily on the artist's life. For instance, the film implies a connection between the "disturbing political reports" of boycotts and book-burnings that began to trickle out of Germany in 1933 and Nussbaum's expulsion from the German Academy in Rome (where he was studying art) for brawling, shortly after the German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels visited the school. In the context of these anti-Semitic currents, the narrator/guide instructs us to "Please enter the Nussbaum corridor," as a tour group assembles in front of the camera. The image then cuts to a dark hallway, which the camera tracks down slowly as the narration continues and sets up the link between

Nussbaum's historical exile and its manifestation in the museum and his paintings: "It [the corridor] is made of bare concrete, no place to feel at home and is meant to symbolize Nussbaum's journey into exile. At the end of the corridor, please make your way into the room on the left."

The paintings in this room begin to manifest what the narrator refers to as Nussbaum's increasingly "schizophrenic" tendencies vis-à-vis his surroundings. After his expulsion in Rome, Nussbaum and his girlfriend found temporary reprieve in Belgium, with a life that seemed comparatively safe on the surface. But this safety was always tenuous, which was reflected in his work as the putatively harmless surfaces of his paintings now served the purpose of self-conscious distortion, hiding danger. To highlight this, the film shows a painting of individuals singing, blissfully unaware of the Roman architecture crumbling behind them. The film then moves to a series of Nussbaum's paintings that featured masquerade masks, which spoke to the necessity of putting on a stoic face and not complaining about living conditions for fear of jeopardizing their Belgian residency permits. In the next room, which is aligned in the museum with a view of the building that was formerly a headquarters of the Nazi Party, Nussbaum's paintings begin to highlight more explicitly a sense of darkening monotony and isolation, featuring "people waiting, idling, lost, devoid of hope and full of resignation," and point to a "growing menace" hidden through symbolism in paintings of harbour scenes. For instance, "Fish Market" features black flags hanging on awnings overlooking a shipyard rather than the colourful flags of different nations that one might expect in such a setting, and another painting features a coiled rope on the deck of a ship that evokes "the arms of a huge octopus," with its "bound end... coiled so harmlessly [it]

looks like a sea snake ready to strangle its captive.” This sense of increasing despair is underlined by the paintings “The Storm,” in which a couple on a ship struggles against the force of the wind of a gathering storm, as well as “The Secret,” which shows one individual whispering into another’s ear, while the receiver of the message gazes out of the canvas with a look of horror. Both “The Storm” and “The Secret” clearly allude to the increasingly futile political situation facing European Jewry, which seemed at the same time to be inevitable, yet impossible to believe.

Once the historical narrative of the film via Nussbaum’s life reaches the beginning of WWII, the danger manifest in his paintings loses its ambiguity. The film anticipates this shift by moving quickly from an economic discussion of how Nussbaum and his wife (they were married in 1937) were earning money through commercial work prior to the war, to a rapid series of shots of black-and-white paintings that evoke the horror of the Holocaust and WWII – images of individuals with their eyes wide in horror, prison camps and ruined cities, accompanied by sounds of gunfire and explosions. It is this historical moment that marks a paradigmatic shift in Nussbaum’s intentions for his art. The narrator makes this clear over a painting of a weeping woman surrounded by barbed wire as he states that after the declaration of war on Germany, Nussbaum “resolved to use his art to document political events, like a diary.” It is from this point that Nussbaum’s art most clearly “lost its innocence.” For the next several minutes, the paintings in the film emphasize the looming specter of death that Nussbaum perceived in wartime Europe, with paintings like “Prison Yard,” “Organ Grinder” (which features an organ grinder who has a deathlike stare and has ceased to play), “Self-Portrait with Jewish Identity Card” (Nussbaum’s most famous painting that captures his reduction to

an ethnic identity and number under Nazi control), and “The Triumph of Death” (which shows the collapse of icons of Western civilization), all of which convey the “helplessness of waiting for death”

This section on Nussbaum’s art after the beginning of WWII concludes with an abrupt stoppage. When the narrator states that on August 2, 1944, Nussbaum was deported on a train to Auschwitz, the film freezes on an image of a stoplight, then fades to black as the narration indicates that this was also his date of death. The film then features a series of explanatory title cards that detail the post-war history of Nussbaum’s paintings that eventually led to the establishment of a Felix Nussbaum Society in Osnabrück and the museum itself. Rather than the expected closing credits though, the film then cuts from the white title cards on a black screen to the mayor of Osnabrück discussing the museum and its importance as a memorial to the town’s Jewish community that was destroyed in the Holocaust.

While this discussion of the historical trajectory covered in *Felix* may seem rather lengthy given my assertion that the filmic perspective is pretty much guided by this history, it is necessary to underline the distinction between the perspective manifest in Nussbaum’s work and that of the film. Earlier I indicated that Kuper’s perspective is largely absent from *The Fear of Felix Nussbaum*, and I would argue that the historical narrative of the film and its dual conclusions offer a way to consider this absence. The first ending (Nussbaum’s death) and the second ending (the memorialization of him and his art in the Osnabrück museum), as the historical objects of the film, have their meaning implicit in them. The meaning of Nussbaum’s art for the film (as is implied in its title *The Fear of Felix Nussbaum*) is that it documents the increasing threats of Nazism that

culminated in his death. The meaning of the commemoration and museum, as Gary Evans indicates, is that “within Germany today many are committed to memorializing those who perished in the Holocaust.”⁷¹ These two “meanings” are conveyed precisely in the history documented by the film – that is, the Holocaust destroyed Jewish culture and persists as a legacy of destruction for which there is an ethical obligation to confront and remember. In *Felix* itself then, historical facts and meaning are intertwined and thus do not require, or even perhaps preclude an authorial commentary to articulate a meaning beyond that which is conveyed by the history covered in the film. While one could argue that the narrator/guide functions as the film’s perspective, this perspective is fully governed by Nussbaum’s life and art, as it is laid out in the Osnabrück museum. The narrator thus actually serves to call attention to the distance of perspective between the film and its historical object. If *Felix* as a film manifests an approach to the history of the Holocaust through the work of Nussbaum, external commentary is rendered unnecessary by the fact that the history of the Holocaust and that of Nussbaum are interconnected through his murder at the hands of the Nazis.

This distance contrasts somewhat with Kuper’s 1995 film *Shtetl*, which also approaches the past through the mediated perspective of another individual, but contains an indication of Kuper’s authorial presence offering an external commentary on the film’s historical object. *Shtetl* focuses on the work of Canadian folk artist Mayer Kirshenblatt, whose paintings depict the daily life and rituals that he recalls from his childhood in a Polish *shtetl* before the war, creating what Kirshenblatt refers to as a “storehouse of memories...[that] emerged from [his] brush.” Gary Evans rightly observes that the paintings featured in the film point to a “once vivid and vital civilisation

⁷¹ Evans 2011.

[sic],”⁷² featuring nostalgic images like Kirshenblatt’s mother in front of the stove, *seder* dinners, and various occupations in the town (tailors, water-gatherers, fishermen, etc.). Kirshenblatt’s paintings also serve to illustrate Jewish rituals that persisted in the *shtetl*, such as a piece that shows a symbolic transaction of silver between a couple and a rabbi in exchange for a couple’s first-born son, since “first-born males belong to the Lord.”

Yet despite the framework that *Felix* and *Shtetl* share, with both approaching the past in film through the mediation of paintings, the two are quite distinct. First, whereas an unidentified narrator acts as a guide in *Felix*, in *Shtetl*, Kirshenblatt himself provides the narration as he sits behind his easel painting. As Kirsheblatt reflects on life in the *shtetl*, the film’s visuals oscillate between him talking and painting, and the paintings themselves that serve as accompanying illustrations. For instance, when Kirshenblatt reveals that the water-gatherer was one of the lowest positions in the town, the film shows a painting that depicts someone carrying water.

On the one hand, this strategy of having Kirshenblatt narrate his own history in accompaniment to his paintings posits an even greater distance between filmic and pro-filmic perspective than *Felix* due to the lack of a *filmic* narrator. While the narrator/guide of *Felix* is positioned as outside of Nussbaum’s perspective, and its narration is subject to the narrative of Nussbaum’s life and paintings rather than vice versa, the film’s use of an external narrator – not to mention the other individuals that provide pertinent information about the artist – points at least to a mediating perspective that recognizes itself as external to the film’s objects. In other words, the filmic perspective of *Felix* is external, but is self-reflexively articulated as such in the opening moments when the narrator welcomes us to the Felix Nussbaum *Haus*. Such a self-reflexive acknowledgement of

⁷² Evans 2002, 167.

this perspectival externality is largely absent from *Shtetl* as Kirshenblatt himself assumes the narration of his own memory and art. Yet since the film approaches the past *through* Kirshenblatt's perspective, this division between film and historical object is still manifest even if it is less overt than in *Felix*.

On the other hand, an external perspective *does* come into play at the conclusion of *Shtetl*, offering a more active authorial commentary than the passive approach to Nussbaum's art in *Felix*. Towards the end of the film, Kirshenblatt discusses the legend of a rabbi whose soul resided in the attic of the Jewish house of study. According to the legend, the rabbi could be heard beating on the ceiling with his walking stick in an effort to protect the Jewish community in times of peril. At this moment, Kirshenblatt's reflection is accompanied by a ghostly white painting on a black background that features a figure with a stick surrounded by angelic figures. As the film cuts back to Kirshenblatt behind his easel, for the first time in the film he implicitly refers to the Holocaust: "But it was to no avail [the mythical rabbi banging his walking stick on the ceiling], when on October 20, [19]42 the remaining 6000 Jews were driven out of our *shtetl* and taken on a journey of no return." As Kirshenblatt is completing this reflection, he turns away from his easel to the left of the camera, as the film freezes. This freezing strategy is similar to the freeze-frame on a stoplight in *Felix* after the narrator describes Nussbaum's arrival at Auschwitz. Yet unlike *Felix*, the freeze-frame after Kirshenblatt's reference to "a journey of no return" marks an abrupt conclusion to the film as the still image dissolves to the closing credits. This of course contrasts with *Felix* in which the freeze-frame cedes to a series of explanatory title cards before the film shifts to a discussion of the museum's

development. In *Shtetl*, the *film's* ending formally enacts Kirshenblatt's thematic emphasis on the *end* of the Jewish community in his town.

This difference can be read via the different fates of the individuals whose perspectives mediate the approaches to the past in *Felix* and *Shtetl* respectively. As I mentioned above, since Nussbaum perished in the Holocaust, the meaning of the film and the history covered by it are intertwined in the destruction of European Jewry that realized the fear of Felix Nussbaum. With *Shtetl*, this is not the case. Kirshenblatt was not killed in the Holocaust and actually had moved to Canada from Poland in the 1920s, well before the destruction of his *shtetl*. His paintings thus reflect neither the fear nor the growing dread of Nussbaum's, but rather a sense of nostalgia that Kuper links to this inexperience: "[Kirshenblatt's] memories are...in fact more positive than most Jews have of Poland...So when he comes together with Holocaust survivors, they don't have much to talk about. [H]is paintings really are very nostalgic...about the wonderful life that he remembers from his youth. So I went by that [in letting Kirshenblatt emphasize nostalgia] for the majority of the film."⁷³ As such, this nostalgic portrait which comprises virtually the entire film stands in stark contrast to Kirshenblatt's final reflection on the fate of his town's Jews, which the film formally emphasizes through its extremely abrupt ending.

Moreover, while Kirshenblatt's final comment refers to a "journey of no return," his inexperience of this journey makes these words lack the experiential quality of the rest of his "storehouse of memories" of the *shtetl* that is manifest in his paintings. His final words thus come from a different epistemological place than the reflections in the rest of the film. When combined with the abrupt freeze frame that concludes *Shtetl* and

⁷³ Kuper, Interview with author.

underlines the annihilation of Kirshenblatt's community, this ending can be read as an implicit authorial (Kuper's) interjection into the film's historiography.

In his discussion of the film, Gary Evans suggests that what *Shtetl* demonstrates via Kirshenblatt's paintings is not simply the vividness of this civilization and way of life, but that these were annihilated by the Holocaust.⁷⁴ I would thus argue that the thematic commentary of the film lies in the dichotomy between the nostalgia of Kirshenblatt's paintings and the abrupt ending that stops this nostalgia in its tracks. If the *meaning* of *Shtetl* is not simply how Jews lived in Polish *shtetls* before the war, but that these vibrant communities were wiped out, the paintings themselves and Kirshenblatt's pre-war nostalgic memories of his *shtetl* are not enough to convey this. Unlike the death of Nussbaum that exemplifies the genocidal practices of the Nazi regime, Kirshenblatt's self, memories and art in and of themselves leave his *shtetl* (and all of the other *shtetls* that it stands in for) *alive*. By concluding *Shtetl* with such an abrupt ending, the *film* declares the gone-ness of these small communities. This conclusion is thus the moment in which an external, authorial perspective makes an active commentary that is necessary to reinforce a meaning that is intimated by the artist's final words, but troubled by the unequivocally nostalgic quality of his paintings and recollections.

This does not mean that Kuper's style *contradicts* what Kirshenblatt *says* in his final words, but that this moment pales the division between a passive external perspective and the perspective of the film's historical object. *Shtetl*'s abrupt ending is indicative of an active authorial commentary that declares the history intimated by Kirshenblatt paintings as *gone*, not unlike the "gone-ness" manifest in the spaces of the past in the documentaries of return. In other words, at this moment, Kuper assumes the

⁷⁴ Evans 2002, 167.

role of mediator between Kirshenblatt and the Holocaust. Kuper alludes to this specifically when he explains what he perceives his commentative role in the film's ending to be. While *Shtetl*'s predominantly nostalgic style is governed by the positive memories that Kirshenblatt has of his youth in Poland, with the film allowing the artist and his paintings to evoke this themselves, Kuper asserts that, "Where I think I manipulated it somewhat is at the end, in the fact that I brought in the ending...How do you end this? I wanted to make a point that this idyllic life...existed in his imagination or in his memory...[A]nd I wanted to say that it was cut, it was destroyed, by one move, gone."⁷⁵ In short, if the meaning of *Shtetl* is the obliteration of the culture that once persisted across *shtetls* in Poland, this meaning could not come wholly from the perspective of Kirshenblatt's paintings, and is thus provided by Kuper's authorial commentary implicit in the film's conclusion.

This commentary can also be read in the context of historian Hayden White's assertion that an external, mediating perspective is necessary for a historical narrative to be told *as* a narrative, since this perspective must choose and impose an end-point/conclusion upon the history being written.⁷⁶ Again, if the "narrative" of *Shtetl* is the vitality of Jewish civilization in Poland that was destroyed by the Holocaust, Kirshenblatt's account does not convey this. As such, Kuper's authorial subjectivity steps into the film to formally declare the tragic ending of the bucolic narrative intimated by Kirshenblatt's paintings and memories. At the same time though, it is important to stress that while White argues that a mediating perspective is necessary to conclude a historiography since the history being written does not actually *end* at the end of the

⁷⁵ Kuper, Interview with author.

⁷⁶ White 1987, 23.

representation, Kuper's commentary implies precisely this point – the history with which the film concludes (the “journey of no end”) actually *does* mark the end of the history represented in the film (Jewish *shtetls* in Poland).

Of course, Kuper's strategy of approaching the Holocaust through the mediations of others is not unique. For instance, as the previous chapter briefly mentioned, Harry Rasky's documentary *To Mend the World* juxtaposes survivor testimony with images of art created by Holocaust survivors and victims in a manner that places eye-witness accounts and art derived from this witnessing on equal levels of historical utility. And if first-hand testimony purports to bridge the historical gap between experience and inexperience, as the films discussed in the last chapter imply, Gary Evans suggests that the artistic forms conveyed alongside these testimonies in Rasky's film perform a similar process of experiential transmission. “These images,” Evans writes, “are probably the closest a viewer will ever come to the actual concentration camp experience.”⁷⁷ Rasky himself had a grandiose vision that this film could transmit the Holocaust to the public on a massive scale. In an internal memo dated October 17, 1986 to Hugh Gauntlett, CBC's Area Head for TV Arts, Music and Science, Rasky emphasizes that with *To Mend the World*, “There is the real possibility here of the CBC being involved with a major international event. The ecumenical nature of the film makes it universal.” In this memo, Rasky also indicates that his hope is to have the film “run simultaneously internationally on television,” as well as to link it with “Odeon-Cineplex [sic], which has

⁷⁷ Evans 2002, 159.

become the largest theatre owner in North America [on] April 26 [1987], which is called *Yom Hashoa* [sic], which means Day of the Holocaust.”⁷⁸

Ultimately, these particular plans to disseminate the film on such a broad scale did not come to fruition. However, Rasky’s conception of *Mend* being able to carry the message of the Holocaust universally through a dualistic approach of testimony and art, alongside Evans’ admiration for the film’s ability to get a viewer “closest” to the “actual concentration camp experience,” suggest that the strategy of “double-mediation” can serve to collapse the barrier of experience that is established in the films discussed in Chapter One, problematized in the films of Chapters Two and Three, and sought to be resolved in the films of Chapters Four and Five.

Yet Kuper’s work challenges this assumption. His repeated choice to approach the Holocaust in his films from external perspectives, even those that contain glimpses of his autobiographical experiences like *Children of the Storm* and *Who Was Jerzy Kosinski?*, is striking precisely since he, as a survivor himself, would seem to have access to the Holocaust experience directly, and thus not require the “bridging” of history putatively afforded by the mediations of *To Mend the World* or the experiential appropriation of the pedagogical/cross-generational documentaries. And it is in this specular distance (to invoke Ruth Leys) constructed in Kuper’s work between his filmic treatment of the Holocaust’s history and the object of his representation (broadly speaking, the Holocaust itself) that the delineation between experience and inexperience collapses completely as the barrier to the past is revealed to be manifest *within* an experiential perspective. In other words, by considering Kuper’s films, the barrier surrounding the Holocaust expands from one derived by a delineation between

⁷⁸ This letter is available in the Harry Rasky collection at the York University Archives.

experience and inexperience, which posits the Holocaust as absent *outside* of experience, to one derived by a perpetual absence that renders the event unknowable and inaccessible *everywhere*, in *spite* of experience.

This dissertation has thus breached an analytical path whereby barriers around the Holocaust gradually become increasingly microcosmic as its absence becomes increasingly macrocosmic. I began with a broad historical consideration of the barriers between Canada and the Holocaust, which informed the next focus - barriers on an interpersonal level within sociopolitical and familial contexts, and the internal and invisible quality of the experience that informs these barriers. I then sought to consider films that allude to the *collapse* this barrier by emphasizing the shared quality of the past amongst survivors, and by placing those that experienced the Holocaust back in the spaces of their pasts, as well as by emphasizing the possibility (or hope?) of transferring experiential perspective to an inexperienced generation, thus blurring the line between first- and second-hand witnesses. Finally in the present chapter I considered this barrier as localized within an individual, collapsed within a singular person while still persisting *as* a barrier despite a lived experiential connection to the Holocaust.

The key to this trajectory is that the barriers of *and* in experience do not simply place the present at a linear, continuous temporal distance from the past, but render the past perpetually *absent*. In this sense, the barrier to the Holocaust that is embodied between Kuper as the director of *Children of the Storm* and Kuper as a testifier in *Children of the Storm* is qualitatively similar to the barrier between Charlie Grant in Austria and the paradise of Canada that he is aiming to secure entry to for his friends. Just as the barrier between the Holocaust and Canada historically was one not simply

constituted by spatial distance, but by bureaucratic decisions that enforced and ensured this distance, so too is the relationship between the Holocaust witness looking back upon himself or herself in the past and the self being looked back upon not simply constituted by temporal distance, but by a cognitive barrier that renders the past perpetually absent from the perspective of the present.

What Kuper's films thus emphasize is a mode of historiography that aims not to reconstitute an irretrievable past, but reflect on its absence, on the fact that the past is only available to us through mediation – in other words, not the way it was, but, like I argued in relation to *Warsaw*, “the-way-it-was-ness.” Such frameworks are of course encouraged in the writings of Lyotard and Nora, and have been taken up in historiography in the work on “historical distance” by Mark Phillips, which explores how “historical accounts not only function at a received distance from events; they also reconstruct and reshape that distance in a variety of ways that bear upon every aspect of our view to the past” by mediating the past formally, affectively, cognitively, and ideologically.⁷⁹ Yet despite these inclinations, and despite what I see as the Holocaust's *central* role in illuminating such historiographic limitations, the popular emphasis on historical *authenticity* in relation to the Holocaust leaves only two mutually exclusive options upon the eventual demise of first-hand witnesses, which both Kertész and Walker imply (albeit to different ends) - *either* feigned historical witnesses or fairy-tales.

Kuper's work reminds us that the past is always already historically absent, and thus requires a historiographic strategy that can interrogate this. In this sense, Kuper's oeuvre not only provides a retrospective reflection on those films analyzed in the first five chapters of this dissertation, but informs the entire approach towards Canada's

⁷⁹ Mark Phillips, “Distance and Historical Representation,” *History Workshop Journal* 57 (2004): 125.

Holocaust cinema adopted by this project, which emphasizes the centrality in this corpus of experiential barriers that posit the Holocaust as absent. As such, while I would argue that this approach is usefully illuminated by the corpus's Canadian national context, and the ability of the cinematic medium to call attention to that which is not there in a subtle manner, I also contend that this framework can point to alternate modes of Holocaust history, Holocaust representation, and Holocaust criticism in other (or trans-) national contexts and in other media forms. In other words, just as this dissertation began by emphasizing "unbridgeable history" as a heuristic to analyze Canada's Holocaust cinema rather than treating the national context as a diagnostic end, so too do I hope that the representational absence of the Holocaust, which is delineated via experiential barriers in this corpus and inscribed within the Holocaust experience in Kuper's work specifically, can point towards new directions in scholarship on both Holocaust representation (including films) *and* Canadian cinema.

Conclusion

Beyond the “Canadian” of Canada’s Holocaust Cinema

The natural inclination when approaching a project such as this – one devoted to a specific national corpus like “Canadian Holocaust Cinema” – is to ask, is there anything about these films that makes them “distinctly Canadian”? Indeed, variations of this inquiry have governed Canadian film scholarship virtually since its beginning as a cogent area of inquiry in the mid-1960s, when Peter Harcourt published his essay, “The Innocent Eye: An Aspect of the Work of the National Film Board of Canada.” In this piece, Harcourt wrestles with the quality of “suspended judgment” that he finds in the films produced by the NFB’s Unit B, and suggests that there is “something very Canadian in all this.” Harcourt goes on to attempt to define this link between “Canadianness” and the suspended judgment in these films by localizing it within the pragmatic social reality of living in Canada: “Conditions in North America, and particularly Canada, can allow a man to spend an easy, comfortable life without great physical hardship; and if he is a serious person, offer him the facilities to contemplate the Great Problems of our Age...It is essentially a question for the leisured, unharassed, middle-class culture.”¹

In his 1994 article, “In Our Own Eyes: The Canonizing of Canadian Film,” Peter Morris takes a retrospective look back at the history of Canadian film scholarship, and identifies within this history the centrality of such an “assumption of nationalism.” Morris argues, “Since the late sixties it has been a given premise that Canadian film criticism should be primarily engaged with elucidating the distinctiveness of Canadian

¹ Peter Harcourt, “The Innocent Eye: An Aspect of the Work of the National Film Board of Canada,” in *Canadian Film Reader*, ed. Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Limited, 1977), 72-73.

cinema as, precisely, Canadian.”² Granted, more recent work has shied away from the rather nebulous notion of “Canadianness” that Harcourt contemplates in “The Innocent Eye,” which is also evident in Robert Fothergill’s colonialist-psychoanalytic explanation of the radically inadequate male protagonist in Canadian cinema. However, I would argue that a concern with articulating a Canadian specificity persists in scholarship like that of Ramsay, Gittings and Chang, all of whom emphasize how Canadian cinema reveals and manifests social issues and inequalities that mirror those that consist in Canadian society.

The Introduction framed the nationalist emphasis of such scholarship by suggesting that when Canadian films are written about, they are usually situated within a “Canadian-cinema” context. In other words, the fact that they are *Canadian* films is central to how they are analyzed. The present project is of course guilty to a certain extent of perpetuating this tradition in its very decision to constitute a corpus of “Canadian Holocaust cinema.” Yet at the same time, I have strived to contextualize the films comprising this corpus in a manner that extends beyond questions of how Canadian Holocaust films evoke a decidedly “Canadian” perspective. My reasons for this are two-fold. First, after having become thoroughly familiar with Canadian film scholarship through my doctoral studies, I decided that the discourse did not require another piece in which – to paraphrase Morris – the “nationalist assumption” was central. Second, as I watched these films, I began to believe that making their national specificity the *primary* focus of this project would short-change this diverse corpus, stripping from it the productive value that it can hold for scholarship beyond the rubric of “Canadian films.”

² Peter Morris, “In Our Own Eyes: The Canonizing of Canadian Film,” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 3.1 (Spring 1994): 32.

This is not to say that the fact that this corpus is Canadian is unimportant. Of course, the historical information conveyed in films like *Canada at War* or *Charlie Grant's War* provide a productive framework for reading films whose Canadian specificity is less overt – those like *Visualizing Memory*, *Stille*, or Kuper's *Warsaw*, *Shtetl* and *Felix*. But as the Introduction stressed, one of the goals of this study was to use this national context as a way *into* analysis rather than a diagnostic end point. As such, while I began this dissertation by considering how the *historical* absence of the Holocaust is particularly (although not exclusively) germane to a Canadian context, the centrality of this national specificity to my analysis began to pale as the chapters progressed, the barriers of experience became smaller, and the questions regarding the absence of the Holocaust became more universal. And I would argue it is when the experiential barriers begin to move away from the decidedly Canadian socio-political ones that are so important in films like *Charlie Grant's War*, *Children of the Storm*, and *Two Men*, that Canada's Holocaust cinema points to questions regarding historical representation and memory that are more productive than whether or not these films reveal or embody some nebulous concept that can be called "Canadianness."

Of course, my contextualization of these films as such invariably suffers from some limitations. First, my decision to read these films through a heuristic of unbridgeable barriers involves an inevitable process of selection that excludes certain films about the Holocaust that have been produced in Canada. In other words, this analysis is not an exhaustive survey of *every* film produced in Canada or with significant Canadian contributions (such as co-productions). My response to this limitation is that this corpus in its entirety is simply too varied and numerous to be included in a single

study, without the analysis becoming a chronological history of productions that lacks a clear critical impetus - like Evans' "Vision and Revision." Accordingly, I opted to select films that my heuristic approach could productively analyze in (I hope) a more interesting manner than simply incorporating *every* film that may vaguely fit under the rubric of "Canadian Holocaust cinema" for the purposes of categorical completion.³ My hope is that while I have not included *every* Canadian Holocaust film in this project, the extensive (possibly excessive) number of films that I *have* discussed – which comprises the vast majority of this invisible corpus - carries with it a justification that my framework offers a valid and productive analytical strategy.⁴

The second potential limitation of this piece is that in my concern with Canadian Holocaust *films*, I have overlooked *other* aspects of Holocaust representation in Canada. For instance, while I refer to Canadian Holocaust historiography, literature, and plays, as well as the Holocaust in the Canadian media in the Introduction, this brief treatment may imply an overstatement of importance (or even the aesthetic value) of the cinematic case. In fact, in one workshop presentation that I gave while in the beginning stages of this project, a number of people suggested that I needed to devote more attention to Mordecai Richler or Leonard Cohen, and even that I should be careful not to rely too heavily on

³ For example, the CBS miniseries *Hitler: The Rise of Evil* (Christian Duguay, 2003) was partially funded by the Canadian production company Alliance Atlantis, and could thus arguably be considered a Canadian Holocaust film. But including this biographical portrayal of Hitler in this dissertation would have contributed no additional value to its consideration of experiential barriers in Canada's Holocaust Cinema.

⁴ Of the 64 titles listed in Evans' 2007 filmography, this project touches on 38 of them. It also analyzes several films that are not included in the filmography, including *Emotional Arithmetic*, *Fugitive Pieces*, and *Raymond Klibansky: From Philosophy to Life*. Moreover, a number of Canadian films that I chose not to discuss *could* fit in to my framework, but would have required that less attention be paid to films that corresponded to it more productively. For instance, *Web of War* (Brian McKenna, 1995) follows three Canadian soldiers "who return to Europe and recount the story of Canadians and Poles who fought alongside each other" during WWII.⁴ As such, this film could have been included in Chapter One's focus on Canada's WWII history, but I opted to focus instead on *The Lucky Ones*, as it places the experiences of Canadian soldiers as external to the concentration camp universe, which corresponds closely to the experiential barriers heuristic.

textual analysis since (to paraphrase) “its not like these are films by Alain Resnais.”

Perhaps it is a testament to my stubbornness that these responses only made me increasingly determined to centralize the films themselves in this study. After all, in Brenner’s consideration of the Holocaust in the writings of Richler, she does not concern herself with Canadian Holocaust films. Similarly, Glaap does not temper his consideration of Canadian plays on the Holocaust by reflecting on the theatrical nature of *The Quarrel*’s two-person dialogue. As such, I felt that deflecting attention *away* from the films would implicitly concede that somehow they are intrinsically unworthy of concerted attention. Such an assumption at the very least betrays a blatant example of critical elitism. Moreover, after several years of being immersed in cinematic representations of the Holocaust, I would argue that films like *Memorandum*, *The Quarrel*, and *Two Men* are every bit as thought-provoking as *Night and Fog* and *Shoah*.

As such, while there are certain limitations to my framework, I stand by the assertion that the centrality of the Holocaust’s absence in these films – be it historical and spatial absence from Canada, temporal absence from the present, or cognitive absence from those who lived through the Holocaust - illuminates critical questions regarding what it means to represent the historical past. Of course, these questions go beyond both the Canadian specificity of the corpus, as well as the question of cinematic representation. I hope that the centrifugal trajectory of my analysis (i.e. moving from Canadian-specific questions to broader issues regarding historical representation) can provide a base for future work that points *outwards*, away from *only* or *primarily* reading these films as first and foremost “Canadian” products.

This “outwards” movement of course necessitates a certain amount of contemplation on what sort of future work might be done based on the present analysis. At the most basic level, since the films discussed here had virtually no serious attention paid previously to them, one possibility is that some may find inclusion in future analyses, be they devoted to Canadian films, Holocaust films, or perhaps even those specifically devoted to neither – for example, a consideration of Kuper’s *Felix* in a study of documentary narratology.

In addition, given the vast number of films treated thus far, there is more work to be done in terms of extensive study of individual pieces. Donald Brittain and John Spotton’s *Memorandum* is one title in particular demands more attention than it is given here. Indeed, my brief treatment of the film in Chapters Three and Four is a testament to the fact that its evocation of invisible barriers is possibly not the most productive avenue by which to illuminate the complexity of its cinematic historiography. Similarly, a more sustained consideration of Kuper’s transmedia Holocaust representation, complemented by the vast resources in the Jack Kuper collection at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Resource Center at Boston University, would make a valuable project all on its own.

Finally, my construction of a heuristic to read an un-examined Holocaust film corpus can potentially pave the way for considerations of similarly invisible collections. With this in mind I must stress that I am not suggesting that Canadian Holocaust films are necessarily *unique* in their tendency to approach the Holocaust by emphasizing its absence, rather than aiming to represent a specific national history (such as those European films referred to in the Introduction), or by deflecting the problem of historical barriers by “assimilating” history into a foreign national context (such as the case of the

Holocaust's "Americanization"). It may very well be that nations that had a similar historical barrier to the Holocaust as Canada contain an unexamined Holocaust film corpus that wrestles with the problematic of the event's absence, or adopt an altogether different approach to this history.

With this in mind, a brief reflection on the case of Australia may be instructive, and point towards the possibility of a project with concerns similar to this one, but framed by an alternate national context. Like Canada, Australia fought in WWII under the British Commonwealth, but was geographically distant from the horrors of the Holocaust. Like Canada, immigration barriers made the possibility of escape to Australia for European Jews remote,⁵ and also like Canada, in the post-war period, Holocaust survivors immigrated to and have been instrumental in the development Holocaust remembrance in Australia. As such, it is possible that within Australian national cinema, there is a collection of Holocaust films that wrestle with the legacy of the event in a manner that is similar to the experiential barriers in the Canadian case.

As far as I am aware, there has been no concerted study of Holocaust films in Australia. However, just as Franklin Bialystok's emphasis in *Delayed Impact* on barriers between Holocaust survivors and their surroundings in Canada has been essential to my reading of Canada's Holocaust films, so too do Judith E. Berman and Avril Alba posit intellectual histories of the Holocaust in Australia that *may* provide a framework for

⁵ As Paul R. Bartrop notes for instance, "Between 1933 and 1945 the Australian government pursued a policy of restricted entry towards Jewish refugees, in line with what it believed were the wishes of the Australian people." This sentiment of course closely resembles the attitude of the Canadian government towards Jewish immigration before and during WWII that was informed by anti-Semitism in the body politic, as I discussed in Chapter One. See Paul R. Bartrop, "Indifference and Inconvenience: Jewish Refugees and Australia, 1933-45," in *False Havens: The British Empire and the Holocaust*, ed. Paul R. Bartrop (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1995), 127. For a full-length study devoted to the historical relationship between Australia and the Holocaust, see Bartrop's *Australia and the Holocaust 1933-45* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1994).

contextualizing a potential Holocaust film corpus in that nation. In *Holocaust Remembrance in Australian Jewish Communities 1945-2000* for instance, Berman stresses not the problem of assimilating a foreign “ethnic memory” into a dominant culture – the problem that underlies Bialystok’s analysis of the Canadian case – but rather the centrality of Judaism in Holocaust commemoration in Australia. In the introductory chapter, Berman argues that before she can even begin to analyze actual instances of Holocaust memorialization in Australia, it is “first necessary to set the subject of public forms of Holocaust in Australia in the context of the growth of an Australian Jewish population.”⁶ Moreover, she explains that in the Australian context, the centrality of Jewish involvement in Holocaust commemoration necessitated a certain “inward-looking orientation [that] was very significant for the nature of Holocaust remembrance in Australian Jewish communities. Public institutional forms for Holocaust remembrance have been intricately connected to sustaining Jewish unity and identity, factors perceived as crucial to ensuring Jewish survival in the post-Holocaust era.”⁷

Avril Alba makes a similar observation about the importance of a Judaic perspective in Australian Holocaust museums, even if she is wary that the “inward-looking orientation” of decidedly Jewish Holocaust memorialization described by Berman “risks rendering Holocaust memory in Australian museums a solely ‘internal’ Jewish concern.”⁸ Such a tendency, according to Alba, threatens to relegate “Holocaust memory housed in Australian Holocaust museums to the periphery of [non-Jewish]

⁶ Judith E. Berman, *Holocaust Remembrance in Australian Jewish Communities 1945-2000* (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2001), 4-5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸ Avril Alba, “Displaying the Sacred: Australian Holocaust Memorials in Public Life,” *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 13.2-3 (Autumn/Winter 2007): 151. For her specific response to Berman’s contention that universalizing the Holocaust threatens to deflect attention from the destruction of European Jewry, see Alba, 165.

Australian public life.”⁹ While Alba acknowledges that Holocaust commemoration in Australia has expanded into institutions that are *open* to the public (i.e. not just Jews), these institutions still emphasize a sacralization of the Holocaust that “originate[s] within the Jewish tradition.” Moreover, she emphasizes that while “Holocaust museums and memorials [abroad] are seldom solely Jewish –in fact, more often than not they are funded and run by state authorities – in Australia, they were founded and funded by Jewish survivors as centres for Holocaust research and remembrance.”¹⁰

Alba’s implication that this sacralization of Judaic origin may contain a quality particularly germane to Holocaust commemoration in Australia is expanded in a 2009 conference paper entitled “Holocaust Museums: Sacred Memory in Secular Space,” a comparative case study of the Sydney Jewish Museum and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. In this paper, Alba argues that the former institution presents the Holocaust through a specifically Jewish frame of reference, while the latter aims to universalize the Holocaust and its lessons to make it applicable to a broad, vastly non-Jewish public. Alba also contends that this distinction derives from the grassroots involvement in Australian Holocaust commemoration by the domestic Jewish community, including survivors. The *public* funds that lay behind the development of the American institution make the museum “property” of the public beyond the Jewish community, which necessitates a universalized treatment of the Holocaust. The decidedly grassroots Jewish funding behind Australian museums on the other hand tends to ensure that the Holocaust will be presented as first and foremost a Jewish concern, and

⁹ Ibid., 170.

¹⁰ Ibid., 152.

that the Judeo-specificity of its meaning will not be effaced.¹¹ As such, between Berman's and Alba's analyses one can see the potential for an approach to the question of Australian Holocaust representation that differs *both* from the experiential barriers and the assimilative universalization of the Canadian and American cases respectively.

Granted, my contention that there "may" be such a Holocaust film corpus in Australia is speculative. My defense in this regard is that it was time-consuming enough to find the films for *this* project, which have been produced in the national context in which I reside (and which in large part have been funded by public tax dollars).¹² At this point then, all I can do is hope that this project can point to the possibility of film corpuses from nations that are not normally associated with the "Holocaust film" genre, which may potentially in turn point to new ways of re-framing questions of Holocaust representation. But the first step towards being able to utilize such films in an analytical capacity is to establish them within a discursive framework. Of course, that which is adopted in this project is only *my* framework. Future scholars on Canadian Holocaust films may poke holes in my heuristic of unbridgeable barriers, or perhaps there will be a wave of Canadian Holocaust films that thematically do away with the problem of the Holocaust's absence, thus rendering my analysis dated and limited in its longevity. But of course, these potential challenges are beyond my control. If this project is successful

¹¹ Avril Alba, "Holocaust Museums: Sacred Memory in Secular Space, Comparative Case Study: The Sydney Jewish Museum and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum" (paper presented at the International Graduate Students' Conference for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Worcester, Massachusetts, April 26-29, 2009). See also Note 27 in the Introduction.

¹² For instance, the CBC refused to allow me to see a version of *Two Men*, even after the Carleton University library appealed on my behalf, and suggested to them that I could travel to Toronto to view it onsite. As it turns out, I was only able to find this film – one obviously central to my "unbridgeable barriers" heuristic – as a VHS recording of the broadcast in the collection of the Library and Media Centre of the Centre for Jewish Education in Toronto.

in nothing more than establishing Canada's Holocaust films in a public discourse (either scholarly or general), it will have accomplished one of its central goals.

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