



THE TRAIN JOURNEY

*Transit, Captivity, and Witnessing
in the Holocaust*

SIMONE GIGLIOTTI

THE TRAIN JOURNEY

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The Train Journey: Transit, Captivity, and Witnessing in the Holocaust

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One might think that writing a book on train journeys in the Holocaust would be a reliable conversation stopper. That has not been the case. Who would have that the trauma of “cattle cars” would be enduringly fascinating and appealing to so many different people? The anecdotal history behind the history of this book remains unwritten. For now.

Colleagues from universities in Australia were the first audiences for the topic of train journeys. I owe Mark Baker, Tony Barta, Krystyna Duszniak, Donna-Lee Frieze, Roger Hillman, Konrad Kwiet, and Steven Welch much gratitude for their advice and input on the themes of trains, survivors, and writing. Tony Barta and Roger Hillman were particularly vigilant in tracking the book’s progress once I was immersed in writing it, and both read draft chapters, as did Omer Bartov, Berel Lang, Dirk Moses, and Alan Rosen. I am very grateful to all of them for their detailed commentary and encouragement.

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In August 2002, I took up a temporary appointment at the University of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica. I could not have anticipated a more profound experience of ambivalence and ultimately, growth and professional reorientation of my interests. Jamaica has complex and fascinating histories of displacement and dispossession, histories that were inevitably recalled in the classroom whenever I taught the Holocaust to Caribbean students. James Robertson and Swithin Wilmot were welcoming and generous colleagues,

and were very supportive of my research into the transit histories of German and Jewish refugees in the region.

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The publication of this book concludes a journey that began in Melbourne, Australia, and ends in Wellington, New Zealand. The latter is a place that does not typically feature as a home for Holocaust refugees and survivors. On occasion, the country’s European Jewish refugee history resurfaces, as do its remaining survivors. In writing this book, I have been inspired by three women in the Wellington Jewish community—Hanka Pressburg, Clare Winter, and Inge Woolf.

INTRODUCTION

A Hidden Holocaust in Trains

“Move over. Make room for the others!” We squeezed and crushed in as if we were animals. A man with only one leg cried out in agony and his horrified wife pleaded with us not to press against him. We traveled in the dark crush for a long, long time. No air. No food. People urinating continuously in the latrines. Then the shriek. Over the moans and helpless little cries, there rose a piercing scream I shall never forget. From a woman on the floor beneath the small, barred window came the horrifying scream. She held her head in both her hands and then we who were close by saw the words scratched in tiny letters: “last transport went to Auschwitz.”¹

When we were marched out to the cattle trains, you have a cattle train in the Washington museum, I never really knew what the dimensions were, nobody could tell me, it’s about three quarters the size of a regular tour bus ... there were about 170 people packed into this cattle car. At first some people wanted to prevent the panic, to tell people, “look people, organize, stand up, there is no room for everyone to sit” ... but it didn’t work, people were in a panic, the young and strong were standing at the windows, blocking whatever air there was.²

Even today freight cars give me bad vibes. It is customary to call them cattle cars, as if the proper way to transport animals is by terrorizing and overcrowding them. Of course that happens, but we shouldn’t talk as if it is the norm, as if abuse were the only option in treating animals. In any case, the problem with the transport from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz wasn’t that cattle or freight cars are not meant for transporting people; the problem was not the type of car or wagon, but that it was so overcrowded ... On the road to Auschwitz, we were trapped like rats.³

Kay Gundel, Anna Heilman, and Ruth Klüger—three women, three journeys, and indelible memories of captivity. There are countless stories about the horrors of deportation trains that were critical in the Final Solution, the Nazi euphemism for the mass murder of European Jewry during World War II. Irrespective of their origin of deportation, whether from

Notes for this chapter begin on page 29.

Warsaw, Drancy, Salonica, or Westerbork, former deportees recall resoundingly similar experiences. Deceived into believing that deportation promised survival, seduced by the tantalizing lure of food, violently grabbed and beaten in houses and on streets, intimidated by death threats, volunteering to prevent the break up of their families, desperate to leave the ghetto—an estimated three million Jewish deportees were forced into conditions that Gundel, Heilman, and Klüger describe so vividly. They were transported in freight cars to the camps in the “East”: Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz, and Majdanek. Only thousands survived the destinations of those deportation trains, and fewer still to tell their stories.

Deportation transports by train were experiential breaks from the ghettos and camps, which scholars have studied as the principal locations of victims’ suffering and memory.⁴ The conditions in trains inflicted one of the most intense bodily assaults for Jewish victims under the Nazi regime that survivors have commonly described as a “cattle car” experience.⁵ Their debilitating effects were concealed behind the Nazi propaganda image of trains in constant and circuitous motion to different wartime destinations. Deliberately omitted from this vision was the hidden struggle of deportees. This struggle placed them between life and death moments: overcrowding, unwanted touch, unexpectedly erotic moments, shame, nakedness, starvation, insanity, death, and affirmations of human will. Despite the surfeit of references to deportation train journeys in testimonies and postwar culture, scholars have made little effort to, figuratively speaking, enter the cattle cars, sit with the stories, and find a place for them in the history of victims’ suffering during the Holocaust. This book seeks to be a corrective of this oversight.

The book’s main argument is that survivor testimonies of this experience provide a portal to a hidden Holocaust inside trains. They are the victims’ history of Nazi deportation policy, which represented the political immobilization of personal mobility. This policy and project of forced relocations identified Jews as deportable, administered them as “travelers,” and transported them as freight. The victims’ history of deportation can also be interpreted in its comparative and conceptual potential. I read deportation’s trauma as a sensory and embodied history of train experiences that radicalizes nineteenth-century responses to train transit. These responses were grounded in spatial and somatic trauma. They included changes to perception, distancing from the natural world, and sensorial disconnection from landscapes because of mechanized transit. In their political impact, deportation train journeys during the Holocaust are a grim testament to modern state-sponsored practices of isolation, exclusion, and ethnic cleansing. Deportations during the Holocaust can also be interpreted as a critical part of Jewish histories of transit and immobility.

My analysis of the three stages of deportation—departure, the train journey, and arrival at the camps—aspire to other interventions. I argue for renewed attention to the visual and embodied dimensions of survivor experiences, what I have termed “sensory witnessing.” Sensory witnessing was foregrounded in Terrence Des Pres’s 1976 classic study *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*. However, with the exception of one chapter on “excremental assault,” little critical attention has been paid to the sensory dimensions of experience and memory during the Holocaust. Des Pres confined his analysis of sensory trauma to the concentration camps, although he acknowledged excremental assault’s preparatory work of defilement in the “locked boxcars, crossing Europe to the camps in Poland.”⁶ He argued that in the camps, the smell of and closeness to excrement shifted from an imaginary metaphor of symbolic stain to a persistently inhaled evil: “When civilisation breaks down, as it did in the concentration camps, the ‘symbolic stain’ becomes a condition of literal defilement; and evil becomes that which causes real ‘loss of the personal core of one’s being.’ In extremity, man is stripped of his expanded spiritual identity.”⁷ Des Pres’s argument has an equally valid predecessor in the experience of deportation trains, where the unmaking of bodies, particularly through excremental assault, exposed a profound crisis of witnessing.

An interpretation of immobilized bodies in trains also opens up discussion about the sensory foundations of witnessing in confined space, and the utility of emotion in writing intimate histories of experience. I examine the foundations of objective and subjective positions in relation to historical representation as categorized by Robert Eaglestone, who offered a binary view of truth claims. He argued that one understanding of truth is comprehensive and positivist, establishing a link to factual, empirical events, while the other is existential, concerned with ethics, and “how the world is for us.”⁸ My reading of deportation as a victims’ history intends to reveal an existential truth that is a counternarrative to historical works, which have examined deportation from the perpetrators’ perspective. Entering the deportation trains challenges the long-standing scholarly preoccupation with deportation as a narrative of clinical actions—a bureaucratic inventory of timetables, deliveries, procedures, and traffic management. This scholarly approach has examined European-wide policies of deportation, the timing of its implementation as a product of Nazi decision making for the Final Solution, and the men responsible for deportation’s administration and implementation, such as Adolf Eichmann. But to what extent do experiential and empirical truths converge? What deportation meant to the Nazis who conceived it, to the bureaucrats and officials who administered it, and to its immobile victims cannot be reconciled, yet the relationship of cause and effect is not exclusive or isolated as a study of perpetrator-victim

relations. Testimonies of deportation transit reveal an intimate, disturbing, and taboo-breaking episode in the history of victims' suffering during the Holocaust. The terrorizing impact on deportees of compressed space and indeterminate journeying was not unknown to the bureaucrats. Their job was to actively and knowingly collude in the production of false truths and destinations, and to present these transports in records and to the victims as resettlement.

Resettlement—the ruse for the mass deportation of Jews from ghettos and transit camps—was crucial in the commission of the Final Solution. Deportations represented a critical application of resources and transport to the murderous intention already in practice in Nazi policy. Deportations intensified the experience of immobility that was initiated when the Nazi regime came to power in January 1933, and introduced laws and measures that moved progressively from social to physical attacks: segregation, expulsion, relocation, and murder. Deportation was the critical transition from relocation to murder. Between October 1941 and October 1944, an estimated three million Jews were deported from ghettos and transit camps across Europe to the extermination camps at Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz and Majdanek.⁹ These numbers represent half of the total number of Jewish deaths under the Nazi regime.¹⁰

An interpretation of victims' responses to deportation is critical in understanding the direct impacts of Nazi policy as it was formulated by bureaucrats in Berlin and implemented in ghettos, towns, and locations far removed from the administrative center. I examine perpetrator-victim relations through deportation policy's sustained effects on the body, self-image, and witnessing capacities of deportees. A close reading of testimonies reveals the factors that shaped victims' representations of their persecutors during this forced relocation. The interpretive possibilities of a sensory history of deportation, however, are not limited to the victims. As deportees commonly reported, roundups for deportation, surveillance of deportees in transit, and unloading at the camps, were accompanied by deliberate and random acts of perpetrator violence, abuse, and killing. This behavior is frequently repressed in euphemistic language or deliberately unrecorded in bureaucratic documentation.

Deportation testimonies are rebuttals to the image of resettlement. The initial push into the carriage, the rush for sitting and standing space, the train's unconfirmed destination, the compression of bodies, and the violation of social boundaries were nothing compared to the overpowering assault of excrement, urine, and vomit, and the dearth of water and food. I provide a close reading of deportees' testimonies by using Clifford Geertz's method of "thick description." Espousing the virtues of a semiotic approach, Geertz commented that "to look at the symbolic dimensions of social action ... is

not to turn away from the existential dilemmas of life for some empyrean realm of de-emotionalized forms; it is to plunge into the midst of them.”¹¹ A study of deportation transit telescopes the dimensions of violence and violating actions that are allowed and disallowed when civilization breaks down. But to which history or literature of witness do testimonies of deportation belong, given that transit has no particular or constant place, but is rather a cumulative itinerary of landscapes and traumatic geographies?

Testimonies of deportation have not been extensively utilized by historians, and they have also been overlooked by scholars seemingly committed to interpreting victims’ experiences. This neglect is in contrast to the scholarly investigation of ghettoization and camp experiences. Despite the enormity of the task, and the incompleteness of remaining archival records, historians have produced comprehensive inventories and histories of deported national communities. Alongside historical narratives about the administration of deportation, the victims have been recorded or profiled in terms of origin, the date of deportation, convoy number, and destination. Institutional research into deported individuals and communities and their fates is ongoing,¹² with published works including Serge Klarsfeld’s *Mémorial de la déportation des juifs de France* and *Mémorial de la déportation des juifs de Belgique*, Michael Molho’s chronicle of the persecution of Greek Jewry, *In memoriam: hommage aux victimes juives des Nazis En Grèce*, and Alfred Gottwaldt and Diana Schulle’s *Die “Judendeportationen” aus dem Deutschen Reich 1941–1945: Ein kommentierte Chronologie*.¹³

Historians’ attention to deportations of persecuted groups under the Nazi regime has not produced equivalent focus on its explicitly direct impact: a focus on deportation as a victims’ history.¹⁴ The data of this history are available in the form of wartime letters, reports, postwar oral and video testimonies, unpublished and published memoirs, and war crimes trials. When Holocaust survivors have been asked to testify about their experiences, particularly in war crimes trials, considerable tensions have emerged between the empirical truths historians are seeking to validate and the truths witnesses are able to tell. For example, in the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem, prosecutors attempted to link victims’ trauma to perpetrator documents, including those relating to timetabling, competing traffic, provisions for the journey, and euphemistic language about resettlement that, for the most part, were seen to typify bureaucratic communications on deportation. Yet, survivor testimony often failed to meet the evidentiary standards of a legal, documentary truth.¹⁵ This clash of truths is evident in the following exchange between the Attorney General and Israel Gutman—eminent historian, participant, and chronicler of the Warsaw Ghetto resistance—who testified about his deportation to Majdanek:¹⁶

Attorney General: How many people were there in that transport?

Gutman: I cannot state numbers. I can only say it was actually impossible to stand up in the freight car ... [t]he congestion was so great. It was one block of human beings. And when members of families lost contact with one another in this dense crowd, they were unable to find one another again.

Numbers were not Gutman's concern. It was the crowd, the memory of suffering deportees.

Experiences of deportation, such as Gutman's, have received passing attention in postwar culture. References to deportation often ignored the inside-the-train experience, and instead suggested its trauma through references to the physical infrastructure of railway travel, such as departure platforms, train stations, and train tracks, with arrival at camps as the fatal and geographical core of the Holocaust. The connotation of finality in these references is hardly surprising given the historical and cultural ubiquity of the camps as the murderous center of the Nazi regime. The objectification of trains as vehicles to the camps in these references appears to validate Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi's description of the Holocaust trains as an icon for "post-Holocaust metonymy of collective doom and traumatic identification."¹⁷ This feeling of doom is recalled by Primo Levi: "almost always, at the beginning of the memory sequence, stands the train which marked the departure towards the unknown not only for chronological reasons but also for the gratuitous cruelty with which those (otherwise innocuous) convoys of ordinary freight cars were employed for extraordinary purposes."¹⁸ The Holocaust train resonates in testimonies, literature, and visual culture as the vehicle to a fatal destination, rather than mobile residence to a life-threatening compression that both prepared deportees for, and disconnected them, from the camp world.

The experiential trauma of deportation train journeys has crossed genres, languages, and generations. The best-known accounts that were translated into English include Elie Wiesel's journeys in *Night*, Primo Levi's journey from Italy to Auschwitz in *If This Is a Man*, Charlotte Delbo's "Arrivals, Departures," which depicts the station as a theatre for abandoned travelers, and her *Convoy to Auschwitz*—the journey of the women of the French Resistance.¹⁹ Historical novels that focus on transports of Jews and non-Jews include Jorge Semprun's *Le Grand Voyage* (The Long Voyage), and Christian Bernadac's multivolume *Déportation, 1933–1945*.²⁰

In poetry, Dan Pagis's "Written in Pencil in a Sealed Railway Car," is perhaps one of the most discussed and reproduced poems about the traces of the Holocaust trains,²¹ and Władysław Szlengel's "A Little Station Called Treblinka" inserts a Polish dimension to destination-themed literature, as have music and songs of the wartime period. For example, "Treblinka Dorte" (There Lies Treblinka) is a Yiddish song sung by women kitchen

workers who witnessed deportations of Jews outside the Warsaw Ghetto area.²² Steve Reich's "Different Trains" and Herbert Distel's "Die Reise" (The Journey) also provide evocative soundscapes of deportation trains.²³ In visual art, Ziva Amishai-Maisels has analyzed how train scenes were a popular leitmotif for inmate artists with images of luggage, ghetto crowds, journey confinement, and arrival commonly depicted.²⁴ Some of these transit motifs have been used in installations, such as Arie Galles's *Fourteen Stations*, his Kaddish for Nazi victims, Andrew Rodgers's "Pillars of Witness" bronze castings at the Melbourne Holocaust Research Center in Australia, and in Judy Chicago's art tourism, expressed in her kitsch-like "Wall of Indifference."²⁵ In contrast, the artifacts of deportation's personal yet nameless biography are stunningly evoked with second-hand clothing in French artist Christian Boltanski's *Canada* installation.²⁶

These literary and artistic outputs also have a strong visual foundation in the form of wartime photography, which portrayed various deportation scenes of order, forward motion and, occasionally, suffering and separation. Photography by German, Jewish, and clandestine witnesses, depicted columns of moving crowds in streets after roundups, panoramic landscapes with masses of deportees boarding trains, and less commonly, of the unloading of deportees and their belongings at camps. The graphic photographs of the Iasi "death train," which depicted survivors of the June 1941 pogrom in Romania promised safety through transport to a new location but those who died in the trains from heat exhaustion, dehydration, and suicide became an early case of death in transit.²⁷ Although the full extent to which German and Nazi photographers documented violent deportation scenes or encounters is not known, the available visual archive of deportation does not depict suffering bodies or corpses. Rather, the visual archive is highly sanitized and subjective. Deportation is portrayed as a banal bureaucratic practice, a compliant procedure without violence, impact, or suffering. This compliance is most evident in depictions of group togetherness, with people walking in columns or waiting crowds as signature motifs. The prevalence of the crowd in motion or assembly in Nazi and German photography conveyed a misleading impression of passivity that has arguably influenced historians' interpretations of Jewish behavior.

"To the Umschlagplatz" (see Figure 1.1) comes from the Stroop report about the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto following the 1943 uprising. It depicts the march of remaining ghetto residents with their knapsacks to the train terminal. Verifying the photographer's identity and/or affiliation allows room for interpretation about the evidentiary intentions of documentation and how these factors shaped the inclusion and exclusion of scenes and actions. The intention of the photograph seems clear enough: to record the successful suppression of any remaining insurgent tendencies. But what

remains outside the scene is the undocumented and suppressed truth of the violent liquidation. There are other crowd scenes of motion and stillness in the visual archive of deportation. The column of people in Figure 1.2, for example, depicts moving from the Warsaw Ghetto although the photo's uncertain provenance has limited its utility as historical evidence. Interpreted from the victims' perspective, this photo visualizes the itinerant life of ghetto residents, who are weighed down by luggage, walking in what appears to be ostensible compliance with orders, and without extensive reinforcement by police or guards. Again, the selective framing of order and compliance compels thought about what was undocumented during these relocations. The photo by Walter Genewein, an accountant in the Lodz Ghetto, portrays Jews with layers of clothing and luggage, boarding trains (see Figure 1.3). The photo is part of a large collection of some four hundred images from the Lodz Ghetto, which includes depictions of Jewish councils, Jewish communal life, funerals and cemeteries, labor and industry, "gypsy" areas, and the nearby work camp of Pabianice.²⁸ The boarding of Jews appears as just another transit event in Genewein's visual chronicle of the ghetto's mobile population, although it quite possibly depicts the resettlement to Chelmno in April 1942.²⁹ Genewein's presentation of deportation as a bureaucratic activity visualized the Nazis' recording of deportation as benign: the very deliberate intention to mask the murderous destinations of trains to deportees.



Figure 1.1 “To the Umschlagplatz, 1943” (WS 26537). Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.



Figure 1.2 Deportation, Warsaw Ghetto, 1943 (WS 79111). Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.



Figure 1.3 Deportation, Lodz Ghetto, 1942 (WS 74537). (Jüdisches Museum der Stadt Frankfurt), Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.

Although Jewish photographers portrayed crowds carrying luggage under surveillance, scenes that were similar to German and Nazi images, they also moved beyond objectification and used the camera as an instrument of evidentiary disclosure and truth telling. Jewish photography of deportations, particularly by Mendel Grossman and Henryk Ross in the Lodz Ghetto, did not remain on the outside of the crowd, but moved among and with the prospective deportees. Their photos exhibited an ethical commitment to a range of victims' physical and emotional responses, including their anxiety, frantic activity, courage, and emotional despair. These responses were largely omitted from the German and Nazi record. Mendel Grossman's image of a victim of the Lodz Ghetto's "Gehsperre" of September 1942 may not reveal much about the circumstances outside the frame that led to the scene; that is, knowledge of what occurred during the week-long roundup of the ghetto's ostensible weak links of the aged, children, and hospital patients (see Figure 1.4). It does, however, reveal Grossman's intention to document resistant actions as ruptures to the image of compliance. These actions were also clandestinely captured by Austrian soldier Hubert Pfoch (see Figure 1.5). The photograph is an urgent visual testimony of violence and abandonment. The image (of two presumably dead) bodies slumped next to the railroad tracks outside of Siedlce, near Treblinka, is a powerful corrective to the impression of compliance and order, and corroborates the claims of testimonies of departure locations as sites of death.



Figure 1.4 Jewish victim killed during the "Gehsperre," Lodz Ghetto, 1942 (WS 02698). Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.

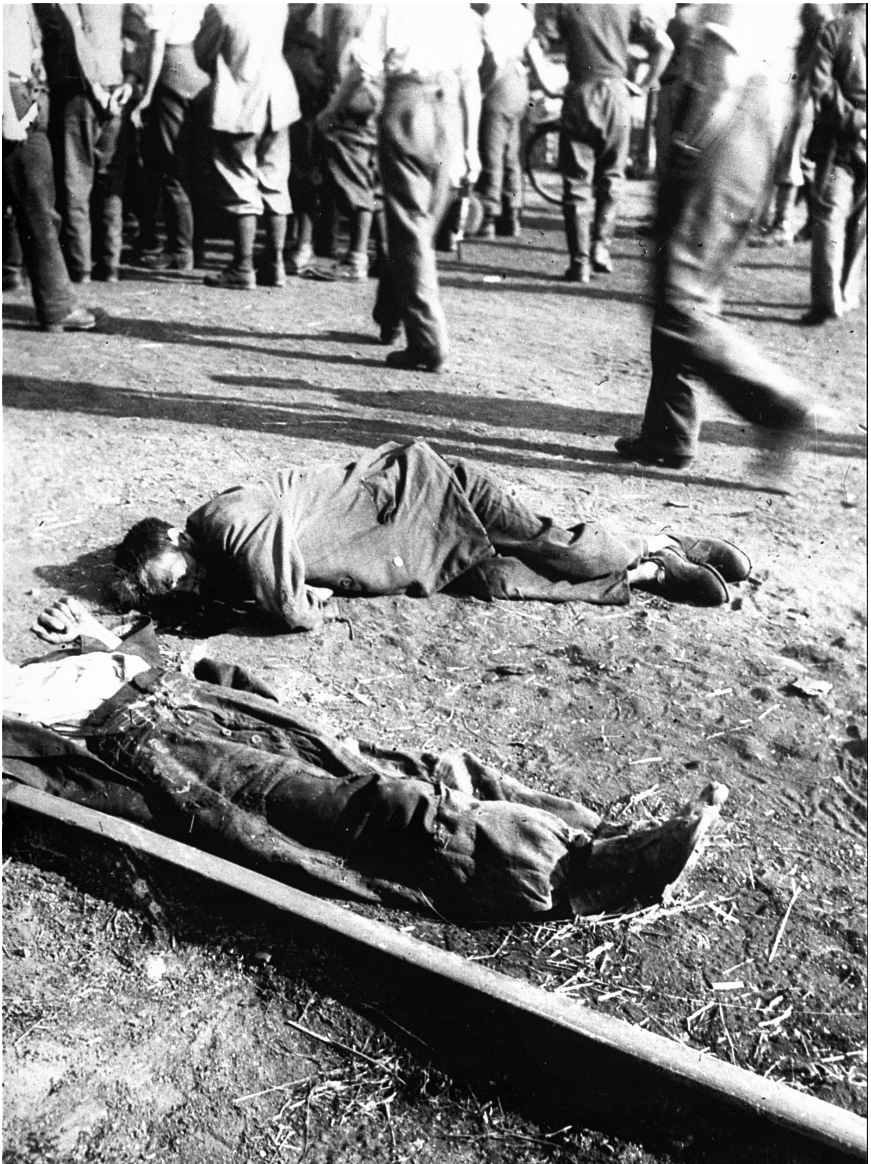


Figure 1.5 Jewish victims killed during a deportation action, Siedlce, 1942 (WS 88278). (Dokumentationsarchiv des Oesterreichischen Widerstandes), Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.

Photography, like cinema, provided a screening of deportation's procedures that suggested the trauma of victims. These depictions were limited to exterior depictions of the train and its passengers at departure, in transit, and at arrival. One of the few filmed wartime sequences of deportees inside trains at departure is found in a short silent film about the deportations from Thrace and Macedonia in March 1943 to Treblinka, a journey that lasted for three weeks and included transport by boat along the Danube.³⁰ Postwar cinema from Europe and the United States drew on photographic depictions of passivity and occasionally resistance in ghettos, though it rarely focused for prolonged periods of time on the inside of the freight cars.

Cinema's intervention was to recreate the camps and their death-world as deportation's destination, locations largely omitted from the historical visual archive of resettlement. This cinematic gallery of deportation includes agonizing separation moments at departure, such as those in *The Pianist* (2002), violent scenes of boarding trains in ghettos and transit camps, external images of closed freight cars in motion, and selections of deportees at arrival at camps. There are some films, such as *The Pawnbroker* (1964), *Angry Harvest* (1985), *Fateless* (2005), and *Der Letzte Zug* (2006), which have taken the inside of the cattle car as an extended stage of immobilization and distress, portraying deportees' battles with space, smell, sound, and each other. Holocaust trains also feature as vessels for the trafficking of victims, especially in deathly and remote landscapes, as depicted in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985). Lanzmann's framing of the intersecting grid of iron tracks shift its Nazi intention of benign resettlement into a memorial to the failed arrival of Holocaust trains—the railroad tracks are permanent scars of death traffic across Europe to Poland's backyard.

Although postwar documentary and narrative cinema gave voice and vision to victims' testimonies, it also conflated experiences, scenes, and archival photography to present a generic cinematic journey. These acts of appropriation have been exhibited in museums, where the photography of deportation has emanated from wartime film footage of transit and resettlement, images that have produced a collective deportee identity, and a decontextualized and visually mobile victim of universal suffering without much reference to the ethnic or religious biography of the represented person. A commonly used example of an endless Holocaust journeyer is the film still, widely circulated as a photo, of a frightened child. She is Settela Steinbach, peering out of a cattle car, en route from Westerbork transit camp (see Figure 1.6).³¹ Her captive status is repeatedly reinscribed and represented in post-Holocaust uses of her victimization. In her vulnerability, she transcends her historically immobile transport moment and that of her racial group and departure origin, the deportation of Sinti from Westerbork. Her universality stands in for the entrapment of deported Jewish children in Europe.³²



Figure 1.6 Sinti child on train en route from Westerbork transit camp, 1944 (WS 05199). (Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz), Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.

This cultural output of deportation's trauma is a sample of the enormous range of traumatic references associated with Holocaust transit. The emphasis on traumatic transit is so broad that an explanation about this book's focus is needed. Which experience is under examination given that trains and transit played formative roles in Jewish victims' lives under the Nazi regime?

There are innumerable experiences of mobility and immobility that can be studied. Victims' lives were increasingly shaped by a policy that entailed ongoing displacements, deprivation, humiliation, and abandonment. Moved from villages and shtetls to ghettos, from ghettos to camps, between camps, and from camps to evacuations and death marches near the end of the war, victims were nothing if not in a permanent state of existential and residential crisis. Their lives were itinerant, uncertain, and without a future. The deportation journeys under examination are compelling examples of forced transit of persecuted groups under oppressive regimes. For Jews, however, this example of forced transit has an additional resonance in their experience and collective memory of exile, migration, and tenuous residence in diaspora locations. The Final Solution sought to terminate the long-term survival of the Jews as an ethnic group. Although persecution was advertised and promoted in propaganda, rhetoric, and speeches, a murderous intention was not

concretized or formalized into a coordinated policy of destruction until late 1941. The itinerary toward that destination is reflected in contradictions in Nazi policy. These contradictions can be explored in the restrictions on Jewish mobility and emigration options before that time: locally in Germany, in occupied Poland from 1939, during the so-called resettlement or wild deportation phase, and finally in the murderous deportation phase—from 1941 to 1944.

Before their journeys to the death camps as part of the Final Solutions, Jews and their mobility were of key concern to the Nazis. The alleged threat of Jewish infiltration in transit and social space existed in a complex relationship long before the SS requisitioned the Deutsche Reichsbahn to supply trains for deportations. Restrictions to transit and leisure before 1939 were based on laws that promoted the displacement and marginalization and immobility of the Jews in German social space: sitting on park benches, swimming, cinema attendance, and curfews were examples of such incursions.³³ Alon Confino has argued that tourism in postwar Germany provides telling insight into Germany's Nazi past as it promoted practices about what was considered as normal and exceptional in everyday life as well as national experience.³⁴ Confino indicates how the tourism industry was implicated in segregative practices against Jews. For example, the 1935 Nuremberg Laws forbade most hotels from accommodating Jewish guests, while a decree from the Ministry of Interior issued on 24 July 1937, set extreme restrictions on the presence of Jews in spas and another decree of 16 June 1939, made access to them impossible.³⁵

Railway stations were targeted as potential infiltration sites from a number of sources, including the illegal sale of foreign newspapers and unregulated Jewish mobility. These concerns of infiltration were addressed in the Reich Chamber of Culture on 1 November 1933, which, in line with the "reconstruction of the German press in the National Socialist State," vetted or approved individuals who worked in railway bookshops based on their political and moral reliability.³⁶

The threat of the Jews to the internal security of civilian train space and their proposed containment in class-based carriage captivity achieved particularly obsessive focus in a conversation between Josef Goebbels and Hermann Goering on 12 November 1938 in the wake of the Kristallnacht. The conversation discussed the outrage about Jews sharing a sleeping car with Germans. Goebbels remarked that the Jews "will be given a separate compartment only after Germans have secured seats," to which Goering replied it would be preferable to give them separate compartments: "I'd give the Jews one coach or one compartment, And should such a case as you mention arise and the train be overcrowded, believe me, we won't need a law. We'll kick him out and he'll have to sit all alone in the lavatory all the way."³⁷

Arising from this exchange were two unsustainable possibilities: the entitlement of Jews to their own compartment, and the racial pollution that could result from spatial fusion with German passengers. The investment of dangerous and permeable qualities to train space at this time evoked late nineteenth-century anxieties about trains as unsettled spaces that violated social boundaries of class, gender, and race. Train spaces and their regulation through carriage comforts symbolized the mobility and immobility of travel, the benefits and detriments of confinement, and enforced segregation as a solution. It is tempting to link this conversation to the train's role in deportations as the link of travel into the Final Solution, but a less deterministic reading suggests the ambiguities of defining secure and contaminated public spaces in Nazi Germany, and the alleged threats posed by Jews and their mobility. There were other examples of Holocaust transit before 1939. In the captive world of the victims, though not yet physically imposed, transit involved the voluntary if not fiscally burdensome emigration of the Jews within continental Europe and away from it.

After the Kristallnacht of 9 November 1938, emigration was formalized in the Kindertransport program, the relief package for Jewish children and teenagers from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia to the United Kingdom. Between 1938 and the outbreak of the war, thousands of children traveled by train to various ports for the voyage to Britain. These travels have been recalled with anguish and despair by the children and the parents in numerous memoirs and several films.³⁸ The push for emigration and the threats to Jewish life in Germany did not resolve the Nazi construct of the "Jewish problem" but deferred its resolution by creating refugee crises and exportable problem populations in several countries, including France, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Hungary.³⁹ The European refugee crisis, as the persecution of the Jews was called at the time, was addressed at the July 1938 Evian conference in France. The proposal of Holocaust transit as a further emigration and resettlement of European refugees to countries such as Australia, Canada, South Africa, Britain, and the United States, was denied by leaders and diplomats. The Jews, it was alleged, could incite local anti-Semitism and racial tensions and displace specialized labor.

Although these examples suggest how the history of Jews under the Nazi regime can be discussed in terms of transit traumas and solutions, I do not explore them in depth. This book is not a comparative history of forced relocation of communities and deportation movements in specific countries, or an investigation of policies of resettlement and experimentation implemented by the Nazis in their treatment of Jews and non-Jews before 1941.⁴⁰ Whereas there were countless train and foot journeys implemented by the Nazi regime in their plans for resettlement, forced labor, and deportation,

what defines the parameters of this book is the murderous intention and impact of deportations in the achievement of the Final Solution.

I focus mainly on Jewish victims and their experiences of deportation from late 1941 to late 1944. I use a method that is spatially and temporally grounded in the wartime topography of occupied Poland. I analyze testimonies of deportees as defined by their stages of departure, transit, and arrival at the camps of Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz, and Majdanek. This method is destination determined, but it is also challenged by multiple experiences of finality. Some survivors were transported several times in train journeys that were intended as final, meaning that they were deported from a ghetto to a camp, escaped during transit, returned to the ghetto, and were deported again to another camp. As a result, one can expect some conditioning of trauma from the first train journey, allowing for a comparison about the experience of readiness, shock, and finality in subsequent deportations.⁴¹

The representation of experiences of finality in survivor testimonies acknowledges the prevalence of backshadowing as discussed by literary critic Michael André Bernstein in *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History*.⁴² When applied to the tellability of the train journey, backshadowing refers to how a survivor's first encounter with a camp via a deportation transport, as one of departure–train transit–arrival, becomes largely rerouted in testimonies as a camp-originated memory of arrival–departure–train transit–arrival. In this itinerary, the camp emerges not only as a destination of the train, but also as a perpetually present departure platform where traumatic life experiences find origin, meaning, and are subjected to innumerable comparisons.

The experience of finality was also shaped by prior periods of displacement and captivity. These journeys were often preceded by other violent and degrading experiences of deportation, confinement, and forced movement by train, foot, ship, and truck from rural to urban locations, covered varying time periods, distances and landscapes, and involved progressive separation of families and dissolution of communities. In representational terms, the realization that the journey's outcome was a failed resettlement adds to the resonance of deportation as a final journey in testimonies and reports. The intense spatial constraints that characterized Jewish victims' transit histories were not consistent. For some ghetto communities, such as Lodz, the final journey was preceded by a long ghettoization where spatial deprivations came to be managed. By contrast, where ghettoization occurred relatively late and was followed by rapid deportations, as in the case of Hungarian Jews, the victims' first real experiences of spatial constraints were quite possible in the trains to Auschwitz.⁴³

References to other destinations, Jewish and non-Jewish victims, and varying transport methods, are evidence of the applicability of transit to describe an

experiential condition of persecuted groups. The persecution and deportation of Jews can be contextualized in the history of forced displacements of other victims in Germany and across Europe during the 1930s and 1940s. These targeted groups include the disabled, Sinti and Roma, Poles, homosexuals, and political prisoners. This book excludes witnesses whose experiences of ghettoization and persecution did not result in deportation to the main concentration or death camps, for example, in the Baltic region or in Ukraine.⁴⁴

The end of the war and the collapse of the Third Reich heralded further traumatic journeys of displacement: the forced repatriation of German expellees back to the “Heimat” by train, of Soviet POWs and refugees in Germany, and the forced evacuation of emaciated survivors from concentration camps on death marches. The liberation of Nazi camps in Poland, and later camps in Germany and Austria, announced photography as a formative visual eyewitness in the documentation of genocide’s victims, topography, and scale. Desolate camp landscapes, pits, androgynous-looking inmates, and corpses all featured as horrific evidence of hidden crimes, as did the trains, which made their final journeys in the forced evacuations of inmates from camps in late stages of 1944 and early 1945. The perpetrators’ intentional cruelty and deprivations toward their victims are graphically conveyed in the image of carriage in the Dachau “death train” (see Figure 1.7). This train comprised nearly forty railcars containing the bodies of



Figure 1.7 Death train, Dachau, 1945 (WS 62241). Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.

between 2,000 and 3,000 prisoners who were evacuated from Buchenwald on 7 April 1945.

In suggesting that deportation by trains produced fatal transit experiences, it is possible that objections might arise regarding the temporal and geographical focus when other historical cases of forced transit and displacement have claimed numerically more victims. I do not enter into a debate about a quantitatively defined and competitive “victims’ history” of displacement in the twentieth century, or earlier examples of forced migration, biological displacement, and colonial exterminations. Rather, I argue that deportation journeys during the Holocaust are prismatic and suggestive for engaging with these historical and ongoing examples of the displacement of colonized, indigenous, and oppressed populations. These displacements include those committed in the name of imperial expansion, including forced migrations, territorial invasion, and killings during New World colonialism of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, and the physical trafficking of eleven to fifteen million Africans during the slave trade to the Americas and the Caribbean from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century. The Middle Passage, the name given to the harrowing journeys of the slaves across the Atlantic from West African ports, took weeks and months, and the slave ship has become a symbol of spatial suffering and inhumanity.⁴⁵

Other examples of ethnic cleansing and genocide from an unfortunately long list include the territorial dispossession and physical exterminations of indigenous peoples in white settler societies in Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. There were also episodes of colonial extermination under the banner of European imperialism in Africa from the mid-nineteenth century, for example, in the Congo and in South-West Africa. Episodes in the twentieth century include the Turkish genocide of the Armenians, forced resettlements and incarceration of ethnic and political minorities in the USSR in the 1930s and 1940s, including deportation train journeys to Gulags,⁴⁶ the forcible deportation of approximately 3.2 million Soviet citizens to the Third Reich,⁴⁷ the use of trains as massacre sites in the partition of India,⁴⁸ and ethnic cleansings in post-communist Balkan countries in the 1990s.⁴⁹

The specific focus on deportation journeys is instructive, as the possibilities for future comparative and interdisciplinary research on other transit experiences are rich. Reading testimonies of deportation is conducive to future studies of transit spaces, emplotted experiences, forced movements, and displacements in World War II that prefaced and followed victims’ deportations to the camps, such as evacuations and death marches, and postwar relocations to displacement camps and refuge. Comparative histories of transit experiences of victims from specific communities, or regions, are waiting to be written and visualized, using, for example, the methods of Geographical Information Systems to produce an interactive mapping of

these journeys in their origins, stopovers, and destinations. Holocaust transit also applies to the spatio-temporal movements of perpetrators as individuals and in groups. A visual and spatial interpretation of the criminal routes or trajectories of the wartime activities and occupations of roving individuals, and killing squads, such as the work of police battalions in the invasion of Poland, or in occupation activities in the East, would be especially useful in mapping geographies of crime, complicity, and persecution.

This book is based on published and unpublished English-language testimonies of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust who have written or spoken about their experiences in a number of forums and projects. These sources include interviews conducted by David Boder with displaced persons in camps in the American zone of occupation in postwar Europe in the summer of 1946, survivor testimony given at the Eichmann trial in 1961, unpublished sources held in the archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and oral histories from the 1980s commissioned in the United States, such as the American Gathering Conference Collection. I have also used video testimonies from the 1980s and 1990s, and well-known Holocaust memoirs in English.

The use of testimonies available in English reflects how the victims' history of deportation is a survival narrative through language as refuge. English was not always adequate or available as being the medium for telling, but the preservation of the "perplexity" of telling trauma in fragmented, often frustrated speech and prose, allows for an interpretation of testimony as a mediation of experience, language, and memory.⁵⁰ My use of English-language testimonies builds on Alan Rosen's discussion of English and its evolution as a "tertiary language" in the representation of the Holocaust.⁵¹

English-language Holocaust testimonies allowed the foreign to become familiar, at least linguistically, for audiences removed from its European geography. There is a caution that published and unpublished testimonies that have been written and spoken in English could distance the survivor from the trauma, and continue a repression of memory. Yet if this is case, it is more than likely that testimonies are incomplete fragments or traces of an embodied, irretrievable experience. Philosopher Burkhard Liebsch advances this belief, commenting, "Never ... will there be a definitive testimony, a final text about the Shoah. All that has been said hitherto has its future still in front of it, a future still 'pending' because the testimonies transmit not only what has been said, but also this irretrievable surplus of what remains to be said."⁵² The contention of the "unsaid" surplus is inherited from the long-standing debate among scholars about the Holocaust's ostensible "unspeakability."⁵³ In this reading, the Holocaust represented a profound rupture, defies comprehension to those who were not there, and is particularly resistant to artistic or creative genres of representation. The

contention of the radical ineffability of the Holocaust is more than a hermeneutic debate or an ethnic claim for uniqueness. At its core is an experiential unavailability, the missing testimony of the dead. I do not intend to replicate that approach.

An early undertaking that explored the potential of the Holocaust's frustrated tellability was, as mentioned previously, David Boder's oral history interviews. Eight of the interviews were published in 1949 as *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, the first published book of oral documentation in English after the war.⁵⁴ With a gesture to the future, and to guide the passage of the stories to American audiences, Boder transcribed 70 of the 109 interviews he conducted in Yiddish, German, Russian, French, and other languages into English. In 1957 these transcripts were published in the sixteen-volume opus, *Topical Autobiographies of Displaced People*,⁵⁵ which Alan Rosen has described as "the greatest work on the Holocaust to appear in English in the decade after the war."⁵⁶ Boder's decision to make a multilingual experience a monolingual chronicle reflected his intention to remedy the emerging disparity between the abundance of visual material collected at the end of the war and the paucity of first-hand auditory material on the subject.⁵⁷ Boder was searching for the ordinary witness with the extraordinary, untold story. His impulse guides my approach to reading the exceptional in the ordinary witness story of deportation.

I use testimony to explore the tellability of ordinary witness stories of deportation, and to uncover the fluid narrative space between the said and the unsaid. I do not use testimonies as a supplementary or secondary source to highlight or corroborate empirical facts anchored in documentary sources of the perpetrators, as is common practice among historians. Rather, I use testimony as one critical symptom of witness itself to offer an intervention into the writing of deportation histories as a victims' story—a compilation of fragments, vignettes, and embodied truths. Much of what occurred inside the deportation trains en route from ghettos to camps remains inassimilable to social discourse, and is marginalized in the historiography of the Holocaust. I use testimonies about deportation's fear, excrement, violence, and sensory assault to reverse that ongoing marginalization.

My interpretation of victims' testimonies of deportation has several objectives, and is guided by influences from philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. The first objective is to ask questions about victims' experiences that reflect their own existential crises of truth telling: how are bodily pain and trauma explicable to others who do not share similar experiences? Testimonies of deportation contain traumatic data that historians sometimes find difficult to interpret. These testimonies are nothing if not subjective, emotional, and agony-filled indictments of the effects of Nazi bureaucratic efficiency, and also witnesses to its improvisation and chaos. Although

deportees' responses to transit may have been conditioned by ghetto deprivations and violent roundups, the very containment of deportation's effects inside the train carriages produced an unseen group suffering. Historians might also suggest that the relatively short duration of deportation train journeys, whether in hours or days, and their impact on victims, is difficult to assess in relation to comparatively longer periods of incarceration in ghettos and camps. Yet the suggestion of trauma as having an empirical truth that can be timed is misplaced when analyzing testimonies of deportation. Transport time was unquantifiable: the length of a train journey—hours, days, or weeks—had little relationship to the impact of compression and the psychological ruin it caused.

Second, I focus on the corporeality of the Holocaust as the basis for sensory and olfactory witness truths. I revisit Terrence Des Pres's claims about the impact of excremental assault, which he principally analyzed as a camp phenomenon. His focus minimized the effects of transport shame, the ubiquitous stench, and presence of excrement, urine, and vomit, as initiations into the camp world. Telling and writing at the time, but for the most part, after the war, survivors of deportation transports anticipated the train journey as a reprieve from the miserable ghetto life of disease, malnutrition, and other deprivations. But the illusion of resettlement was quickly destroyed. The conditions in the trains were profoundly invasive, violating, and traumatizing. Already initiated into the sensory assaults of constrained living quarters in ghettos and towns, deportees were still not quite prepared for what inescapable space did to smell, sound, and touch. Indeed, victims' testimonies of olfactory trauma suggest that it was inside the trains that excremental assault incited the most intense and transgressive responses, isolating this space as distinct from other sites of assault.

Deportation train journeys produced countless moments of transport shame. Victims were forced, for example, to turn private experiences—such as excreting and urinating—into public and observed acts. It is from these moments of transport shame that deportation train journeys provide incredibly affecting sources for writing a sensory history of the Holocaust according to its largely unknown, ordinary witnesses. These ordinary witnesses, the majority of whom were Holocaust survivors, were forced by circumstances of history to become messengers but with despairingly few listeners or readers. There are thousands of such testimonies, but very few people have heard of the authors: Leo Bretholz from Vienna, the Warsaw Ghetto fighter Benjamin Piskorz who told his story to David Boder in an Italian displaced persons camp in 1946, and Rosa Ferera from Rhodes. Their experiences of transit—the impairment to sight, the unwanted touch of bodies, and the common practice of ingesting urine—suggest that the sensory assault of transit remains lost in the footnotes, replaced in the

text, and thus in history, with rhetorical themes of hope, survival, courage, moral action, and convoluted definitions of spiritual resistance. Could it be that a lack of critical interest in transport shame is reflective of an ongoing repression of ostensibly taboo topics in the representation of the Holocaust, and indeed, scholarly marginalization of unpublished testimonies, which are seen to exhibit minimal literary distinction or revelations about the human condition? Why is it that Holocaust testimonies which affirm or recuperate the human condition from sustained psychological injury and narratives of a distinguished literary character continue to marginalize the otherwise abundant and ordinary victim experiences found in unpublished accounts and spoken-word video-testimonies?⁵⁸ This reading implies that what constitutes an authentic Holocaust experience is less the content of the story, but rather the drama and sophistication of its telling, the revelation of a previously mystifying experience in language that rewrites the Holocaust as a continuing cultural moment of disruption, mourning, and return.

In what ways does deportation testimony challenge a long-standing scholarly reliance on well-known literature and eyewitnessing as tellable mediums for victims' diverse experiences? To what extent is the claim of challenge too exaggerated as a critical intervention considering the comparatively brief duration of transit in relation to other victim spaces? A third objective is to question what makes a witness in confined spaces, when visual perception, the assumed normative basis of eyewitnessing during the Holocaust, was compromised and regularly failed the deportee in train carriages. It is the primacy of sight that is often advanced as the most critical and essential condition for assessing the authenticity of victims' testimony about their Holocaust experiences. A study of how victims responded to deportation transit questions the sustainability of a visual truth when vision itself was unreliable. Embodied responses and sensory trauma came to represent, for deportees, more suggestive expressions of their confinement. Yet, to suggest that embodied witnessing characterized deportees' responses is hardly an original reading. Were not all Holocaust victim experiences embodied? Indeed, what is striking about the embodied witnessing argument is its lack of application to Holocaust victim responses. A study of deportation transit is therefore suggestive of the possibilities of thinking about witnessing that is more expansive and sensitive to the body traumas of confinement, persecution, and shame. Compressed space heightened deportees' sensorial perception and representation of transit stresses as arguably more extreme and intense than those spatial and sensory attacks in ghettos and camps. An examination of deportation transit allows the recuperation of the suffering body from historiographical neglect and validates the deportee as a witness with authenticity and agency.⁵⁹

A fourth objective is to consider the impact of this heightened sensory space as a significant witnessing moment that is outside the principal fixed locations of ghettos and camps, which are the main locations of many scholarly studies of victim chronicles and postwar representations. Ghettos and camps, in particular, comprise what Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi has called the symbolic geography of the Holocaust. Ezrahi argued that representations of the Holocaust mark it as a universe consisting of “concentric circles,” of which the gas chamber was the center or black hole, and that to have spent the war years avoiding that fate was to have inhabited the “outer circles” of that universe.⁶⁰ By this logic, she writes, “multiple points of reference or departure are not equally valid but rather mark degrees of separation from the ‘Event’ itself.”⁶¹ To what extent do testimonies of deportation provide both a portal to and disconnection from the camp world?

My argument questions the dominance of camp destinations as the traumatic core of this symbolic geography. The sensory invasions of deportation transports anticipated the degradations of the camp world, and in some instances, exceeded them. Survivors compared the bodily pain of transport with previous experiences of separation and captivity, degradation and fear of death, and to imagined ones. For many survivors, their memory of being a deportee was akin to a death that is provocatively suggestive of the gas chambers. Although deportees were transported to the camps to reach the condition of witnessing authenticity, the fact of their survival exempts them from what many scholars and philosophers regard as the Holocaust’s most authentic yet unavailable witnesses: the victims who were killed in gas chambers. Cattle car “deaths” are ignored as secondary traumas compared to the camp deaths. An examination of deportees’ testimonies is not only scholarly in purpose, it is also restorative. I attempt to give life to cattle car voices that have been displaced by the dead.

A final objective is to rethink how victims’ testimonies of deportation can be mapped in comparative and perceptual terms. In what ways is it possible to think about their experiences of train space, mobility, and exclusion as a displaced geography in Holocaust historiography? In what ways are deportation testimonies without a place, so to speak, in historians’ recognition of suffering sites and spaces of the victims? How do victims and survivors work through their memories of deportation using fixed and fluid anchors to place, landscape, and structures? Rather than take the national frame of reference as an organizing principle for analyzing deportation testimonies, I adopt a thematic, stage-based approach that began with removal from the ghettos and terminated at the camps. But what factors made a departure location meaningful? Overwhelmingly, most of the testimonies I use are from the postwar period, and the camps depicted in them are memory points that ground and validate the traumatic narrative of victimization and

survival. The Final Solution camps were the reception and killing centers for the remaining three million Jews from continental Europe. Yet the journeys deportees were forced to take to get to them were needlessly long, humiliating, and unfamiliar. It is the progression from the familiar to the unknown and uncertain that dominates testimonies. What references do deportees use to describe this alienating, existential crisis, experienced twice, first in the war, and then in representational, testimonial time? What geographies of transit are recalled in departures, train journeys, and arrivals at the camp?

One example of mapping literary geographies occurs in *Travelers, Immigrant, Inmates: Essays in Estrangement*, Frances Bartkowski's study of the literature of explorers, survivors, and immigrants. Although Bartkowski approaches the Holocaust memoir as a hybrid form of travel writing, her main location of captivity is the camps. Bartkowski's study of the Holocaust memoir briefly considers experiences of deportation, though not in a lengthy fashion that might argue for this phase as distinct: "Memoirs of deportation under the Nazi regime are focused on the death trains that took days to go from a place that was home or near home to a place that was nameless and foreign, where it quickly became clear that no previous rules applied. The conditions on the trains of crowding and starvation began to do the work of dividing human beings among themselves in a struggle for breath, water, light."⁶² Bartkowski's consideration of narratives of travel, ethnicity, and captivity raises issues of class, gender, and sexuality, with the apparent link among them being that "they all find themselves having left 'home' and ventured out, and having some new faces and places in the world tell them something about where they have come to and from. Travel writing, ethnic discourses of displacement, and the postmodern captivity narratives of concentration camp memoirs offer unique opportunities to examine the rhetoric of submission and domination, that is, the analytics of power. Through this rhetoric, we can read the consolidation of identities as inevitably and simultaneously a strategy of appropriation and accommodation, claim and resistance, provisionality and necessity."⁶³

Bartkowski's omission of deportation transit as an experience that also produces "representations of the selves shaped in relation to an elsewhere" undermines her contention that the Holocaust memoir is a postmodern captivity narrative.⁶⁴ But the sense of captivity is not limited to written testimonies. In video testimonies, deportees' memories of transit are relived as feelings of being "retortured," "reviolated," and "decentered," a boundary-crossing space of behaviors, moralities, and extremes that also has philosophical, sociological, and ethical implications. In telling stories of transit, survivors evoke irreversibility, of not being able to revert to their original self from having endured transit. An examination of deportees' testimonies reveals the factors that create and unmake body image—geographical and

existential displacement, sensory assaults, and abjection. These representations of the suffering self are also instructive for interpreting other events and literatures of torture, political imprisonment, and captivity in modernity. In written testimonies about the Holocaust witnesses narrates displacement and estrangement in spatial and temporal binaries of inside/outside, before/after, and presence/absence. These binaries are not necessarily as explicable or portable as spoken word experiences. The narrative order of writing the self as a traumatized subject is in opposition to the ruptures and chaos of sense memory that often intrudes on the spoken-word telling of transit in the presence of the interviewer.

I read written and oral deportation testimonies in their moments of telling, shifting uneasily between documentation, bearing witness, negotiation of liturgical archetypes, reportage, literature, and the use of fictional references to foreground the real. Collectively, I interpret testimonies as conversations or “journey talk,” that is, stories from the abyss. The testimonies used are bearers of distressing truths that often stand alone in their estrangements from language, the self, and what can be talked about in social discourse. They are very often emotional and combative. In using testimonies to rethink witnessing, I am also cognizant of the philosophical ambiguities that surround the uselessness of testimony produced from experiences of corporeal suffering. There is more than coincidence in the titles of works by eminent philosophers of Holocaust memory: Emmanuel Levinas and “Useless Suffering,” Primo Levi and “Useless Violence,” and Charlotte Delbo and “Useless Knowledge.”⁶⁵ My reading of deportation acknowledges the privacy of pain and brings into view some problems of using these testimonies as an anti-genocide narrative.

In the chapters that follow, I provide a narrative journey of deportation where the themes of train transit, captivity, and witness are explored. Chapter 2, “Resettlement: Deportees as the Freight of the Final Solution,” sits, figuratively speaking, on the outside of the train carriages. I explore the bureaucratic representation of deportations as resettlement in records and to ghetto residents. This chapter provides an anchor to subsequent chapters on deportees’ anticipations and experiences of the image of resettlement. The manufactured image of deportation as a benign relocation, as journey that promised safety, security, and future mobility, continued the social death of victims through objectification and dehumanization. In bureaucratic records, Jews were immobilized by numbers and language as a preface to their confinement on trains. They were represented as objects of an administered process, and defined by their oppressors as statistics and categories to be shipped.

Chapter 3, “Ghetto Departures: The Emplotment of Experience,” introduces deportees’ visions of ambivalence and uncertainty in ghettos before

their journeys in trains. This chapter initiates a discussion of victims' representations of their immobility, an immobility already initiated through constraints on spaces of residence, work, and assembly in ghettos. Journeys to concentration and extermination camps cannot be analyzed without this focus. As depicted in testimonies, eyewitness scenes of waiting for the trains, of families crushing in overcrowded spaces in assembled areas, and in hospitals, synagogues, public squares, prisons, and on station platforms, were a preface to the spatial attacks that would soon entrap deportees in the trains. I examine the pretransit mood and psychology of ghetto communities, relating these accounts to the false image of security and survival that the Nazis willfully constructed.

An examination of how the Nazis constructed and implemented the image of deportation as resettlement is directly related to deportees' interpretation of their transit experiences. Although I argue that the presentation of deportation as a transit experience was central in the psychology of compliance, I do not contend that victims necessarily saw their experiences in this way. For them, deportation journeys were anything but a leisurely transit experience. The intention to see victim testimony as related to the perpetrators' perceptions of them was also significantly addressed in David Boder's interviews. In the "Addenda" to volume XVI of *Topical Autobiographies*, Boder assessed the psychological value of the testimonies. He believed that they offered insight into the "fate of the suffered and their 'techniques' of survival," at the same time disclosing a number of "pertinent behavior mechanisms and aspects of personality dynamics of the perpetrators of their hardships."⁶⁶

Boder's contention about persecutor-victim dynamics, both physically near and distant, provides a useful approach to reading testimonies in chapter 3. I argue that the bureaucratic presentation of deportation transit, in its historical and aesthetic conception, was a critical but by no means sufficient condition in implementing Nazi deportation policy. The image of transit to a work destination was inconsistently applied and developed in its deceptive power in the numerous occupied countries from which Jews were deported. Why did the Germans feel they had to sustain the ruse of a journey with deportations from Western Europe, for example? Distances from ghettos to camps, local knowledge and rumors about destination of deportation trains,⁶⁷ information from escaped deportees,⁶⁸ and wartime demands on rolling stock and supply of troops, influenced the availability and types of carriages used. Yet these variables did not always translate into a consistent image of security and survival in the representation of resettlement to deportees. The failure of the image was evident in the fear, panic, resistance, and suicide of deportees before, during, and after having been assigned to a deportation transport.⁶⁹

I also show that captivity was anticipated before it was experienced, though not to the degree of excruciating invasion reported from accounts of having survived it. The prehistory of captivity in testimonies placed the reader in ghetto space and its multiple crisis scenes of an experiential, ontological, and interpretive nature. Testimonies of deportations to the East also produced a revealing commentary on ethnic space, community, and architecture. Testimonies of deportation exemplified what I contend is not only a geographical exile during the Holocaust, but also an exile from language uttered in the constant repetition of words such as “unspeakable” and “incomprehensible.”

Chapter 4, “Immobilization in ‘Cattle Cars,’” introduces the reader into the space of deportation trains. I build on the words of Gundel, Heilman, and Klüger, and analyze deportees’ testimonies and their representation of the existential, spatial, and sensory traumas of train journeys. These traumas included a tenuous relationship between space and confinement, the feeling of abandonment, ongoing physical and psychological degeneration, and repeated attempts at ethical community among deportees. I also examine the narrative paradigms that permit and repress train captivity’s visceral representation: the sometimes conflicting contexts in which testimonies were written or enunciated as a critical preface to chapter 5, which unpacks the ostensible literary and visual order of these narratives.

The analysis of train space and captivity in motion provides the foundations for chapter 5’s exploration of the tellability of train memories. “Sensory Witnessing and Railway Shock: Disorders of Vision and Experience,” investigates the disorders of Holocaust transit, particularly the marginalization of sight as a primary basis of witness perception and truth. Enlightenment philosophers in the eighteenth century interpreted the visual world as possessing a privileged epistemological status of truth and knowledge—a prerequisite for understanding. The relationship between seeing and comprehension was disrupted during the Holocaust, and especially so in the trains, raising questions about the claims of visual authority in confined space. The issues that dominated the previous chapters such as thematic sameness in the representation of confinement, the impairment to sight, and the repression of taboo topics in Holocaust writing, are telescoped in a close reading of David Boder’s interviews with five survivors about their train traumas.

Deportees’ testimonies of the journey’s end are explored in chapter 6, “Camp Arrivals: The Failed Resettlement.” This chapter examines the ways in which arrival at Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, Chelmno, and Majdanek allowed, on the one hand, the emergence of place as an organizing principle to restore territoriality and fixity to deportees’ testimonies. On the other hand, the unloading of deportees into the feared and foreign

environs of the camps provided no reassurance that the sudden restoration of vision was any more reliable than the other senses as a knowledge or truth to explain what they saw, heard, and felt. Did the sudden return of sight restore clarity to what confronted the deportee? How was arrival represented in terms of discovery, exploration, and relief?

Upon arriving at concentration and extermination camps, deportees consistently remarked that what they saw had no comparison to previous experiences in ghettos, or with rumors about the existence and function of camps. Upon arrival, a cosmopolitan and multilingual inmate population met deportees, yet they principally heard German as the language of incarceration, and indeed were forced into its accelerated acquisition as a camp discourse. This chapter analyzes what arrival represented to deportees, because the distance of their deportation origins to the camps varied, as did the impact of deception, awareness of the connotation of names such as Treblinka, and the circuits of information available prior to deportation, and during transit. Arrival represented termination, separation, and powerlessness to reverse an uncertain destiny. The chapter also expands the literary connotation of arrival through interpreting deportees' entry into the camp through the prism of alternative destinations and exile. Prominent in testimonies of deportation is the appearance of the platform and station as markers of ongoing and completed journeys, though platforms are also synonymous with final exits, the distribution of deportees, and their murder.

In the long history of distressingly abundant state-sponsored violations of the human body, why should deportees' experiences of train journeys during the Holocaust concern us, after all? Anthropologists, in particular, have long interpreted the body as a primary target of state and ethnic violence. Arjun Appadurai contends that although it is obvious to study the body as an object of the "worst possible infliction of pain, terror, indignity, and suffering," its coordinated design and impact cannot be denied: "Wherever the testimony is sufficiently graphic, it becomes clear that even the worst acts of degradation—involving feces, urine, body parts, beheading, impaling, gutting, sawing, raping, burning, hanging and suffocating—have macabre forms of cultural design and violent unpredictability."⁷⁰ To what extent do "cultural design" and "violent unpredictability" emerge in testimonies of deportation as evidence of Nazi genocide? Indeed, if one is to understand the trauma of deportation, and captivity in trains, they first have to be imagined.

Notes

1. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," Kay Gundel, "Reborn: Memoirs of a Camp Survivor, 1947–1986," RG-02.004*01; Acc. 1986.019, p. 93.
2. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Interview with Anna Heilman, RG-50.030*0258.
3. Ruth Klüger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2001), 91. For recent readings of Klüger's work, see Pascale R. Bos, *German-Jewish Literature in the Wake of the Holocaust: Grete Weil, Ruth Klüger, and the Politics of Address* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Linda Schulte-Sasse, "'Living On' in the American Press: Ruth Klüger's Still Alive and Its Challenge to a Cherished Holocaust Paradigm," *German Studies Review* 27, no. 3 (2004): 469–75; Frederick Lubich, "Surviving to Excel: The Last German Jewish Autobiographies of Holocaust Survivors Ruth Klüger, Marcel Reich-Ranicki, and Paul Spiegel," *Modern Judaism* 25, no. 2 (2005): 189–210; and Nancy K. Miller, "Ruth Klüger's Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered, An Unsentimental Education," in *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, ed. Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2004), 386–95.
4. See Tim Cole's analysis of the Budapest Ghetto, *Holocaust City: The Making of the Jewish Ghetto* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
5. Many survivors use the terms "cattle car," "freight car," and "boxcar" interchangeably in their testimonies. Wherever possible, I have retained the original references as they appear in survivor testimonies. When I discuss victim testimonies at length in the following chapters, I use the term "cattle car" to describe the popular or common, though inaccurate, identification of carriage types used in Holocaust deportations. I also use the term "cattle car" as a phrase of reclamation to identify the emotional and sensory impact of confinement, and its emergence as a genre of testimony. The multiple references to Jewish transports in Holocaust historiography reflect historical descriptions of transport as "freight cars." As indicated in the research of Alfred Mierzejewski, the freight car or standard fifteen- or twenty-ton *Güterwagen* (goods wagon) was commonly used for Jews during deportations, particularly those deportations originating in the Generalgouvernement. (Passenger cars were sometimes used over longer distances, for example, from Westerbork transit camp in the Netherlands.) The labelling of the freight car as a "cattle car" resulted from a misidentification of carriage types by survivors, particularly in the United States. In the discussion of what constitutes a "cattle car" experience, I have relied on the work of historians of the Deutsche Reichsbahn (DRB), most particularly Alfred Mierzejewski, and my e-mail correspondence with him to clarify the types of carriages used in deportations for the Final Solution. I am very thankful to him for assistance on the freight car issue. See Alfred C. Mierzejewski, *The Most Valuable Asset of the Reich: A History of the German National Railway*, vol. 2, 1933–1945 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).
6. Terrence Des Pres, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death-Camps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 51.
7. *Ibid.*, 69.
8. Robert Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 9.
9. See the map, "DRB/Ostbahn Routes and Nazi Death Camps, 1942," in Mierzejewski, *Most Valuable Asset of the Reich*, 118.
10. Raul Hilberg has discussed the methodological and source problems involved in quantifying the number of Jewish deaths. Based on his assessment of the sources, he concludes that

- the “raw data are seldom self-explanatory, and their interpretation often requires the use of voluminous background materials that have to be analyzed in turn. Assumptions may therefore be piled on assumptions, and margins of error may be wider than they seem. Under these circumstances, exactness is impossible.” See Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 3rd ed., vol. III, appendix B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 1303. Hilberg also provides three tables: “Table B-1: Deaths By Cause,” “Table B-2: Deaths by Country,” and “Table B-3: Deaths by Year.” “Table B-1: Deaths by Cause” lists the total figure of 5.1 million Jews killed through ghettoization and general privation (over 800,000), open-air shootings (1.4 million), and camps (up to 2.9 million), of which 2.6 million Jews were killed in death camps. See appendix B: 1320–21.
11. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 30.
 12. These projects include Yad Vashem’s project “Deportation of Jews during the Holocaust.” See the Yad Vashem Web site at http://www1.yadvashem.org/about_yad/what_new/temp_about_yad/temp_index_about_yad_institute.html.
 13. Serge Klarsfeld, *Le memorial de la deportation des juifs de France* (Paris: Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, 1978), and Serge Klarsfeld and Maxime Steinberg, *Memorial de la deportation des juifs de Belgique* (New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1982); Michael Molho, ed., *In memoriam: hommage aux victimes juives des Nazis en Grece* (Thessaloniki: Communauté Israélite de Thessalonique, 1973); H.G. Adler, *Der Verwaltete Mensch: Studien zur Deportation der Juden aus Deutschland* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1974); Alfred Gottwaldt and Diana Schulle, *Die “Judendeportationen” aus dem Deutschen Reich 1941–1945: Ein kommentierte Chronologie* (Wiesbaden: Marixverlag, 2005). On the gender dimensions of deportation, see Margaret-Anne Hutton, *Testimony from the Nazi Camps: French Women’s Voices* (Oxford: Routledge, 2005). Recent comparative studies of deportation include Pim Griffioen and Ron Zeller, “Anti-Jewish Policy and Organization of the Deportations in France and the Netherlands, 1940–1944: A Comparative Study,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 20, no. 3 (2006): 437–73.
 14. There have been references to the organization of deportation train journeys and, less frequently, to their deadly impacts. See, for example, Yitzhak Arad, “The Trains of Death,” in *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 63–67; Yaacov Lozowick, “Judenspediteur: A Deportation Train,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 6, no. 3 (1991): 283–92; Israel Gutman, “Deportation to Death,” in *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 133–45; Simone Gigliotti, “Cattle Car Complexes: A Correspondence with Historical Captivity and Post-Holocaust Witnesses,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 20, no. 2 (2006): 256–77; and my book chapter, “Deportation Transit and Captive Bodies: Rethinking Holocaust Witnessing,” in *Lessons and Legacies IX*, Jonathan Petropoulos, et al. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009).
 15. At various points in the book, I use testimony from the Eichmann trial to demonstrate how it was used, successfully or otherwise, to corroborate a large number of documents on deportations in countries of Nazi occupation and collaboration. For a selective compilation of analyses (in chronological order) of Eichmann, the trial and its continuing impact, see Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 1963); Gulie Ne’eman Arad, ed., “Hannah Arendt and Eichmann in Jerusalem,” special issue of *History & Memory* 8, no. 2 (1996); Shoshana Felman, “Theaters of Justice: Arendt in Jerusalem, the Eichmann Trial, and the Redefinition of Legal Meaning in the Wake of the Holocaust,” *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 2 (2001): 201–38; Christian Gerlach, “The Eichmann Interrogations in Holocaust Historiography,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 15, no. 3 (2001): 428–52; Ylana N. Miller, “Creating Unity through History: The Eichmann Trial as Transition,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 1, no. 2

- (2002): 131–49; Haim Gouri, *Facing the Glass Booth: The Jerusalem Trial of Adolf Eichmann* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004); Hanna Yablonka, *The State of Israel vs. Adolf Eichmann*, trans. Ora Cummings with David Herman (New York: Schocken Books, 2004); Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For an affirmation of the “banality of evil” thesis from a sociological perspective, see Guy B. Adams and Danny L. Balfour, *Unmasking Administrative Evil* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998). More plentiful are recent revisions of Arendt’s notion of the “banality of evil,” including those by Yaacov Lozowick, “Malice in Action,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 27 (1999): 287–330, and *Hitler's Bureaucrats: The Nazi Security Police and the Banality of Evil* (New York: Continuum, 2000). See also Hillel Halkin, “Eichmann: The Simplicity of Evil,” *Commentary* (July–August 2005): 57–61. Eichmann is also the subject of biographical studies; for example, David Cesarani, *Eichmann: His Life and Crimes* (London: Heinemann, 2004), and David Cesarani, ed., *After Eichmann: Collective Memory and the Holocaust since 1961* (London: Routledge, 2005), which was first published as a special issue of *Journal of Israeli History* 23, no. 1 (2004). Also of relevance is Marianna Torgovnick, “Eichmann’s Ghost,” in *The War Complex: World War II in our Time* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 45–69 and 166–72.
16. *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem, State of Israel, Ministry of Justice, Volume III* (Jerusalem: The Trust for the Publication of the Proceedings of the Eichmann Trial in Co-operation with the Israel State Archives and Yad Vashem, 1998), 1153.
 17. Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 109.
 18. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (London: Abacus, 1989), 85.
 19. Elie Wiesel, *Night*, trans. S. Rodway (London: Penguin, 1960), 33. Wiesel was born in 1928 in Sighet, Transylvania, which is now part of Romania. He was fifteen years old when he and his family were deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz. His mother and younger sister perished, his two older sisters survived. Elie and his father were later transported to Buchenwald, where his father died shortly before the camp was liberated in April 1945. See my analysis of Wiesel’s memories of trains, “Night and the Teaching of History: The Trauma of Transit,” in *Approaches to Teaching Wiesel's Night*, ed. Alan Rosen (New York: Modern Language Association, 2006), 32–40; Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man/The Truce*, trans. Stuart Woolf (London: Abacus, 1987); Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, trans. R. Lamont (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) and Charlotte Delbo, *Convoy to Auschwitz: Women of the French Resistance*, trans. Carol Cosman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997).
 20. Christian Bernadac, *Déportation, 1933–1945* (Paris: France-Empire, 1992–93). See his other works on deportation to various camps, including Dachau and Mauthausen, *The Death Train* trans. S. Van Vliet White (Geneva: Ferni, 1978); and *Train 7909, Destination Dachau* (Paris: M. Lafon, 1994).
 21. For a discussion of Pagis, see Ezrahi, *Booking Passage*, 157–78, and Robert Alter, “Dan Pagis and the Poetry of Displacement,” *Judaism* 45, no. 4 (1996): 399–412.
 22. “Treblinka Dorte” (audio file), Music of the Holocaust Online Exhibition, USHMM, available at: www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/music/detail.php?content=treblinka.
 23. See Steve Reich and Kronos Quartet, *Different Trains* (Los Angeles: Elektra/Asylum, 1989), Herbert Distel, *Die Reise* (Therwil, Switzerland: Hat Hut Records, 1988).
 24. Ziva Amishai-Maisels, *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts* (Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press, 1993), 32.

25. Arie A. Galles, *Fourteen Stations* (Madison, NJ, 1993). For a critical reading of “Fourteen Stations,” see Andrea Liss, “Rituals of Mourning and Mimesis: Arie A. Galles’s Fourteen Stations,” in *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*, ed. Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 31–42. Andrew Rodger’s Pillars of Witness sculptures are located at the Jewish Holocaust Museum and Research Centre in Melbourne, Australia, available at <http://www.jhc.org.au/default.asp>, and Judy Chicago, *Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light* (New York: Viking, 1993).
26. For information on the “Canada” Installation that was exhibited in Toronto in 1988, see Didier Semin, Tamar Garb, and Donald Kuspit, *Christian Boltanski* (London: Phaidon, 1997), 80.
27. The trains with pogrom survivors departed from Iasi, Romania on 30 June 1941. They were destined for safety but the condition of the transports resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Jews. See Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940–1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), 80–90.
28. Jewish labor productivity was the main emphasis of Genewein’s collection.
29. The future destination of the deportees who stand beside the passenger train is uncertain according to the text that accompanies the photo. See USHMM Photo Archives W/S no. 74537.
30. Parts of the deportation are captured in the film “Deportation of Jews from Bulgarian-Occupied Macedonia,” March 1943, available at the USHMM Wexler Learning Center, <http://www.ushmm.org/lcmedia/viewer/wlc/film.php?RefId=DFB0212D>.
31. This photo is from a Dutch film about Hanns Rauter, an Austrian SS official with responsibility for Westerbork. See *Rauter Trial, Westerbork* (1948) at the Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive at USHMM: Story RG-60.0785, Tape 317, available at http://resources.ushmm.org/film/display/main.php?search=simple&cdquery=Deportations&cache_file=uia_abDqGB&total_recs=10&page_len=25&page=1&rec=5&file_num=1099.
32. See Chris Vos, “The Past in Iconic Clichés: The Case of the Girl between the Doors of a Cattle-Wagon to Auschwitz,” in *History in Words and Images: Proceedings of the Conference on Historical Representation*, ed. Hannu Salmi (Turku: University of Turku, Department of History, 2005), 168.
33. Jacob Borut has examined the continuity thesis about anti-Semitism in German history through his study of segregationist tourist facilities against Jews during the Weimar period. See Borut, “Antisemitism in Tourist Facilities in Weimar Germany,” *Yad Vashem Studies* (Vol. XXX, 2002), 1–42.
34. Alon Confino, “Dissonance, Normality, and the Historical Method: Why Did Some Germans Think of Tourism after May 8, 1945?” in *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*, ed. Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 327.
35. Confino, “Dissonance, Normality and the Historical Method,” 328.
36. See Documents 278 and 279, in *Nazism 1919–1945: A Documentary Reader, Vol. 2, State, Economy and Society, 1933–1939*, ed. J. Noakes and G. Pridham (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1984), 396. Reprinted from J. Wulf, ed., *Presse und Funk im Dritten Reich* (Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn Verlag, 1964).
37. See Document 427, ND PS-1816, in *Nazism 1919–1945*, ed. Noakes and Pridham, 558–60.
38. Acclaimed scholar of the Holocaust, Geoffrey Hartman, was sent to England in 1939 as part of the Kindertransport program. See <http://www.library.yale.edu/testimonies/about/hartman.html>. Accounts of the Kindertransport include Mark Jonathan Harris and Deborah Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*

- (London: Bloomsbury, 2000) and the film by the same title. For a critical reading of the Kindertransport in relation to the construction of diaspora identity see Beate Neumeier, "Kindertransport: Memory, Identity and the British-Jewish Diaspora," in *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments*, ed. Monika Fludernik (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003), 83–112; and Michael Geyer, "Virtue in Despair: A Family History from the Days of the Kindertransport," *History & Memory* 17, nos. 1/2 (Fall 2005): 323–65.
39. On emigration options for German Jews see Wolfgang Benz, "Emigration as Rescue and Trauma: The Historical Context of the Kindertransport," *Shofar* 23, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 1–6.
 40. On the deportations of Polish communities, see Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution: The Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939–1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007).
 41. For example, see David Boder's interview with Jurek Kestenberga from 31 July 1946. Kestenberga was thirteen when he was deported to Majdanek in 1943. He escaped from a deportation train, recovered from a gunshot wound with the help of a compassionate Polish peasant, made his way back to the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943, and was then deported to Majdanek after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The interview is available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=keste&text=_t.html. Parts of the interview are also reprinted as "Jurek K.," in *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival*, ed. Donald L. Niewyk (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 108–17.
 42. Michael A. Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
 43. I thank Tim Cole for this insight.
 44. On this point, I refer to deportees, such as German Jews, who were sent to killing sites in Riga and Minsk, and also to experiences of occupation and persecution in Ukraine. On ghettoization in Ukraine, see the recent works by Wendy Lower, "Facilitating Genocide: Nazi Ghettoisation Practices in Occupied Ukraine, 1941–1942," in *Life in Ghettos During the Holocaust*, ed. Eric J. Sterling (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 120–44, and her book, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
 45. A recent study is Markus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007).
 46. On train journeys to Gulags, see Anne Appelbaum, "Transport, Arrival, Selection," in *Gulag: A History* (London: Penguin, 2003), 159–78.
 47. Testimonies of state-engineered repression through captivity are not unique to the Nazi regime. Pavel Polian discusses the theory and practice of deportation in relation to the displacement of ethnic groups in the Soviet Union. He remarks that the "USSR was neither the trailblazer nor the only practitioner as far as deportations were concerned. It was, rather, the regime that most consistently and insistently implemented such a policy." See Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*, trans. Anna Yastrzhebski (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 2.
 48. On trains as death spaces in other countries, I refer to train massacres that occurred during the partition of India along religious lines in August 1947. Partition produced an enormous refugee displacement of approximately ten million people. The massacres were most atrocious when trains from Punjab were sent across the border into India and into Pakistan, filled with dead bodies of fleeing refugees. For oral testimony of these train massacres see Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight* (London: Collins, 1975), especially chapters 13 and 14. My thanks to Maria-Suzette Fernandes Dias for

- this reference. See also Salman Rushdie's acclaimed novel, *Midnight's Children* (London: Cape, 1981).
49. Recent surveys and critical interpretations include Dan Stone, ed., *The Historiography of Genocide* (London: Palgrave, 2008); Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); A. Dirk Moses and Dan Stone, eds., *Colonialism and Genocide* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007); Benjamin A. Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Eric Stover and Harvey M. Weinstein, eds., *My Neighbor, My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For a useful overview of approaches to writing histories of genocide see Cathie Carmichael, "The Violent Destruction of Community during the 'Century of Genocide,'" *European History Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2005): 395–403, and Peter Fritzsche, "Genocide and Global Discourse," *German History* 23, no. 1 (2005): 96–111.
 50. See Alan Rosen's analysis of Boder's use of "perplexity" in *Sounds of Defiance: The Holocaust, Multilingualism and the Problem of English* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 21–33 and 198–200.
 51. Rosen, *Sounds of Defiance*, 9.
 52. Burkhard Liebsch, "Giving Testimony," in *Contemporary Portrayals of Auschwitz: Philosophical Challenges*, ed. Alan Rosenberg et al. (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000), 75.
 53. See, for example, Amy Hungerford, *The Holocaust of Texts: Genocide, Literature, and Personification* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), Thomas Trezise, "Unspeakable," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1 (2001): 39–66, and Berel Lang, *Holocaust Representation: Art within the Limits of History and Ethics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).
 54. David P. Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949).
 55. David P. Boder, *Topical Autobiographies of Displaced People, Recorded Verbatim in Displaced Persons Camps with a Psychological and Anthropological Analysis*, 16 volumes (Chicago: Illinois Institute of Technology, 1957). *Topical Autobiographies* was intended as an inconclusive statement on the project, as Boder failed to secure the requisite funding to continue his research. His unique archive also included songs sung by interviewees in the DP camps. Boder recalled his method of inviting DPs to sing: "I would meet a colony of DPs in a particular shelter house for lunch or dinner. After the meal I would ask them to sing and, with their knowledge, I recorded the songs. When I played these back, the wonder of hearing their own voices recorded was boundless." See Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, xx. One of the recorded songs "There in the Camp" can be heard at Music of the Holocaust Online Exhibition, available at <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/music/detail.php?content=boder>.
 56. Rosen, *Sounds of Defiance*, 17.
 57. See "Addenda," *Topical Autobiographies*, vol. XVI, 2-3161.
 58. On historians' marginalization of the witness, see Tony Kushner, "Holocaust Testimony, Ethics, and the Problem of Representation," *Poetics Today* 27, no. 2 (2006): 275–95. I thank Alan Rosen for this reference.
 59. See Karein K. Goertz, "Body, Trauma, and the Rituals of Memory: Charlotte Delbo and Ruth Klüger," in *Shaping Losses: Cultural Memory and the Holocaust*, ed. Julia Epstein and Lori Hope Lefkowitz (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 177.
 60. Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, "Questions of Authenticity," in *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, ed. Hirsch and Kacandes, 54. These ideas were first explored in Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, "Representing Auschwitz," *History & Memory* 7, no. 2 (1996): 121–54.

61. DeKoven Ezrahi, "Questions of Authenticity," in *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, ed. Hirsch and Kacandes, 54.
62. Frances Bartkowski, *Travelers, Immigrants, Inmates: Essays in Estrangement* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 15.
63. *Ibid.*, xxvii.
64. *Ibid.*, 3.
65. See Emmanuel Levinas, "Useless Suffering," in *The Provocation of Levinas*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 156–67; Primo Levi, "Useless Violence," in *Drowned and the Saved*, 83–101; and Charlotte Delbo, "Useless Knowledge," in *Auschwitz and After*, 115–231. On the ethics of writing about the dead, see Edith Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology and the Nameless Others* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998) and Antoon de Baets, "A Declaration of the Responsibilities of Present Generations Toward Past Generations," *History and Theory* 43, no. 4 (2004): 130–64.
66. Boder, "Addenda," *Topical Autobiographies*, vol. XVI, 3-3162.
67. On the topics of knowledge and rumor, see the compilation of primary testimonies from Jews and ordinary Germans in Eric Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband, eds., *What We Knew: Terror, Mass Murder and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany* (London: John Murray, 2005).
68. Yehoshua Büchler examines an overlooked attempt at rescue in 1944 of members of He-Halutz (a Zionist pioneer underground group) to provide immigration visas for remaining Slovakian prisoners (following deportations in 1942) interned in Auschwitz for their relocation to Palestine. Büchler details how information about Auschwitz was disseminated; in addition to the Vrba and Wexler reports, deportation destinations of Slovakian Jewry and attempts at gathering information about their arrival locations. See Yehoshua Büchler, "Certificates for Auschwitz," *Yad Vashem Studies* XXX (2002), 1–29. See the report by Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler, *Extermination Camps of Auschwitz (Oświęcim) and Birkenau in Upper Silesia* (Washington, DC: Executive Office of the President, War Refugee Board 1944), Rudolf Vrba and Alan Bestic, *I Cannot Forgive* (New York: Bantam, 1964) and Ruth Linn, *Escaping Auschwitz: A Culture of Forgetting* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).
69. See David Lester, *Suicide and the Holocaust* (New York: Nova Science Publications, 2005).
70. Arjun Appadurai, "Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in the Era of Globalisation," in *Genocide: An Anthropological Reader*, ed. Alexander Laban Hinton (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 289. See also Michael D. Jackson, "Thinking through the Body: An Essay on Understanding Metaphor," *Social Analysis* 14 (Dec 1983): 127–49, and Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

RESETTLEMENT

Deportees as the Freight of the Final Solution

In his article, “German Railroads/Jewish Souls,” Raul Hilberg asked: “How can railways be regarded as anything more than physical equipment that was used, when the time came, to transport the Jews from various cities to shooting grounds and gas chambers in Eastern Europe?”¹ The railroads were a formative scholarly preoccupation for Hilberg, who trawled the archives, “pondering the special trains, the assembly of their rolling stock, their special schedules, and their financing.”² He concluded that in the hands of bureaucrats and technocrats, the railroads metamorphosed, becoming a “live organism” that “acted in concert with Germany’s military, industry, or SS to make German history.”³ The deadly use of railways was history making for Germany, and marked “the end of the Jewish people in Europe.”⁴ The historian Alfred Mierzejewski has estimated that the end of the Jews was achieved in no more than 2,000 trains. The use of those 2,000 trains, supplied mainly from the Deutsche Reichsbahn (DRB), the Ostbahn (Polish railways), and other national carriers was, according to Mierzejewski, insignificant in relation to other wartime demands for rail traffic.⁵ The quantitative insignificance of this traffic is, however, historically unprecedented. Although trains and their wartime uses have a historical relationship before World War II, the use of trains for death camp transports was a critical enabler of the Nazis’ genocidal ambition. Without the involvement of trains, the murderous pace of killing in the camps would be undeniably diminished, as would be the number of Jewish victims who now perpetually rest in the figure of six million.

For many scholars, Nazi-organized deportations represent the power of totalitarian modernity, the comprehensive use of transport in facilitating war objectives and genocidal agendas, and highlight the depersonalization of bureaucracies through the labor of the desktop murderer, the Schreibtischtäter, exemplified by the chief architect of deportations, Adolf Eichmann. Deportations also produced a traumatic history of impact for the victims, an impact that was anticipated, if not exacerbated, by the organizers of transports without regard for the physical and psychological welfare

Notes for this chapter begin on page 54.

of the victims. The intentions of these transports were unrecorded by its organizers. Resettlement was a constructed, sanitized narrative that blended truth and fiction. In train timetables, telegrams, inventories, and other communications, Jews were referred to as *Stücke*, quantities to be identified, accounted for, collected and transported. An examination of victims' testimonies of deportation cannot be studied in isolation, but is linked to the bureaucratic organization of transit as resettlement, investigating the process's intentions, methods, and labor. For the Nazi regime, the presentation of deportation to the victims as journeys worth taking was necessary and crucial in the solicitation of ghetto residents to departure points. But the image was only moderately successful. Its credibility also depended on the victims' hopes for resettlement as a reprieve, despite the often brutal and violent actions of SS guards and Jewish police that accompanied roundups. This incongruence of truths was not always sustainable. Why was the vision of resettlement necessary? What were its organizational features? What factors threatened the image of transports to the East as journeys of life?

This chapter briefly examines the organization and movement of deportation transports across Europe in the context of other wartime journeys and cargo carried by the DRB. I first outline how these transports were organized and recorded by bureaucrats. I then examine how resettlement was implemented with the controversial involvement of Jewish councils, who were charged with fulfilling the deportation quotas issued by the SS, and who used force and fabrication to entice victims to departure points.

Bureaucrats and railway officials were centrally involved in the implementation of deportations for the Final Solution.⁶ Hilberg argued that the Final Solution comprised a "destruction process," which consisted of a vast network of individuals, agencies, organizations and institutions, and a "machinery of destruction" to design and administer it. The process occurred in four phases that marked transitions from social to physical death: identification as Jews through laws, decrees, race hygiene beliefs, material expropriations of Jewish property and business, concentration in larger towns and ghettos, and annihilation by disease, starvation, killing squads, and gas chambers in camps. Most historians contend that the shift in Nazi policy from localized and regional killing to European-wide genocide occurred between July and December 1941.⁷ Deportation transports represented a bridge of continuity from concentration in ghettos and *Einsatzgruppen* massacres to mass death in the camps. The railroads served an apprenticeship during resettlements, when trains moved Jews to ghettos between 1939 and 1941.

The section of the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) concerned with resettlements was headed by Adolf Eichmann.⁸ Contrary to perceptions of deportations as a series of forced migrations pursued with relentless vigor, the Jews were deported in waves between 1941 and 1944, intervals

shaped by the exigencies of planning and coordinating mass murder across Europe. Coordination was dependent on the availability of carriages from the DRB and other national carriers, as well as overcoming the disruption to war traffic because of embargoes and the threat of insurgencies in ghettos and camps.⁹ Because deportation was implemented in waves, it had the compounding effect of communal traumas in ghettos, villages, towns, and transit camps, inspiring calls to mobilization and rebellion when rumors about the fate of the deported could not be refuted.

Mobile killings and deportations were dependent on war victories. On 22 June 1941, the German army launched “Operation Barbarossa” by invading the Soviet Union, an offensive that delivered an estimated 2.5 million Jews into the destructive path of the mobile Einsatzgruppen. Unlike the pursuit and massacre of Jews in the Soviet Union, industrialized murder in the camps was concentrated in a largely contained spatial nexus: the stationary yet dispersed victims became mobile yet confined in freight car transports, and the killing—previously enabled by roaming actions of the Einsatzgruppen—became largely stationary through the construction of camps. The shifting mobility of the perpetrators and increasing immobility of victims were entwined in a spatial relationship of isolation, exclusion, and forced relocation. Inspired by German success in the Soviet Union, the Nazi racial war against the Jews expanded in ambition and intention. The murderous geography was increasingly centralized in the “East”: Chelmno, Auschwitz, and the Operation Reinhard camps of Majdanek, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka, and in close proximity to existing railway lines.¹⁰ By the time of the first deportations of German Jews to the Ostland (Kovno, Minsk, and Riga) and to Chelmno some eight years into the Nazi regime, Jews had been languishing in ghettos in occupied Poland since early 1940.¹¹ Their fate was to change, irreversibly, after the Wannsee Conference of 20 January 1942.

Ministers and bureaucrats at the conference discussed details about the implementation, obstacles, and possible consequences of the Final Solution. It was not enough to transport or resettle Jews to the territory of the “East.” Lost Jewish productive labor had to be replenished, empty apartments had to be tenanted, and abandoned properties had to be confiscated.¹² No other stage of the destruction process posed so many administrative considerations, nor was any so costly and “staggeringly complex.”¹³ Legal and practical issues surrounding deportation, such as priority areas for “liquidation” and Jews in mixed marriages, were discussed but never clearly resolved.¹⁴ These issues did not impede the goals of deportation in occupied and projected areas of influence, but in fact energized the commitment to existing and future “deportable” Jews.

The months between January and May 1942 witnessed the deportation of Jews from France and Lublin, and later in 1942, from the Netherlands,

Belgium, Warsaw, and Croatia. The second phase of deportation operations began in January 1943, when trains marked with “Da” (designated for special trains for Jews outside the Generalgouvernement) and “Pj” (for Polish Jews inside the Generalgouvernement) saw the transport of Jews from Theresienstadt, Bialystok, and Grodno.¹⁵ During 1943, in addition to Jews from Czechoslovakia, Jews from Greece and Italy were also deported. The largest remaining national group was 450,000 Hungarian Jews. The Nazis’ swift occupation of that country saw their deportation between May and August 1944 in approximately 147 trains to Auschwitz.¹⁶ In numerical terms, Auschwitz was the largest camp, and the most cosmopolitan. The diversity of its inmate population reflected the geographical reach of the Nazi genocide, for its deportees originated from, among others, the Wartheland region, Upper Silesia, East Prussia, the Bialystok District, Netherlands, Belgium, Slovakia, and Hungary. Treblinka was the main destination for the Jews from the Generalgouvernement ghettos, including Warsaw and Lublin, and received a large number of deportees from Greece and Yugoslavia.¹⁷

Jewish deportees were not the only “freight” being transported, as the DRB maintained a range of commitments to the Nazi regime. These included the relocation of Soviet prisoners of war and civilian conscripts westward to work in Germany’s factories and fields, the transport of victims to euthanasia centers,¹⁸ the resettlement of 800,000 Jews and Poles into the Generalgouvernement,¹⁹ trains for the construction and maintenance of the camps, the transport of 900,000 foreigners to Germany for forced labor, the transport of Jews for slave labor, and the return carriage of looted property of the deported victims to enterprises and agencies in the Third Reich for use in the war.²⁰ It is possible to see how the use of 2,000 Sonderzüge (special trains) for the transport of Jews to death camps was, from an operational standpoint, insignificant in the DRB’s traffic, which ran an average of 30,000 trains per day in 1941 and 1942, decreasing to about 23,000 trains daily in 1944.²¹ Yet the figures should not detract from the fatal intention of Sonderzüge. In this respect, the role of the DRB was transformative. If the advent of the railways in the nineteenth century contributed to a revolution in the bureaucratic model of organization, the DRB’s support to the Nazi regime arguably transformed the capacity of bureaucracies to achieve a racial and spatial reorganization of Europe in the twentieth century.

Administration of Resettlement

The administration of deportation as resettlement utilized the existing infrastructure of modern transit in the form of stations, timetables, luggage, and fares. The timetabling of resettlements was especially important in regulating

special trains alongside other war and civilian rail traffic, and maintaining order, flows, and rhythms at the destinations to which these trains traveled. Timetables were not only important to the Transport Ministry; they also needed to be coordinated with a particular camp's extermination capacity.

The preparations for deportation included several stages: the procurement and dispatch of a train, scheduling, collection and assembly, stock supply, financial payment, staffing, and the compilation of deportation lists.²² Once a deportation transport was organized, the RSHA IV B4, the main office that coordinated deportations, circulated guidelines with detailed instructions on procedures to be followed. They provided railway timetables that were devised two to three months in advance and in agreement with the Transport Ministry. They also assigned a quota to each locality, and issued orders for the number of transports. The transport of Jews in Sonderzüge entailed complex procedures that utilized the existing administration and vocabulary of transit in administrative correspondence and documents: timetables, travel agencies such as the Central European Travel Bureau for booking deportees as "travelers" (*Reisende*),²³ and the fabrication of deportation's purpose in terms of "resettlement" (*Aussiedlung*), "evacuations" (*Evakuierung*), and destinations "to the East" (*nach dem Ostern*). The "East" also expanded in territory as the discourse of denial demanded. For example, the destinations of deportation transports were rerouted in language as "passed through the camps in the General Government," rather than "special treatment," so as to convey the impression that transports actually went to the "Russian East."²⁴

The description of deportees in bureaucratic communications as a "traveler" or "passenger" and the complicated fare pricing applied to transports reinforced the image of resettlement as life journeys for the deportees. Based on 1942 figures, the DRB charged the SS the following rates for the Jews as third-class passengers transported on one-way fares in freight cars: adults ten years and older cost four pfennig per track kilometer; children under ten were two pfennig per kilometer; and children under four were transported free of charge. The group fare for 400 or more persons per transport was two pfennig per person. In comparison, soldiers were charged 1.5 pfennig per kilometer for a return ticket.²⁵ Although the DRB requested payment for the supply of trains for deportations, these funds were not always forthcoming, as Jews had to make it themselves from the sale of their confiscated property. The bill for Jewish transports was sent to the SS, the agency that requested the trains, and the fare reflected the quantity of persons booked and the distance covered.²⁶ On some occasions, the payment of transports could not guarantee their departure, and in many cases, delays at departure and en route aggravated the conditions of transit. Cars and locomotives were scarce, lines were clogged, and bomber and partisan attacks interrupted

traffic and contributed to shortages, “yet throughout this time Jews were being sent to their deaths.”²⁷

This death traffic was implemented within the demands of wartime, a rationale that created profoundly shocking conditions for deportees, conditions concealed in documents and timetables as the number of carriages in transports, the number of “travelers,” and departure and arrival times: “To save locomotives and to reduce the total number of transports, the trains were lengthened and the cars loaded to the hilt. In the case of Jewish Sonderzüge the norm of one thousand deportees per train could be pushed to two thousand, and for shorter hauls (in Poland) to five thousand. There might have been less than two square feet per person.”²⁸ The trauma of touch so commonly experienced by deportees and represented as a cattle car compression was implicit in bureaucratic documents. The overloading of trains with deportees to maximize the concession fares for the SS slowed the trains down considerably, sometimes to forty kilometers per hour, and circuitous routes to the camps were devised to avoid congestion, because “the Jews ... did not have to be rushed to their destination; they were going to be killed there, not used.”²⁹

The financial administration of deportation as resettlement was essential to its effective implementation as an exercise devoid of implication or responsibility. Even though Jews were booked as travelers, they were shipped as cattle, reflected in the types of carriages used and the group fares charged. Zygmunt Bauman contends it is this purely clinical and dehumanized aspect that typifies the bureaucratic mentality: “For railway managers, the only articulation of their object is in terms of tonnes per kilometer. They do not deal with humans, sheep, or barbed wire. They only deal with cargo, and this means an entity consisting entirely of measurements and devoid of quality.”³⁰ The representation of deportation as “resettlement” and its victims as “travelers” enabled genocidal traffic to pass through countries and the individual consciences of bureaucrats. The objectification of victims in Nazi discourse is a central issue for scholars in their analysis of language as an instrument of genocide. In his analysis of documents of deportation, such as timetables and correspondence between officials, Hilberg argues that four devices characterized bureaucratic language: prosaic formulations, special words, unvarnished bluntness, and roundabout phrasing.³¹ Karin Doerr asserts that “in official communication, the Nazis favoured noun phrases and the imperative and passive modes. Bureaucrats, in particular, employed German in this style and manner in order to render their statements and actions imprecise and impersonal.”³² Berel Lang argues that the displacement of language in genocidal facilitation saw, “the willed recreation of language entirely as an instrument or means, together with the condition presupposed by that change: the claim by political authority to

authority over social memory and history; the reconstruction of language as entirely ideological and thus as independent of facts, on the one hand, and of human agency, on the other; the assertion of political power to fill the space which is left by the denial to language of all authority of its own.”³³

Henry Friedlander sees distinctions in communications of the bureaucrats that were premised on concealment, and in the public language of the propagandists.³⁴ This public language had two purposes: the first was to inflame, abuse, and exaggerate words to isolate social and racial others, while the second was to exalt and idolize the attainments and ambitions of the Nazis.³⁵ Friedlander contends that the language work of the propagandists was atmospheric, an ideological world of language’s making, whereas the language of physical destruction was the responsibility of the bureaucrats, whose vocabulary was expansive, flexible, euphemistic, but rarely literal.

The foregoing brief overview of deportation traffic and its euphemistic recording is more than a figurative exercise. The transition to mass industrial killing was not simply a transport-and-supply issue of the DRB guaranteeing available carriages to the SS. The transition’s efficiency was premised on the ready and constant supply of victims, who had to be identified, selected, and presented as deportable. The removal of Jews from their communities was already underway in Germany during the period of legal, civic, and social expropriation of the 1930s, before their physical movement into the ghettos and the relinquishing of property and possessions. Deportation, however, demanded a more significant extraction of Jews from their ever-diminishing material, social, and financial commitments. It was a major psychological, administrative, and social exercise, and like most steps in the removal of Jews from their local communities, the Nazis forcibly implicated Jewish councils and community organizations in severing those bonds. Faced with a huge task of relocating the victims from ghettos to camps, and with an obvious labor shortage to achieve it, how were death transports presented to deportees as journeys worth taking? What was required to solicit prospective deportees’ compliance and discourage their opposition and evasion?

Preparing the Deportees

Deportations were marked by a major contradiction in representation: the benign bureaucratic record had to suppress in language its often-violent physical implementation. In the dispatch of a train, the DRB insisted that the SS and its helpers have the deportees ready at the designated loading location before the scheduled time of departure. In historiography, round-ups and liquidations prior to movement by trains belong to what Wolfgang Scheffler has called the “Forgotten Part of the Final Solution.”³⁶ Scheffler

considers the implementation of Nazi racial policy in Poland as the failure of resettlement plans in the Soviet Union, and the manpower shortages and psychological burdens of the *Einsatzgruppen* to complete extermination actions against the Jewish population. Occupied Poland was, as Scheffler and other historians have noted, a contested administrative and experimental racial landscape. During the occupation, the Nazi objective was to create a biological utopia cleansed of impure races, a cleansing that had to be balanced by the use of Polish and Jewish labor for the German war economy, and resettlement plans for ethnic Germans.

Scheffler's analysis moves beyond the larger ghettos to investigate deportation procedures in individual districts and prefectures, which "vitiating even the strictest regulations for secrecy."³⁷ The deportation of Jewish populations in the *Generalgouvernement*, for example, followed a basic and repeated scheme, in which Jewish councils participated at varying levels of assistance, such as providing a registry of Jews living in the ghettos. Starting in August 1942, resettlement operations were initiated in all districts as mass relocations from the larger ghettos, such as Lemberg, Lublin, Krakow, Warsaw, and Radom.

In the larger cities, resettlement operations entailed enormous depletions of workers from war-related industries, and populations in smaller ghettos were often transferred to larger ghettos preceding deportation to camps. The task of implementing resettlement was a coerced enterprise, with Jewish councils ordered to supply police for the roundups. Jews who resisted resettlement were often shot or sometimes interned. Roundups took place when least resistance was anticipated—late at night, or early in the morning. Before the victims were removed from their houses, the ghettos were physically blockaded and numerous units were called on as enforcers, such as security police, security service, order police, *gendarmérie*, SS auxiliaries, and sometimes the Polish police.³⁸ Scheffler corroborates Hilberg's views on the procedure of roundups: "the ghetto residents had to 'gather' at suitable points with a minimum of baggage" and "this procedure took place with extreme brutality. Sometimes the procedure lasted whole days. Since no water was provided for those waiting, this caused great deprivation during the hot summer days of 1942; the deportees had been driven to the loading station in a totally exhausted condition. Finally, they were cruelly packed into the freight cars, and once again neither water nor food was provided for the trip."³⁹

Scheffler's description of the "extreme brutality" of the roundups is supported in deportees' accounts of the behavior of SS, auxiliary officers, and Jewish police in occupied Poland who claimed no greater monopoly on the use of violence than other perpetrators in ghettos and transit camps. Deportees' accounts expose the destructive impulses that accompanied violent persecutions, not only in the infliction of violence, but also in the routinization

of dehumanization in killing sprees and sites, particularly in the smaller locations, where the principle of secrecy was absurd when reflected in the widespread labor participation in the clearing of ghettos. Scheffler contends that “any closer examination of the ghetto liquidation in all districts of the General Government reveals an abyss of brutality and cruelty that in no way fell short of the occurrences in the extermination camps.”⁴⁰ Readiness of the victims could not be guaranteed, and often resulted in waves of violence while finding those Jews assigned for deportation. This violence was obscured in the word *Aktion* (action), a euphemism for physical force, violation, and murder. The *Aktionen* included roundups, theft, despoliation, and killing.⁴¹ Frequent delays in departures occurred because of *Aktionen* and non-compliant deportees, and also from scheduling deportation trains behind wartime traffic. Not all Jews were immediately deportable; however, Jews under arrest or waiting trial could not avoid deportation, unless they were already sentenced to death.⁴²

From the Nazi perspective, the most convincing method to solicit victims’ compliance was to deny the reality of resettlement, and to include the Jewish councils in its implementation. The recruitment of Jews in the implementation of roundups was not an isolated practice, but was symptomatic of the involvement of Jewish inmates in various “gray zone” occupations or commandos that included sorting deportees’ luggage after arrival at the camps, and working in Sonderkommando units in the crematoria.

The shockingly ruthless roundups and liquidations of the ghettos are often integrated into studies of the development of race and resettlement policy between 1939 and 1941 and the ghettoization of the Jews and resettlements of Poles, Sinti, and Roma, and ethnic Germans.⁴³ Historians such as Israel Gutman have examined roundups and liquidations in relation to the mobilization of underground resistance movements in ghettos.⁴⁴ In *Hitler’s Ghettos*, Gustavo Corni examines “round-ups, deportations and elimination of the ghettos” by looking at how residents perceived relocations and violence. He contends that although roundups and deportations were not completely unanticipated, the destinations largely were, with Germans attempting to disguise that reality and provide inaccurate information about the fate of deportees, who were lulled into a false sense of security. Corni surveys the proactive responses by Jews to the unexpected brutality of roundups and liquidations by finding work in factories, essential businesses, or, contentiously, in becoming a member of the Jewish police. Other responses included attempted escape from ghettos, hiding in forests, joining partisan groups, or passing as Aryans. Corni also includes fatalism, suicide, evasion, and resignation as everyday responses, and the following statement ascribes a common judgment of apathy to victim behavior: “Undoubtedly, the image of ‘sheep to the slaughter’ that is so often referred to reflects the prevailing

form of reaction. Resignation characterized those who got on the trains, possibly because they thought they were going somewhere better.”⁴⁵ Corni’s analysis does not pay much attention to victims’ nervous anxieties that were fueled by the lack of information supplied to them about the destinations of the trains, and how physical, group powerlessness affected their responses.

Moreover, Corni minimizes the relationship of dependency and trust between ghetto residents and the Jewish councils to provide instruction about deportations, an involvement that remains highly controversial. The topic remains as divisive now as it was when Hannah Arendt described the supporting role of the Jewish leaders as “pathetic,” “sordid,” and “undoubtedly the darkest chapter of the whole dark story.”⁴⁶ The role of Jewish councils and leaders, such as the Lodz Ghetto’s Chaim Rumkowski, in implementing deportation practices is an oft-cited example of corruption and false security. For some Jewish council leaders, the objective of cooperation was justified as an insurance policy against deportation. Although they carried out tasks and functions as ordered by Nazi authorities, such as collecting and supervising deportees at assembly points, the involvement of Jewish police, alongside leaders and members of Jewish councils, have been perceived as complicit and morally reprehensible. Wartime and postwar courts organized around the displaced council members and policemen in Germany and Italy, as well as in Israel, passed judgment on their guilt or innocence, their alleged collaboration with the Nazis, and in particular sought to understand the motives of the policemen, whose defense of obedience to orders was rejected by the courts.⁴⁷

Officials working for the Jewish councils gained the victims’ trust and belief in the image of safe transit. They were involved in compiling deportation lists, and providing Jewish police to conduct and supervise roundups. They maintained accurate departure addresses of the deportees, of their property, and their personal belongings. Individuals and families assigned for deportation were ordered to report at a specified location at a certain time; and once evasions increased, residents were picked up without notification. Ghetto residents were held in assembly areas, which were often market squares, hospitals, and synagogues, until the transport was fully collected and the paperwork completed. In assembly centers, prospective deportees were searched for contraband by Gestapo members. Jewish councils ensured that each deportee was equipped with blankets, washing utensils, and food. Although these provisions were often more detailed and exacting, the apparent care for deportees’ welfare aimed to reassure them that such items would be needed during their journey and after their arrival. It was precisely these instructions that enabled the deportees’ luggage to be moved directly into sorting factories in camps for redistribution and return to the Reich. In circumstances similar to the way people

settle their household affairs before leaving their residence for an indefinite period, departing residents unknowingly participated in their own expropriation. Officials from the Ministry of Finance carried out inventories of deported Jews in a procedure that testifies to what Martin Dean has called the “economic Final Solution.”⁴⁸ Deportees had to leave their apartments in good order, pay household bills, surrender their keys, and take with them a limited quantity of personal possessions. On the day of deportation, they were taken to the station on foot or by truck, and loaded onto sealed third-class passenger (often freight) wagons.⁴⁹

The bureaucratic presentation of deportation as resettlement was also conveyed in instructions given to deportees in preparation for their transit. These instructions included itemized data for “voyage luggage,” change of address cards, and “letter actions.” Although these records were not representative of the range of deceptive administrative practices, they indicate the passage of Jews from ghetto inmate to “traveler.” In the instructions for transit, representatives of Jewish councils often reassured the victims of the “necessity for punctual and meticulous compliance with all instructions” and tried to minimize the “psychological burdens on the deportees,” especially when the pace of deportations from areas under German control started to increase in 1942.⁵⁰

One example is “Instructions of the Directorate from the Jewish Community in Berlin,” which was directed specifically to the Spicker family on 3 July 1942 on Transport No. 02019 to Theresienstadt. The following instructions indicate the anticipated problem—the packing and sorting of belongings—and its solution, which was to convince prospective deportees to participate in this process of expropriation by selecting required and treasured items for their journeys. Clothes were to be left at a nearby collection depot, and a minimal amount of luggage was permitted, such as night items, a blanket, plate, spoon, cup, and food. Keys to the apartment were to be handed over to a waiting official, as was detailed information on investments and bank accounts. A concluding sentence in the instructions to the Spicker family read: “we ask you sincerely to follow these instructions with precision and to prepare for your transport with calm and introspection.”⁵¹

Another example refers to contents of “voyage luggage”—clothes, food items, blankets, and valuables—that the deportees were instructed to pack. In the document “Guidelines of February 20, 1943 issued by the Reich Security Main Office, pertaining to the ‘technical implementation’ of the deportation of Jews to Auschwitz,” notes were listed regarding journey provisions. Deportees from the territory of the Reich, Bohemia, and Moravia were advised to take the following rations for approximately five days: one suitcase or knapsack each with one pair of sturdy work boots, two pairs of socks, two shirts, two pairs of underpants, one pair of overalls, two woolen

blankets, two sets of bed linen (top and bottom sheets), one dinner pail, one drinking cup, one spoon, and one pullover.⁵²

The final example underscored the untrackability of deportees. Before their departure from ghettos, deportees were instructed to complete change-of-address cards, which deliberately omitted reference to the actual destination in favor of “moved—address unknown.”⁵³ The deception was complete after arrival in the camps through the completion of a *Briefaktion* (letter-action). A “letter action” referred to the act where new arrivals wrote to relatives or friends in the ghettos or cities, reassuring them about the prospects of resettlement, and attempted to quash circulating rumors about the true nature of deportation’s destinations.⁵⁴ The victims’ completion of these cards and letters concluded the imaging of deportation as resettlement. These cards and letter can also be seen examples of effacement in Michel Foucault’s concept of bio-power in the transformation of human life.⁵⁵

Managing the Resettlements: Perpetrator Traumas

Although bureaucratic language and documents contributed to the physical removal of victims, perpetrator accounts of being in intimate physical and spatial proximity to them during the transit process reinforced the sanitized image of the victims as “freight” and “travelers,” and occasionally admitted the traumatic human impact of the procedure. What was concealed in bureaucratic records as benign encounters between perpetrators and victims was often difficult to suppress in the management of logistical hiccups and resistant deportees on trains. The objectifying language of deportation as a resettlement process collided with the appearance, sound, and smell of the suffering victims. Two examples of what I call “management traumas” of deportation reflect how language was used as a rhetorical stabilizer of the problems of transit and delivery. In both examples, victims appear in perpetrator accounts to defy the image of their representation as compliant resettlers.

The first example relates to the prevention of escapes from deportation trains to Belzec. In wartime accounts, deportees who jumped from trains were referred to as “springers” and “jumpers.” “Jumping” from freight cars occurred more frequently on routes where ghettos and camps were in close proximity, when the distances were short, and the landscapes often familiar to deportees. Emanuel Ringelblum’s essay “They Escaped from the Wagons” described the profile of jumpers as “those who had experience. Young men. One [young man] escaped two times—organized eight ‘springers’—people who escaped extermination in Oswiecim by springing

out of the railroad wagons taking them there.”⁵⁶ Steve Paulsson’s analysis of “jumping” from trains suggests that it was not an isolated phenomenon, particularly in deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto.⁵⁷ Escape also occurred early on in the journey from locations outside of Poland en route to other destinations. On the account of the age of carriages and also due to previous attempts by deportees, the battered conditions of some freight cars made it possible to remove boards. Moreover, the wagons were equipped with small windows strung with barbed wire, which “could be removed or filed through, and anyone small and agile enough could jump out. Alternatively, the doors could be prised open. Jumping from the trains was dangerous, of course: not only physically, but because each train included one or two wagons with roof-mouthed booths, manned by guards with machine-guns.”⁵⁸

The prevention of “jumpers” from trains became a management issue for guards and officers. The frustration with “jumpers” was apparent in Josef Jäcklein’s report from 10 September 1942 about a Jewish deportation train from Kolomea to Belzec.⁵⁹ Jäcklein assumed command of the train at 7:30 pm, at which time he described in characteristically sanitized language the terrible condition of the deportees as being in a “highly unsatisfactory state.”⁶⁰ Jäcklein complained about the lack of guards on the train, with one officer to nine men in the escort unit, as reason enough to refuse command of the train, but complied in the spirit of following orders. Even before the train departed, both escort units “had their hands full” preventing Jews from escaping, compounded by darkness that concealed the sight of other carriages. Jäcklein seemed inexperienced in his allocation of the escort unit, which departed “on schedule at 20.50” with the placement of five men at the front and five men at the rear of a transport with fifty-one cars and a “total load of 8,200” Jews.⁶¹ Given this compression, it is no surprise that Jäcklein reported, “we had only been traveling a short time when the Jews attempted to break out of the wagons on both sides and even through the roof.”⁶²

Jäcklein’s report can be seen as a trauma testimony of managing the journey’s delivery of deportees and their assured and continuing confinement. Jäcklein was so concerned at the success of these “jumpers” that he telephoned ahead to the stationmaster at Stanislau and requested nails and boards to repair the damage to the trains to prevent further escapes. Still, Jews succeeded in attacking other parts of the train, ripping the barbed wire from the windows to such an extent that Jäcklein removed the equipment Jews were using as instruments, the very items that they were instructed to pack for their journey. Given the pounded conditions of the carriages and ferocious will of the Jews to escape, Jäcklein had the “train boarded up at each station at which it stopped, otherwise it would not

have been possible to continue the journey at all.”⁶³ He also complained that the engine of the train was not strong enough to carry the weight of the deportees, which compromised the speed of the train and thus made escape more possible and “without any risk of injury” because of the slow ascent up hills. Escape attempts must have been especially frequent since the escort squad used all the ammunition and additional supplies of 200 bullets obtained from soldiers.

Jäcklein appears annoyed that the escort squad had to resort to improvised methods at deterrence such as “stones when the train was moving and fixed bayonets when the train was stationary.”⁶⁴ Unintentionally, he provides a corroborating witness to the testimonies of deportees about the mass panic and death space of trains: “the ever-increasing panic among the Jews, caused by the intense heat, the overcrowding in the wagons ... the stink of the dead bodies—when the wagons were unloaded there were about 2,000 dead in the train—made the transport almost impossible.”⁶⁵ Jäcklein appears relieved when the train enters Belzec where he is able to transfer its unloading responsibility to the camp commandant. His trauma in managing the train journey culminates in a failure to establish the number of escapees.⁶⁶

As indicated from Jäcklein’s testimony, train journeys were death spaces, and those who managed to survive them were in states of shock and decline at arrival, markedly disheveled and unsettled from the disorientation, overcrowding, and stench. In the eyes of perpetrators, deportees who arrived at camps were actualizations of the anti-Semitic image of dirty Jews beyond care, and their appearance and smell were used to justify their inhumane treatment as a welcome “relief.” The description of deportees as “cargo” and “freight” continued the objectification and distancing inherent in the language of bureaucratic documentation. The fabrication of the journey’s destination as one of life was evident in the construction of artifices of stations at arrival, which was discussed in the testimony of Treblinka commandant Franz Stangl and his construction efforts there during December 1942. In his exchanges with Gitta Sereny in her book *Into that Darkness: From Mercy Killing to Mass Murder*, Stangl recalled that he ordered the construction of a fake railway station, a clock (which did not work), ticket windows, timetables and arrows indicating future connections. Stangl comments that the artifice was a mechanism of repression to avoid confronting the liquidations of the Jews. In reality, the artifice was Stangl’s way of avoiding his involvement in it.⁶⁷

Sereny: Would it be true to say that you got used to the liquidations?

Stangl: To tell the truth, one did become used to it.

Sereny: In days? Weeks? Months?

Stangl: Months. It was months before I could look one of them in the eye. I repressed it all by trying to create a special place: gardens, new barracks, new kitchens, new everything; barbers, tailors, shoemakers, carpenters. There were hundreds of ways to take one's mind off it; I used them all.

Stangl's efforts to create an image of temporary journeys and village life indicate a management trauma that varies from Jäcklein's frustrated report on the deportation train from Kolomea to Belzec. Stangl's management trauma returned in sense memory, revived as a visual imprint from his recollection of wartime encounters with trapped and crowded Jewish deportees. This sense memory was revived, ironically, from his own train journeys while living as a wanted war criminal in Brazil: "When I was on a trip once, years later in Brazil ... my train stopped next to a slaughterhouse. The cattle in the pens, hearing the noise of the train, trotted up to the fence and stared at the train. They were very close to my window, one crowding the other, looking at me through the fence. I thought then, 'Look at this; this reminds me of Poland; that's just how the people looked, trustingly, just before they went into the tins.'" It is this contemporary vision, rather than the procedure of mass death that led Stangl to comment, "I couldn't eat tinned meat after that. Those big eyes ... which looked at me ... not knowing that in no time at all they'd all be dead."⁶⁸ Sereny sought clarification of his comments and his power to reverse those fatal outcomes:⁶⁹

Sereny: So you didn't feel they were human beings?

Stangl: Cargo ... they were cargo.

Sereny: When do you think you began to think of them as cargo? The way you spoke earlier, of the day when you first came to Treblinka, the horror you felt seeing the dead bodies everywhere—they weren't "cargo" to you then, were they?

Stangl: I think it started the day I first saw the *Totenlager* in Treblinka. I remember Wirth standing there next to blue-black corpses. It had nothing to do with humanity—it couldn't have; it was a mass—a mass of rotting flesh. Wirth said, "What shall we do with this garbage?" I think unconsciously that started me thinking of them as cargo.

Sereny: In your position, could you not have stopped the nakedness, the whips, the horror of the cattle pens?

Stangl: No, no, no. This was the system. Wirth had invented it. It worked. And because it worked, it was irreversible.

Stangl's characterization of the Jews as "cargo" is often cited by scholars as evidence of how proximity to killing brutalized its perpetrators, how it allowed camp workers and commandants to rationalize their participation,

and continue the infliction of mass murder to the point where the perpetrators represented their actions as symptomatic of the system rather than the result of their own choices and decisions. Although deportees were forced to endure conditions of transit that made them appear to be less than human, they were not “animals” and “like cattle” of their anti-Semitic representation, but desperate, abandoned, and on the threshold of death. Stangl’s characterization of Jews as cargo is further evidence of language’s use as denial of the human and of personal responsibility. The image of “cargo,” of Jews as being locked in “cattle pens” signaled the journey’s brutal work as an invisible torturer in producing conditions of transit that allowed Stangl to view Jewish deportees as being removed from humanity, and indeed, to rationalize their killing as merciful.

As the management traumas of Jäcklein and Stangl show, a significant legacy from the implementation of deportation relates to accountability for its administrative procedures and human impacts, and how various perpetrators represented their involvement in it. The intentional denial of deportations as death journeys in bureaucratic communications produced an evidentiary quandary for historians and prosecutors involved in postwar trials of deportation’s officials and bureaucrats. Scholars have taken the Eichmann trial as a prime example of the dilemma in extracting admissions of bureaucrats’ guilt, complicity, and ideological commitment to the Final Solution. Eichmann killed from his desk, with the ink of his pen, and with indifference and detachment. His clinical perception of his role at his trial in Jerusalem seems to have laid the basis for unquestioning interpretations that have institutionalized his defense as reflective of a bureaucratic mentality. In his own analysis, he was an expert in transportation and emigration, and applied this knowledge to traffic in the East, where no Jewish expert was needed, no special directives were required, and where no privileged categories existed.⁷⁰ Eichmann’s defense counsel suggested he was, after all, a tiny cog in the machinery of destruction and hence the destruction process. To Franz Novak, Eichmann’s Transport Officer in the RSHA, Auschwitz was not a world that starved the mind and body before killing it, but a place of motion: “For me, Auschwitz was only a train station.”⁷¹ Interpretations of bureaucratic work as detached and without visible physical impact on victims illuminate how the geographical and psychological distance of administrative structures creates a shield against moral feeling that spatial proximity to the victims may have challenged, and indeed did challenge, when perpetrators were directly confronted with the very people who transcended objectification: deportees embracing life and defying death.

Deportation has been analyzed as the product of the efficient and committed work of the desk murderer and his ostensibly unthinking obedience in a totalitarian complex of invisible actions with fatal outcomes. As the most

prominent representative of this group, Eichmann was not the first or the last to be subjected to interrogation, trial, and public outrage. In addition to his coordinating initiative, deportation involved ongoing and sustained commitments to moving and managing rail traffic and at camps.⁷²

It was in the postwar courts where the tasks of deportation received scrutiny. Henry Friedlander noted that the first trial involving a deportation commenced in 1947 and concluded in 1948 and concerned a small number of deported Jews from Württemberg.⁷³ In his ongoing study of trial cases in postwar West and East Germany, legal historian Dick de Mildt analyzed the frequency of prosecutions against “tatnahen Täter”—individuals who had physically perpetrated killings, as well as Schreibtischtäter—higher and top-ranking representatives of the ministerial bureaucracy, industry, the Wehrmacht, judiciary, the police, and the Nazi party. In a survey that covered 1945 to 1952, de Mildt concludes that only five trials were held against twelve such perpetrators.⁷⁴

Crimes of murder and complicity in murder—key crimes as prepared by prosecution teams in the Nuremberg trials—became dominant between 1967 and 1987 in West Germany, where the percentage of trials concerning crimes against Jewish victims rose from twenty-nine to seventy-six, whereas the number of trials against Schreibtischtäter numbered only fourteen against twenty-seven defendants. Many Schreibtischtäter profited from the revision of a German law of May 1968, which saw the mitigation of penalties for complicity in murder to fifteen years, rather than a possible maximum of life sentence. For those involved in administrative crimes, such as the commission of transports, the existence of personal base motives or racial hatred was almost impossible to prove, because the bureaucratized nature of the task at hand was, more often than not, conducive to the containment or dilution of racial prejudice, rather than its expression.

Cases where sentences were passed against defendants involved in deportations include that of Karl Wolff. He was found guilty of complicity in the mass killing of Warsaw Jews by “intervening with the under-secretary of state of the Reich Ministry for transport, in order to secure the availability of deportation trains to Treblinka.”⁷⁵ Sentences were also passed against defendants in the Netherlands for the arrest and deportation of local Jews to Auschwitz and Sobibor,⁷⁶ against Franz Rademacher for pressuring German institutions and governments allied with Germany to shoot Jews imprisoned in Serbia, and to deport Jews from Belgium, Germany, France, Croatia, the Netherlands, and Romania to concentration camps in Poland, and to prevent their emigration to Palestine.⁷⁷ Case 690 saw the defendant receive eight years for cooperation in the deportation of Jews from Thrace and Macedonia to Auschwitz and Treblinka by the dispatch of the SS-Hauptsturmführer Theodor Dannecker and Dieter Wisliceny as “Jewish specialists” to the German diplomatic corps in Sofia and Salonica.⁷⁸

Other cases included prosecutions of individuals involved in the deportation of 532 Norwegian Jews to Auschwitz,⁷⁹ life imprisonment for the organization of deportation from Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka of 230,000 Jews from July to September 1942,⁸⁰ and a four-year sentence passed against the RSHA Adviser for Jewish affairs in Bucharest for his involvement in the deportation of Romanian Jews to Auschwitz.⁸¹ The geographical range of this complicity shows the dependence of the SS and DRB on foreign officials for the identification, arrest, and deportation of Jews in occupied countries and under the auspices of collaborationist regimes. The lack of success in achieving sentences for these “Administrative Crimes” underscores the frustration about the prosecution of deportation’s labor as a compartmentalized crime in an organic genocidal network.⁸² The frustration is especially disturbing considering the incongruity in assessing accountability for the impacts of powerful bureaucrats in contributing to the displacement and eventual deportation of millions of innocent civilians.

The pursuit of accountability for deportations has moved beyond individuals and redirected to national rail carriers. In 1999, Jean-Jacques Fraenkel lodged a lawsuit against a “collective collaborator,” the Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français (SNCF), for its role in the deportation of the litigant’s father from France.⁸³ Alleging that the SNCF “collaborated in the deportations without any individual or collective act of opposition” and knew of “the intolerable conditions that these people faced on the cattle cars,” the litigation was the first of its kind to prosecute a national railway for crimes against humanity.⁸⁴

In 2006, a tribunal in Toulouse, France, ordered the state and the SNCF to pay 61,000 euros to a European MP, Alain Lipietz, and his sister, as compensation for their father and uncle’s transportation to Drancy in 1944. In their ruling, the judges cited the prejudice suffered by the victims in confinement and in Drancy, and stated that transportation from the camp “amounted to an act of negligence of the state’s responsibilities” because of the knowledge that Jews from Drancy would most likely be deported to Auschwitz.⁸⁵ The judges also cited the “third-class tariff” the SNCF applied to Jews even though they were transported in “cattle trucks,” a reference to the charges the SS incurred in transporting Jews. In a decision that will undoubtedly affect future claims, the conviction against the SNCF was overturned by an Administrative Appeals Court in March 2007, which argued that administrative courts did not have the jurisdiction to rule on the legal liability of the SNCF in deportations.⁸⁶ These brief examples illustrate the ongoing concerns about the victims’ frustrating pursuit of accountability for deportation’s traumatic human impact.

This chapter opened with Raul Hilberg’s question about why the railroads should be understood as anything more than physical equipment

used to transport Jews. Hilberg's work, along with that of other scholars, provides a partial answer. In historical scholarship, the administration of deportations of Jews to death camps has been represented as the work of detached bureaucrats. Timetables, quotas, euphemistic language, and numbers feature in historians' analyses of the distancing mechanisms of deportation as an efficient, ordered, and committed objective of bureaucrats who were relied upon to follow procedure and resolve obstacles when they arose. These men did not kill with guns but with correspondence and signatures.

The clinical approach of detached bureaucrats is not isolated, and has continued in historians' representations. A striking example is to offer the deportation's trauma as an inventory of removals. While the repetition of deportees as numbers in train convoy totals and timetables to be shipped reminds the reader of the compression of transit, it can also have the effect of severing that compression from the human action, choices, and commitment on which it was so critically dependent. Numbers obscure the trauma of deportation as a human crime with inhumane impacts. I am interested in what victims disclose as the reason for why we should be interested in the workings of the railroads in World War II. Their transit testimony rejects deportation's efficiency as the listing of departures and arrivals on a timetable, and quotas to be shipped. These railway testimonies were about ruptures to mobility, about degradations of life, and the relentless threat of death. Their reports of journeying disclose a radical narrative of transit that unmakes the modern railway experience.

Notes

1. Raul Hilberg, "German Railroads/Jewish Souls," in *The Nazi Holocaust: Historical Articles on the Destruction of the European Jews*, ed. Michael Marrus, vol. 3 (Westport, CT: Meckler, 1989), 520. Raul Hilberg, *Sonderzüge nach Auschwitz*, trans. Barbara Voedder (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1987). *Sonderzüge nach Auschwitz* is not isolated in its study of railroad operations, functionaries, and transport officials. Other works include Heiner Lichtenstein, *Mit der Reichsbahn in den Tod: Massentransporte in den Holocaust* (Köln: Bünd-Verlag, 1985), Alfred Gottwaldt, *Julius Dorpmüller, die Reichsbahn und die Autobahn: Verkehrspolitik und Leben des Verkehrsministers bis 1945* (Berlin: Argon, 1995), Kurt Patzold and Erika Schwarz, *Auschwitz war für mich nur ein Bahnhof: Franz Novakder Transportoffizier Adolf Eichmanns* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 1994), and Alfred C. Mierzejewski "A Public Enterprise in the Service of Mass Murder: the Deutsche Reichsbahn and the Holocaust," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 15, no. 1 (2001): 33–46.
2. Raul Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory: The Journey of a Holocaust Historian* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 40.
3. Hilberg, "German Railroads/Jewish Souls," 520.

4. Hilberg, *Politics of Memory*, 40.
5. See Mierzejewski, "A Public Enterprise in the Service of Mass Murder," 35–36.
6. The work of bureaucracies in facilitating the Holocaust has produced a vast literature on individual behavior, with historians seeking explanations about motivations, actions, and knowledge of the deadly outcomes of collaborative work. For an overview see Michael Thad Allen, "Introduction: A Bureaucratic Holocaust—Toward a New Consensus," in *Networks of Nazi Persecution: Bureaucracy, Business and the Organization of the Holocaust*, ed. Gerald D. Feldman and Wolfgang Siebel (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), 259–68.
7. There is disagreement among scholars regarding the date of Hitler's order for European-wide genocide, although many historians view the months from June to December 1941 as critical. See Christian Gerlach, "The Wannsee Conference, the Fate of German Jews and Hitler's Decision in Principle to Exterminate All European Jews," *Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998): 759–812; Ulrich Herbert, ed., *National Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000); Christopher R. Browning, with contributions by Juergen Matthaeus, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Christopher R. Browning, "The Decision-Making Process," in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2004), 173–96; Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007).
8. Hilberg, "German Railroads/Jewish Souls," 527.
9. For other national carriers and their administrative locations, see figure 4, "Railroad Structure Outside Germany," in Hilberg, "German Railroads/Jewish Souls," 528. Under *Deutsche Reichsbahn* control were the *Generaldirektion der Ostbahn* in Krakow in the *Generalgouvernement* (central Poland); the *Generalverkehrsdirktion Osten* in Warsaw in the occupied Soviet Union; the *Hauptverkehrsdirktion* in Paris (France); the *Hauptverkehrsdirktion* in Brussels (Belgium); the Plenipotentiary of Reichsbahn with Dutch Railways in Utrecht (the Netherlands); and the Plenipotentiary of Reichsbahn with Danish Railways in Aarhus (Denmark). The "autonomous" railroads were those of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, in Slovakia, and the Axis satellites of Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria.
10. See map two, "DRB/Ostbahn Routes and Nazi Death Camps, 1942," in Mierzejewski, *Most Valuable Asset of the Reich*, 118.
11. Henry Friedlander, "The Deportation of the German Jews in Post-War German Trials of Nazi Criminals," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, XXIX (1984): 217–18.
12. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 267.
13. *Ibid.*, 355.
14. Hilberg contends that in contrast to the Reich-Protectorate area, there was no *Mischling* problem, no mixed marriage problem, no old Jews problem, and no war veteran problem in Poland. There were only a handful of foreign Jews in Poland, some of whom were pulled out of the ghettos at the last minute and shipped to killing centers by mistake. See Hilberg, *Destruction of the European Jews*, 3rd ed., vol. 2, 509. The example of the Rosenstrasse is a case in point of unwanted, high-profile negative publicity about deportations. In early 1943, German wives and their supporters mobilized and protested for a week outside a predeportation collection center in Berlin against the transport of their once-exempt Jewish husbands who numbered around 2,000. This protest was a successful intervention and demonstration of German public solidarity with the Jews that the Nazis,

- and Goebbels in particular, wanted to avoid repeating. On the Rosenstrasse protests, see Nathan Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart: Intermarriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996). See also the film *Rosenstrasse* (directed by Margarethe von Trotta, 2003).
15. Mierzejewski, *Most Valuable Asset of the Reich*, 123.
 16. *Ibid.*
 17. See the table outlining destinations of deportation transports from the incorporated areas and the *Generalgouvernement* in Hilberg, *Destruction of the European Jews*, 3rd ed., vol. 2, 504.
 18. Susan Benedict and Jochen Kuhla, "Nurses' Participation in the Euthanasia Programs of Nazi Germany," *Western Journal of Nursing Research* 21, no. 2 (1999): 250.
 19. Mierzejewski, *Most Valuable Asset of the Reich*, 115.
 20. Mierzejewski provides information on the contents of returning transports. Between January and June 1942, the camp at Chelmno sent 370 freight cars loaded with the clothes of 145,000 Jews to Germany. Odilo Globocnik, commandant of Treblinka, reported to Himmler that 100 million Reichsmark worth of valuables were shipped to Germany in 852 freight cars during *Aktion Reinhard* beginning in June 1942 until the embargo in December 1942. On 6 February 1943, Oswald Pohl sent a list to Himmler confirming that 825 freight cars with clothing, bed feathers, and rags were sent to Germany from Auschwitz and Lublin. One car contained 3,000 kilograms of women's hair. In March 1943, Globocnik informed Himmler that during the previous three months, a further 1,000 freight cars with clothing materials valued at 13.3 million RM were sent to Germany. See Mierzejewski, *Most Valuable Asset of the Reich*, 127.
 21. Mierzejewski, "A Public Enterprise in the Service of Mass Murder," 36.
 22. The stages and central agencies of deportation are outlined in Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), 157–220.
 23. In the circulatory plan (*Umlaufplan*), the "travelers" included Ethnic Germans (Vd), Romanians (Rm), Poles (Po), Polish Jews (Pj), and Western Jews (Da). See Raul Hilberg, *Sources of Holocaust Research: An Analysis* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 75.
 24. Peter Witte and Stephen Tyas, "A New Document on the Deportation and Murder of Jews during 'Einsatz Reinhardt' 1942," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 15, no. 3 (2001): 477.
 25. The charges for Jewish transports are taken from Hilberg, *Destruction of the European Jews*, 2nd ed., and Hilberg, *Sonderzüge nach Auschwitz*. The transport cost for soldiers is from Heiner Lichtenstein, "Räder rollten für den Mord: Die Deutsche Reichsbahn und der Holocaust," *Tribüne* 21 (September 1982): 92.
 26. Hilberg, "German Railroads/Jewish Souls," 527.
 27. *Ibid.*, 532.
 28. *Ibid.*, 540.
 29. *Ibid.*, 540–41.
 30. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 102.
 31. Hilberg, *Sources of Holocaust Research*, 72.
 32. Karin Doerr, "Nazi-Deutsch: An Ideological Language of Exclusion, Domination and Annihilation," in Robert Michael and Karin Doerr, *Nazi-Deutsch, Nazi German: An English Lexicon of the Language of the Third Reich* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 32.
 33. Berel Lang, *Writing and the Moral Self* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 158.
 34. Henry Friedlander, "The Manipulation of Language," in *The Holocaust: Ideology, Bureaucracy, and Genocide*, ed. Henry Friedlander and Sybil Milton (Millwood, NY: Kraus International, 1980), 103. Essential reading on this theme is Viktor Klemperer, *The*

- Language of the Third Reich, LTI—Linga Tertii Imperii (A Philologist's Notebook)* trans. Martin Brady (London and New York: Continuum, 2002).
35. Friedlander, "The Manipulation of Language," 104.
 36. Wolfgang Scheffler, "The Forgotten Part of the 'Final Solution': The Liquidation of the Ghettos," *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 2 (1982): 31–51.
 37. *Ibid.*, 36.
 38. *Ibid.*, 43.
 39. *Ibid.*
 40. Scheffler, "Forgotten Part of the 'Final Solution,'" 47.
 41. Friedlander, "Manipulation of Language," 109.
 42. See Document 66, "Circular from Central Office in the Judiciary, Government of the General Government, Cracow, 21 August 1942" (Slg, Polen. Bd. 353. S. 168), in *Archives of the Holocaust: An International Collection of Selected Documents*, ed. Henry Friedlander and Sybil Milton, vol. 22 (New York and London: Garland, 1993), xxxiv.
 43. See Jonny Moser, "Nisko: The First Experiment in Deportation," *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 2 (1985): 1–29, and Phillip T. Rutherford, "Absolute Organisational Deficiency: The I.Nahplan of December 1939 (Logistics, Limitations, and Lessons)," *Central European History* 36, no. 2 (2003): 235–73.
 44. Gutman, *Resistance: Warsaw Ghetto uprising*, Israel Gutman, *Fighters among the Ruins: The Story of Jewish Heroism during World War II* (Washington, DC: B'nai B'rith Books, 1988), Israel Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt*, trans. Ina Friedman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).
 45. Gustavo Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos: Voices from a Beleaguered Society, 1939–1944* (London: Arnold, 2002), 278.
 46. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 117–18. Citing Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), Arendt recalled instances that wherever the Jews did not cooperate, fled the Nazis, or went underground, the number of victims was halved. Her condemnation occupied just a few pages of the book, yet it was the most inflammatory; it saw her ostracized from the Israeli academic community, and delayed the translation of her book into Hebrew for four decades. Idith Zertal reads Arendt's interpretation of the Jewish leadership as providing "the most profound insight into the moral collapse cause by Nazism, among the persecuted as well as the persecutors." She also reads the behavior of Jewish councils as distinct from the behavior of "ordinary" Jews (those who were without connections or social standing) in terms of historical experiences of accommodating traumas of assimilation. Zertal claims Arendt saw Jewish council leaders as the "parvenu," the privileged, prominent Jews who try to play by the rules of others, by the very society that brands and outcasts them, and who struggle to win special treatment for themselves and their kind. See Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, 141–45.
 47. Material available refers to forty-two trials against former ghetto policemen and kapos, but includes verdicts for only twenty-seven of them. In nine of the trials, the defendants were freed or rehabilitated. In thirteen cases, the defendants were forbidden to hold any position in Jewish public life or were condemned as traitors to the Jewish people and in five cases banished from the community. See Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Stein and Day, 1977), 555.
 48. Martin Dean "The Economic Final Solution: The Interrelations between Nazi Emigration, Confiscation and Deportation Polices towards the Jews, 1938–43," paper presented at the "Generations of Genocide" conference, Wiener Library, London, 26–27 January 2002. See also Martin Dean, *Robbing the Jews: The Confiscation of Jewish Property in Europe, 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press in cooperation with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2008).

49. Friedlander, "Deportation of the German Jews," 211.
50. Hilberg, *Sources of Holocaust Research*, 82.
51. These instructions are echoed in other directives from the Jewish Community of Berlin to prospective emigrants to the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, who referred to the resettlement as a "voyage." Information for "participants" in an emigration transport included advice about the surrender of personal documents such as birth and death certificates to the Jewish Community Archive, the outfit for the journey, the visibility of Jewish stars on items of clothing, and the items that should comprise luggage as a backpack, large suitcase, and hand luggage with a blanket. Certain items were reserved for the "voyage luggage" (suitcase or backpack), which was presumably loaded separately from the deportees, such as tools, razors, sewing gear, and scissors, which during the train journey may have aided escape attempts, hence the insistence that they be separate and available for easy disposal at the arrival location. Cited in Hilberg, *Sources of Holocaust Research*, 85.
52. Reinhard Rürup, ed., *Topography of Terror: Gestapo, SS and Reichssicherheitshauptamt on the "Prinz-Albrecht-Terrain": A Documentation* (Berlin: Verlag Willmuth Arenhövel, 1995), 122.
53. To minimize inquiries concerning deported Jews, registration offices (*Meldebehörden*) should not enter the place of destination (*Zielort*) into the register, but should instead record only "moved or emigrated to unknown place" (*unbekannt verzogen*) or (*ausgewandert*). See Rürup, *Topography of Terror*, 226.
54. Lang, *Writing and the Moral Self*, 168.
55. Michel Foucault's concepts of "bio-history," "bio-power," and "bio-politics" are often applied to the Nazi racial state. See Michel Foucault, "Right of Death and Power over Life," in *Violence in War and Peace: an Anthology*, ed. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 79–82.
56. See Emanuel Ringelblum, "July–December 1942: Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto," in *Anthology of Holocaust Literature*, ed. Jacob Glatstein et al. (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 43.
57. Gunnar S. Paulsson, "Escapes from Camps and Trains," in *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 92–96. There was a related thread on the "H-Holocaust" discussion list in 2000, which discussed "jumping from deportation trains." The thread hosted scholarly and personal replies about jumping attempts, the physical, psychological, and life-threatening difficulties involved in doing so, and the hostile territory in Poland, which increased the dependence of deportees on compassionate bystanders.
58. Paulsson, *Secret City*, 92.
59. Josef Jäcklein, "The Train Journey to Belzec: Schutzpolizei Zugwachtmeister Jäcklein's Report (14 September 1942)," in *The Good Old Days: The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders*, ed. Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen and Volker Riess, trans. Deborah Burnstone (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1991), 232–35.
60. *Ibid.*, 232.
61. *Ibid.*, 233. Of note is Jäcklein's description of the deportees as "load." The total transport figures approximate to an excruciating 160 deportees per carriage.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*, 234.
64. *Ibid.*, 235.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*
67. Gitta Sereny, *Into That Darkness: From Mercy Killing to Mass Murder* (London: Pimlico, 1995), 200.

68. *Ibid.*, 201.
69. *Ibid.*, 201–2.
70. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 218. In *Unmasking Administrative Evil*, Adams and Balfour use the bureaucratic processes of the Holocaust as the quintessential measure of evil unmasked. They assert, “the culture of technical rationality ... has introduced a new and frightening form of evil that we call administrative evil. What is different about administrative evil ... is that its appearance is masked. Administrative evil may be masked in many different ways, but the common characteristic is that people can engage in acts of evil without being aware that they are doing anything at all wrong.” See *Unmasking Administrative Evil*, xx.
71. Hans Safrian, *Eichmann und seine Gehilfen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), 142–43.
72. Mierzejewski looks at the attitudes of former railway employees to the killing of Jews in camps, many of whom did not request transfers for fear of jeopardizing their employment, or simply turned a blind eye. He argues that “there is no record of any member of the railway sections protesting the transports, let alone asking for a transfer. Again, fear for their jobs and the safety of their families, and the simple fact that most did not care because they were not personally involved and were caught up in their duties, explains their behavior.” See Mierzejewski, *Most Valuable Asset of the Reich*, 126. For an interview with a former *Deutsche Reichsbahn* apprentice outside the period of the Final Solution, see “Small Hills Covered with Trees,” in Dan Bar-On, *Legacy of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 200–217.
73. Friedlander, “Deportation of the German Jews,” 206.
74. Statistics on convictions and acquittals are from the Web site Justiz und NS-Verbrechen (Nazi Crimes on Trial), coordinated by Dick de Mildt. Relevant case numbers are 022, 080, 123, 260, und 310. Available at <http://www1.jur.uva.nl/junsv/JuNSVEng/JuNSV%20English%20homepage.htm>.
75. De Mildt, *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen*, Case No. 580.
76. *Ibid.*, Case No. 645.
77. *Ibid.*, Case No. 673.
78. *Ibid.*, Case No. 690.
79. *Ibid.*, Case No. 739.
80. *Ibid.*, Case No. 821.
81. *Ibid.*, Case No. 876.
82. On the theme of administrative crimes, see Christopher R. Browning, “Bureaucracy and Mass Murder: The German Administrator’s Comprehension of the Final Solution,” in *Comprehending the Holocaust*, ed. Asher Cohem, Joav Gelber, and Charlotte Wardi (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1988), 159–177. Browning examines the bureaucratic work of Franz Rademacher (Foreign Office), Harald Turner in Serbia (military administrator of the occupied territories), and Hans Biebow (German administrator of the Lodz ghetto).
83. See “French Railway Fined for WWII Role,” *Spiegel Online*, June 7 2006. Available at www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,420057,00.html.
84. Ben Macintyre, “Son Sues Rail Firm over Auschwitz,” *The Times*, 1 January 1999, 13.
85. “France Guilty of Holocaust Crime,” *The Age* (Melbourne, Australia), 8 June 2006, 11.
86. “Deportation: Appeal Court Overturns Condemnation of French Railway Operator,” *European Jewish Press*, 27 March 2007. Available at www.ejpress.org/article/news/15453.

GHETTO DEPARTURES

The Emplotment of Experience

The unmaking of the modern railway experience began before victims were forced to board the trains. Roundups, unannounced inspections, ruthless extractions from apartments, and beatings were all features of the forced relocation from ghettos, towns, and villages. Observing the deportation of Jews from Salonica, Greece, Rosa Miller wrote: “And the Jews emerge, weighed down by their rucksacks, their bundles, their bags, loaded with baskets containing food for the journey ahead. Children press close to their parents, uncomprehending, fearfully following their every move. Older people have difficulty in walking, they stumble and fall sometimes, but everybody must carry their burden. Young people walk out defiantly, head up, completely silent.”¹

Using Miller’s description as a departure point, I analyze victims’ testimonies of departure from ghettos in different locations across Europe. I explore what they were discussing, responding to, and witnessing at each critical stage of transit, of which I identify three: identification and round-ups, assembly and waiting, and boarding the trains. I have divided the departure stage into these intervals, acknowledging that deportees were not so explicit in their distinctions. An examination of how survivors represented their departure experience recalls Robert Eaglestone’s notion of existential truths. These existential truths are conveyed in entries from the Warsaw Ghetto’s *Oyneg Shabbes* (OS) Archive, maintained under the direction of Emanuel Ringelblum, and personal chronicles by Judenrat officials and leaders. Other chronicles include those from the major ghettos in Eastern Europe, and testimonies based on experiences in Central and Southern European ghettos.² An examination of these assorted testimonies might not necessarily reveal new data that historians consider original or revelatory about victims’ experiences. Rather, my intention is to interpret deportees’ representation of departure in relation to mobility, exile, and displacement from time and geography. I chart the ways in which deportees represented existential shifts from the ghettos and the loss of anchors to the familiar—be it work, social commitments, or family—to the railway stations. Deportees

Notes for this chapter begin on page 85.

moved from their residences into the condition of interminable transit, a condition that seriously undermined and often terminated the sustainability of familiar anchors.

Victims' experiences of forced relocation and impending train journeys can be read as a commentary on ambivalent and traumatic modern transit experiences. The narration of deportation is inseparable from the destabilizing impact of mechanized transit and its administration: timetables, trains, trauma, and stations. Survivor testimonies, whether in diaries, chronicles or postwar reports and memoirs, offer vivid descriptions of suspension between stability and uncertainty. I explore what impact the physical and mental fatigue of expulsions had on witnessing, arguing that the perception of terminated mobility pushed deportees into abjection and despair. This abjection was a prologue for the train journey. What traumatic geographies guided witnessing when it was without a location or place-based anchor? What were deportees thinking and discussing in response to resettlement directives? First, I provide a brief review of historians' interpretations of deportation. Second, I analyze each interval of departure, suggesting that victims initiated a dialogue with the capacity of the visual to capture separation and struggle. Using insights from cultural theory and geography, I suggest that removal from familiar routines, relationships, and locations propelled deportees into the vocation of an itinerant. Testimonies of departure convey a mode of address that struggles with the tellability of memories without obvious place-based anchors. This witness address also counters the representation of deportation as a perpetrator-centered procedure of resettlement, and refutes historians' assessments of victims as willing volunteers for this forced relocation.

Victims' responses to deportation, and particularly their options for resistance, are a long-standing, if not divisive, theme in historiography. Scholars have examined deportation as a failed galvanizer of armed physical resistance, particularly in the East European ghettos. During the years of mass deportations—1942 and 1943, and most often after roundups and news of liquidations in nearby ghettos and massacres in the Eastern territories became known, urgent resistance calls were issued. In the January 1943 "Call for Resistance by the Jewish Military Organisation in the Warsaw Ghetto," reference is made to the destination of deportation trains as the motive for choice making: "Whoever defends himself has a chance of being saved! Whoever gives up self-defense from the outset—he has lost already! Nothing awaits him except only a hideous death in the suffocation machine of Treblinka."³ The call to resist the Nazi pretense of resettlement, and to choose to die fighting resonates in "An Appeal: Bialystok Ghetto Resistance Organisation," issued on 15 August 1943, as does knowledge of the death traffic of deportation:

Be Aware—five million European Jews have already been murdered by Hitler and his hangmen. All that remains of Polish Jewry is about 10 per cent of the original Jewish community. In Chelmno and in Belzec, in Auschwitz and in Treblinka, in Sobibor and in other camps more than three million Polish Jews were tortured, suffering the most gruesome deaths ... Jews, we are being led to Treblinka! Like mangy animals we will be gassed and cremated. Let us not passively go to the slaughter like sheep! Even though we are too weak to defend our lives, still we are strong enough to preserve our Jewish honor and human dignity by showing the world that although we are in shackles we have not yet fallen. Do not go to your death willingly.⁴

Resistance calls extended the image of the passive Jew to the voluntary deportee, an update that was repeated in other wartime witness accounts and in postwar indictments of Jewish responses. Associated with the “sheep to the slaughter” image, the allegation of voluntarism implies that in relation to deportation, individual and group attempts to avoid it were possible, common, and ignored. The will to resist that scholars and postwar audiences so commonly expected of deportees but which they did not deliver is misplaced, if one considers the options presented to them. They had other less heroic concerns to consider. If roundups were accompanied by extreme brutality and were an ominous indicator of future peril, why was there not more resistance to them? If deportees had some warning that boarding the trains meant an almost certain death, then is there not some truth to the image of Jews as compliant victims? These readings are implicit in the following exchange from the Eichmann trial. The exchange demonstrates a common temptation to elicit prophetic actions from deportees, and downplays the highly volatile environment that influenced their assessment of freak and unpredictable options. The Attorney General asked Ya’akov Gurfein about his deportation from Galicia to Belzec:⁵

Attorney General: Tell me, at the railway station when they packed you into the train going to Belzec, when you thought that it was likely to go to Belzec why didn’t you resist, why did you board the train?

Gurfein: We no longer had any strength left. Very simply, we wanted it to end quickly. This was in 1943. After so many years we did not have the strength to resist any more.

Attorney General: You wanted it to end?

Gurfein: We wanted to die more quickly.

Attorney General: Then why did you jump from the window?

Gurfein: There nevertheless was an impulse. From the moment that we saw that the train was going in the direction of Belzec some spark was ignited. We saw

someone jumping and some spark was kindled within people who wanted to save themselves. I wouldn't have jumped, if my mother hadn't pushed me forcibly.

Gurfein's suggestion that choice making was possible at the time of boarding has produced a discourse of shame in victims for not anticipating, and consequently averting, the fate mapped out for them. This discourse has minimized how the conditions of ghettoization, roundup, and violence impacted on victims' immediate options. The perception that victims could have done more to direct their own fate during ghettoization is echoed in readings of apathy in the responses of Jewish individuals and groups in relation to resistance and action resulting from Nazi persecution and its threat prior to mass deportations in 1942. The contention of apathy is undermined if one considers deportation as a profound and irreparable incision into a ghetto's existence.

Anticipation, anxiety, stress, uncertainty, hope, and ambivalence were just some of responses to violent, unexpected, and forced roundups of ghetto residents and the separation of families, as well as the deportation of vulnerable ghetto groups, such as the sick, the elderly, and the children.⁶ Communities were held captive to the fear of deportation before announcements were made and roundups commenced. To avoid deportations, ghetto residents frantically attempted to save themselves and create alternative destinies—of escape, and of demonstrating their capacities for reinvention in new occupations for which they had little practical experience. For women, and at tremendous risk, this included passing as Aryans to facilitate communication between Jewish resistance networks. Survivor testimonies and chronicles made reference to the devastating impact of incarceration and fluctuating ghetto populations, of overcrowded accommodations, and ambivalence about the future. Ghettos did not receive major permanent replenishments from incoming migrations; rather the opposite was true. Disease, starvation, suicide, and random violence claimed lives, as did the deportation trains that carried people away to their deaths in the euphemisms of “outsettlement,” “evacuation,” and “resettlement.”

Deportation's impact was not only ethnically destructive, it was also representational. Wartime chroniclers and survivors used the euphemisms of transit to mock the brutal intention and impact of deportation. The imperative to be a witness to deportation's constant motion of removing people from communities was often narrated as the admitted incompleteness of the testament. The incompleteness was exhibited as a self-conscious dialogue with language to be documentary and objective. How could language capture scenes, migrations, emotions, and experiences that were, above all, embodied? How did extremity create frustrated witnesses and testifiers? Deportations brought to the fore the difficulties of creating an objective historical account of Nazi occupation amid a psychological assessment of

the community. It produced a temporal divide of “before” and “after” in testimonies, underscored by a fervent embrace of writing and telling the ordinary witness story. The “after” theme is especially striking, as deportations disrupted the archiving process in many communities, removing the already contributing and potential witnesses. The rupture was especially felt in the Warsaw Ghetto and the fact-gathering work of the OS.⁷

Prior to the deportations in the summer of 1942, the OS was the biggest underground archive in Europe devoted to the collection, study, and testimony of genocide and civil resistance in and around the Warsaw Ghetto. Ringelblum’s primary objective as director was to undertake an ethnographic and historical investigation of the texture of everyday life, and Jewish popular expression. There were secondary, but no less monumental aspirations, as Ringelblum also sought to create a usable past through assembling an archive of the material culture, economic structures, and folk customs of Polish Jewry’s masses. These objectives oscillated between the idealistic and the urgent, and as the war progressed, were shaped by threats to ethnic survival and imagining a Jewish secular humanism after the war.

The periodization of trauma in contributions to the OS about deportations had a memorial basis in Jewish history. Gabrielle Spiegel characterized the representation of deportations according to traditional modes of commemoration, of the historicization of these departures in Jewish collective memory through “liturgical time.”⁸ The deportations provoked Ringelblum to lament the loss of community history and society, the texts of which would have provided the “ordinary” character of the archive.⁹ As described by Spiegel, Ringelblum wanted to complement the liturgical presence in the OS archive, which included Yizkor books, poetry, songs, and prayers, with a renewed focus on life writing and telling through memoirs—a genre he felt was neglected among Eastern European Jews.¹⁰ Ringelblum attempted to remedy the marginalized memoir genre following deportations, urging a wide-ranging endeavor to document the disappearing traces of the Polish-Jewish shtetl world, and to identify its burial ground—Treblinka. He wanted to revive a modernist impulse in life telling detached from liturgy.

An exploration of how deportation shaped the commitment to witnessing is explored by Alexandra Garbarini in *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust*. Analyzing chronicles from Central and Eastern Europe, the author builds on the “after” theme foregrounded in the OS. She contends that 1942 and 1943 witnessed a period of extreme ruptures, which provoked in diary writing “new questioning about God, humanity, the future, and the continuity of their [Jewish] identities and a sense of total alienation from the outside world.”¹¹ Garbarini argues that this writing departed in intensity from earlier ghetto chronicles, diaries, and reports, which tended to valorize the act of writing itself as a response to persecution.¹²

These approaches by scholars are indicative of how victims' testimonies are read for their themes of resistance, coping mechanisms, and the self-conscious archiving of individuals and communities in crisis. I add to these interpretations by considering the embodied anticipations and impacts of deportation as an impending immobility. This approach reads testimonies through the prism of cultural geography, and theories of mobility and transit normally associated with sociology, anthropology, and postcolonial studies. Although cultural geography and spatial knowledge are long-standing topics of debate in the humanities, their integration into Holocaust studies is relatively recent.¹³

Analyzing representations of the self and other in relation to place allows a consideration of the spatiality of testimony and the employment of experiences—in effect, an expansive and constricted geography of mobile witnessing. This mobile witnessing is not fixed or finite. Particularly apparent in this geography are references to the infrastructure of transit such as railway stations, platforms, carriages, and tracks. This narrative attachment to the street landscapes and physical infrastructure of deportation is a fascinating and untold chapter in which everyday objects metamorphose from banality to extremity. This metamorphosis also occurs in other public places, such as hospitals, market squares, and places of religious observance. These public buildings are, however, more than mere backdrops in testimonies to the main themes of loss, displacement, and estrangement. Taken collectively, they constitute a memory map that marks the boundary between the familiar and the unknown. The witness's tellability of departure from ghettos, with its desperation, anticipation, and sense of motion without destination, evokes an image of a frontier or border that is to be crossed. The human and inhuman landscapes of this frontier are the central referents through which the experience of train transit is initiated, negotiated, and interpreted.

Local architecture is an important spatial marker in testimonies as it allows the witness to anchor experiences. In the "Architecture of Terror," J. Krzysztof Lenartowicz suggests that architecture is not a mute witness to events, but enables a type of "imaging." In his article, buildings and structures are interpreted as tropes and constant presences in the witness's testimony. Their imaging refers to the "knowledge, memory and feelings of the viewer; the physical structure shapes behaviours and is perceived through senses."¹⁴ The impact of mobility and motion on the departure from ghettos anticipates the sensory destabilization that occurs during deportation transports as unwanted social relations and intimacy among the crowd of bodies. During the representation of this en route witnessing between roundups and boarding the trains, the civic architecture provides initial locations and places from which to ground the witness's emerging dialogue with loss of the familiar, especially one's accommodation and family. In different forms

of testimony, but especially applicable to postwar memoir writing, deportation is narrated as an unknown route map.

The contention that deportation testimonies are unknown route maps acknowledges the influence of cultural theory. As an output of reimagining, reanimating, and reliving, testimonies are representations of the self shaped in relation to an elsewhere. Sociologists Barry Curtis and Claire Pajackowska assert that the “journey is a symbol of narrative ... its destinations are often described as a passage through symbolic time, forwards towards a resolution of conflict and backwards towards a lost aspect of the past.”¹⁵ Holocaust testimonies, however, defy this resolution and are permanently shaped by the constancy of conflict. Frances Bartkowski contends, “travel is movement, movement through territorialised spaces, movement by those who choose to move and those who are moved by forces not under their control. Travel could then suggest crossing cultural boundaries, trespassing, visiting, capture.”¹⁶

Testimonies convey emplotment insofar as experiences are framed in temporal moments of increasing danger and diminished spatial expression and mobility: peace and relative stability, the Nazi onslaught, the rapidity of the collapse of the community, or the resistance to it, the suffering of family and friends, the deportation experience, the camp, and finally liberation. This pervasive sameness of the structure of Holocaust emplotment, or as telling a familiar story or rhetorical trauma, admittedly makes testimony vulnerable to attacks about the survivor’s dilution, repression, and inflation of particular experiences. Yet the sameness is also a source of evidentiary and corroborating strength of testimony from different periods and locations.

The emplotment of experiences also offers a route map of transit: it guides, it displaces, it tours, and it transgresses. The spatiality of testimony refers to the impacts of dislocation and removal of the victim from his or her ghetto housing or accommodation, life, and community. The cultural theorist Michel de Certeau reflected on emplotment in narrative, suggesting that “every story is a travel story—a spatial practice.”¹⁷ While de Certeau was not referring to the narrative maps produced by Holocaust chroniclers and survivors, his writing is evocative for considering the tellability of transit and spatial constraints. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau reflects on the metaphors of modern movement: “In modern Athens, the vehicles of mass transportation are called *metaphorai*. To go to work or come home, one takes a ‘metaphor’—a bus or a train. Stories could also take this noble name: every day, they traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories.”¹⁸ De Certeau proceeds to explain how narrative structures have the status of spatial syntaxes: “By means of a whole panoply of codes, ordered ways of proceeding and constraints, they regulate changes in space ... made by

stories in the form of places put in linear or interlaced series: from here one goes there.”¹⁹ Holocaust testimonies are spatial trajectories that can be read, in de Certeau’s words, as “*narrative* actions; this will allow us to specify a few elementary forms of practices of organising space: the bipolar distinction between ‘map’ and ‘itinerary,’ the procedures of delimitation or ‘marking boundaries’ and ‘enunciative focalizations.’”²⁰ Testimonies provide both maps and tours of the sites and spaces of life and its decline: “description oscillates between the terms of an alternative: either seeing (the knowledge of an order of places) or going (spatializing actions). Either it presents a tableau (there are) or it organizes movements (you enter, cross, turn).”²¹

De Certeau’s reflections on mapping are applicable to the emplotment impulse in Holocaust testimonies, which are often seen to have their own assessment criteria by scholars and survivors who advocate the uniqueness of the event. With each stage of departure, familiar anchors of testimony, such as residence, place, public sites, friends and communities, are removed. Increasingly, as deportees are confined to limited and temporary waiting sites, the struggle between place as a physical anchor, and space as an experiential marker of mobility and constraint, becomes more obvious and traumatizing. Existential truth takes on increasingly sensorial form that challenges visual knowledge as persistently available to mobile witnesses.

Roundups: Street Scenes of Despair

During roundups, victims reported on a wide range of incidences, abuses, and reactions. Chronicles of roundups and removals testified to the physical expulsion of ghetto residents and their capacity to witness and report existential truths. Two deep community traumas of lasting loss occurred in the Warsaw and Lodz ghettos between June and September 1942. Avraham Lewin’s *A Cup of Tears: A Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto* includes an agonizing mapping of deportation traumas.²² His “Diary of the Great Deportation” argues that the disappearance of the ghetto community was not only historically unprecedented, but was also a representational rupture. His entry of 22 July 1942 scopes the community’s fear: “A day of turmoil, chaos and fear: the news about the expulsion of the Jews is spreading like lightning through the town, Jewish Warsaw suddenly died, the shops are closed, Jews run by, in confusion, terrified. The Jewish streets are an appalling sight.”²³ Lewin’s depiction of the streets seeps with emotional despair, evident in his entry of 23 July: “Weeping. The Jews are weeping. They are hoping for a miracle. The expulsion is continuing. Buildings are blockaded. 23 Twarda Street. Terrible scenes. A woman with beautiful hair. A girl, 20 years old, pretty. They are weeping and tearing at their hair. What would Tolstoy

have said to this?”²⁴ In the 25 July entry, Lewin moves the reader to the Umschlagplatz, the assembly and deportation point in the Warsaw Ghetto: “Last night there were a lot of suicides. Conditions at the Umschlagplatz. People are dying where they are being held. You can’t go in or out. By yesterday, 25,000 had been taken away, with today, 30,000. With each day, the calamity worsens. Many give themselves voluntarily. It is supposed that hunger forces them into it.”²⁵ Irreconcilable visions dominate the entry of 26 July: “The buildings at 10–12 Nowolipie Street are surrounded. Shouts and screams. Outside my window they are checking papers and arresting people. Human life is dependent on some little piece of paper. It’s really enough to drive you insane. A lovely morning, the sky is wonderfully beautiful: the sun is shining, the acacia is blooming and the slaughterer is slaughtering.”²⁶

Lewin’s reference to the “slaughterer” comes from Chaim Bialik’s famous poem, “In the City of Slaughter” (1904), written in response to the devastating Kishinev pogrom of April 1903.²⁷ With each diary entry, Lewin insists on the futility of historical analogies to describe the ghetto assaults. They are more than pogroms. On 31 July, “the tenth day of the slaughter that has no parallel in our history” is isolated in keywords that indicate comparison and precedent, and is further evident in his entry of 1 August: “The nightmare of this day surpasses that of all previous days. There is no escape and no refuge. Mothers lose their children. A weak old woman is carried on to the bus. The tragedies cannot be captured in words.”²⁸ Lewin’s descriptions accrue in intensity and are an example of crisis writing. His words evoke the pain of past expulsions as he continues his frustrated look into history to filter a contemporary truth. The Jewish police are implicated in the crime, as are Ukrainians and Germans who led the crowds to their departure point:

The 19th day of the “action” of which human history has not seen the like. From yesterday the expulsion took on the character of a pogrom, or a simple massacre. They roam the streets and murder people in their dozens, in their hundreds. Today they are pulling endless wagons full of corpses—uncovered—through the streets. Everything that I have read about the events in 1918–19 pales in comparison with what we are living through now. It is clear to us that 99 per cent of those transported are being taken to their deaths ... Twenty Ukrainians, Jewish policemen (a few dozen) and a small number of Germans lead a crowd of 3,000 Jews to the slaughter. One hears only of isolated cases of resistance. One Jew took on a German and was shot on the spot. A second Jew fought with a Ukrainian and escaped after being wounded ... the Jews are going like lambs to the slaughter.²⁹

Lewin’s portrayal of the street as a public murder site also resonates in other accounts of the July 1942 deportations from Warsaw. Ghetto communities deeply resented the Jewish police’s involvement in these removals. Their ruthless approach and roaming mobility are represented primarily in terms

of the physical injuries they inflicted during roundups. Josef Zelkowicz condemned their actions:

The Jewish police take, they take whomever they can. Whoever is there. If someone has hidden and cannot be found, he remains free. But they, when they take, take the one who is there and the one who is not ... The sun settles bloodily in the west, the entire west, swimming in blood. It would be foolish to think the sky is reflecting the blood shed in the ghetto today. The sky is too far from the earth. Nor have the cries and moans of the ghetto reached it. The lamentations were all in vain; tears were shed and lost for nothing. No one saw them. No one heard them.³⁰

The Jewish police were secondary in authority to the German police, who were the primary instruments of terror. The power of German mobility was reflected in the random seizure of anyone who looked deportable. Stanislaw Sznapman recorded that “early on the morning of Wednesday 22 July 1942, a sense of foreboding descended on the Jews inside the ghetto ... At about 11 AM, word went around that the deportation had begun. The despair was boundless. People were overwhelmed by panic and dread. Meanwhile, the Germans began riding around through the ghetto in their cars and picking men off the street, especially the better dressed; some were killed where they stood.”³¹ Sznapman also graphically describes the roundups, in which the ghettos’ streets and walkways were thoroughfares of brutality:

Red traces of German bestiality could be seen inside the apartments, in the courtyards, on the sidewalks, and along the streets—puddles of Jewish blood and dozens of motionless bodies of men, women, children and old people, the innocent victims of the self-proclaimed cultural crusaders ... And so, from 22 July on, every day from morning to evening, the barbarians’ hapless victims marched through the ghetto streets under a hail of blows from clubs or rifle butts, their faces frozen in pain, their bodies bowed under the weight of their packs and bundles, their last material possessions.³²

What is interesting in Sznapman’s description is not only the forced and brutal movement of people, but also the absorption of individuals into the hapless crowd, which has become a primary, albeit misleading, symbol of the voluntarism of Jews during deportation actions.

Emanuel Ringelblum described the compulsion to witness in the OS archive as a storyboard of emotion: “a photographic view of what the masses of the Jewish people had experienced, thought and suffered.”³³ Certainly, this preoccupation manifests in the cinematic-like descriptions of landscapes in the removal of people from houses, the tearing apart of families, and beatings of non-compliant Jews. Also pervasive in the OS archive were references to fatigued and terminated transit. Lamenting the expulsion of displaced and

persecuted Jews in Russia and the Eastern territories from the Einsatzgruppen massacres, Ringelblum wrote about the violent local geography of Jewish history: “‘Blood-red Highways’—this is the name we can give to all the tales of wandering of Jewish men and women, young people and children, who roamed constantly from the time the Germans approached their homes until they found a place of rest and settled in a spot from which they could wander no farther. All the highways are stained, like Jewish history, with drops of blood shed by the Gestapo murderers or the Wehrmacht.”³⁴

Ringelblum’s references to the fatal effects of transit (and the incredible stories of return) were evident in his selection of articles for the OS archive. His naming of street addresses and destinations inserted witnessing locations into a feared geography of captivity and death. These locations included: “Death-Camp Chelmno,” “First Day of the Deportation ‘Action’ on No. 3 Dzika Street,” “Ten Days of the ‘Trans-Settlement Action’ of Warsaw Jewry,” “The Destruction of Warsaw,” “The Last Stage of Resettlement Is Death,” “Some Information about Treblinka,” and “Reminiscences of a Treblinka Escapee.”³⁵ Ringelblum depicts images of complicity and betrayal that emphasize the ethnicity of the landscapes, their persecuted communities, and the final foot journeys of the deportees:

All are driven to the Umschlagplatz, which turns into an island flooded with tears of Jewish pain, suffering, affliction and death ... Empty freightcars are ready, standing there, and these are then fully packed with 120 to 200 persons and AWAY! Where to? No one knows ... But whoever knows the story of Chelmno, Trawniki, is aware of the manner in which these unfortunate must perish: machine guns, gas, electrical current—these are to be their redeemers from pain... Despair and hunger force people to go voluntarily to the Umschlagplatz. The Community issued posters saying that volunteers to the Umschlagplatz will be given 3 kilograms of bread and one kilo of jam. Claimants come forward. Instead of dying from hunger they prefer a bullet. So they go towards death.³⁶

Ringelblum’s mournful commentary is further internalized by deportees’ embodiment of violence. The prevalence of sensory witnessing emerges in these testimonies as the collision of aural and visual cues of invasions and extreme juxtapositions.

Motion was indicative of endings, as terrifying sounds shape the memory of Zofia Pollak, who was deported from a small ghetto in Poland to Belzec: “Wednesday, the night of August 26, 1942. One can hear the first shots, crushing of windows, shattered doors, lamentation, weeping, screams. There is a feeling of cruel slaughter outside. The action started. Midnight, a beautiful and clear night, with the moonshine lighting up the rooms, so nice around, and in such a night you hear cries of innocent children, of mothers and fathers, shaking the air.”³⁷ Returning to that moment, she

writes: "At 2:30 in the morning the 'Schupos' with whips in their hands, having the merciless face of murderers, are driving us out from our house. We join the other Jews, and we are assembled in the Square near Bristol, where the horse-cars used to stay, and here we are watching the scenes of children being shot to death in their Mothers' hands and thrown from the balconies."³⁸ The insistence on a visual truth also shapes her testimony. Her merging with the crowd created its own captivity: "I recall the horrible stories from the barbarian times, but even these atrocities are pale as compared with the cruelties and savagery before my eyes. Wherever I look around, familiar faces. We are arranged in formation of 'sixes' and we are completely surrounded, so escape is out of the question."³⁹

One of the most shockingly ruthless roundups of victims for deportation took place in the Lodz Ghetto in 1942 in the action known as the "Sperre"—the daytime curfew that the Nazi administration imposed and brutally enforced between 5 and 12 September.⁴⁰ During those eight days the Nazis deported 15,685 people, mainly children under the age of ten, people over sixty-five, the sick, those unable to work and those without employment, openly conducting their roundups in courtyards, squares, orphanages, hospitals, and on the streets. They were targeted as the ghetto's "weak links." The "Sperre" provoked Chaim Rumkowski, the head of the Judenrat in Lodz, to further promote the ghetto as an industrially productive center, although the belief in productivity was an illusion manufactured by the Nazis as long as it was self-serving. Diary chronicles and postwar survivor testimonies illuminate the desperation that intensified with each day of the "Sperre."

Testimonies about the impact of the "Sperre" continue the theme of witnessing in crisis, namely, the challenges involved in testifying to the forced movement of ghetto residents. They also reveal, as did testimonies from the Warsaw Ghetto, the locations of violence that were inscribed into architecture or material sites of witness. "Sperre" memories of violence and separation are inscribed in locations of care and ostensible protection, such as hospitals, and testimonies are anchored to infrastructure, if not buried inside different buildings. Josef Zelkowicz's diary entry from September 1 depicts the targeted victims and their impending immobility:

The hospitals are emptied ... At seven o'clock sharp, trucks drove up in front of the ghetto hospitals on Lagiewnicka Street, Wesola Street and Drownowska Street, and began loading the patients who were in these hospitals onto them ... The morning of the third anniversary of the war was soaked in tears that could not rinse the dust and blood from the ghetto streets. News that the sick are being taken from the hospitals' spread like wildfire across the ghetto. Fearless pandemonium began ... Who in the ghetto did not have someone in the hospital?

Among the sick who are mobile, a feverish activity rules—they make attempts to save themselves, jumping from the upper stories, leaping over fences, hiding themselves in cellars, impersonating hospital attendants.⁴¹

Zelkowicz's reference to the mobility of the sick implied not just physical motion, but also the urgent passage into a new identity to avoid capture. The quest for reinvention and healthy bodies on the announcement of the "Sperre" is also reflected in Riva Cherug's comment: "It is impossible to describe the panic that ensued. The old wanted to look young; they wanted to work. The ill wanted to look well, and children wanted to look older than ten years of age—but no one knew what he must be in order to survive."⁴²

Teenager Dawid Sierakowiak recorded trepidation following the hospital evacuation in his diary entries: "The mood in the ghetto is panicky; everything's in suspense, and everyone's waiting ... In the evening disturbing news spread that the Nazis had allegedly demanded that all the children up to the age of ten must be delivered for deportation, and supposedly, for extermination."⁴³ On 4 September 1942, Chaim Rumkowski confirmed this suspicion with his notorious "Give me your children" speech, which set the tone and justification for the deportation. He presented the action as a tale of rescue and survival. Ironically, he rationalized this removal through invoking the anti-Semitic metaphor of the unhealthy Jewish body in need of cleansing through a symbolic amputation of its limbs. He declared:

A grievous blow has struck the ghetto. They are asking us to give up the best we possess—the children and the elderly ... In my old age I must stretch out my hands and beg: Brothers and sisters, hand them over to me! Fathers and mothers, give me your children! You may judge as you please; my duty is to preserve the Jews who remain. I do not speak to hotheads. I speak to your reason and conscience. I have done everything and will continue doing everything possible to keep arms from appearing in the streets and blood from being shed. The order could not be undone; it could only be reduced ... The part that can be saved is much larger than the part that must be given away.⁴⁴

The effect of Rumkowski's speech was palpable, as ghetto residents desperately pursued an alternative to immobility. According to Sierakowiak, "The panic in the city is incredible. Nobody's working anywhere; everyone's running to secure work assignments for those in their family who are unemployed."⁴⁵ The representation of roundups in terms of panic and fear in the East European ghettos was similar to the anticipation of resettlement in other locations where ghettoization was relatively brief.

Magda Weisberger's testimony about her deportation from Czechoslovakia is one of thousands that can be described as an ordinary witness. Weisberger's report exhibits no distinguishing literary qualities or sophistication.

Life events and family members appear and disappear in her account with ostensible ease. Her testimony fuses the three stages of departure, yet also recalls an unusually long waiting period before deportation:

The nightmare started when one morning a German soldier appeared in front of our gate forbidding anyone to leave ... Soon our turn came and we managed to take a few belongings. We were herded into the Synagogue where we found the rest of the Jewish community. The following day we were taken to Nagy Szolos both on foot and in a caravan of horse drawn wagons. The Jews from the whole state were being concentrated there. For about a month we lived in squalor and subsisting on meager food. We were humanity in despair, uprooted from our homes, and not knowing what the future will bring.⁴⁶

Gizel Berman was relieved that deportation brought a kind of certainty to her life, albeit painfully experienced a separation from her family in Uzhhorod—a town in Western Ukraine with a complex ethnic and political history that was under Hungarian rule from 1938 until 1945. The motion of the trains represents the work of removal: “Most of us were looking forward to leaving. Because those being taken were strong, healthy people, the sick and the old worried they’d be left behind. They begged the younger ones to be sure to take them along.”⁴⁷ Restrictions on luggage were met with a selection crisis: “I started to sort through our things. Should I take warm or cool clothing? Which sentimental items could I not bear to leave behind?”⁴⁸

Lotte Weiss, deported from Slovakia in August 1942, recalls the three stages of her diminishing mobility and her anticipation of departure as a collective voice for her sisters Lily and Erika, who were deported with her: “The last night in our parents’ home was the worst in our life. Because of the rumours we had rucksacks ready and my parents filled them with food and clothing.”⁴⁹ Anna Krausz’s roundup in her native Hungary during 1944 is a continuation of her directed motion and captivity:

Finally, after Passover we were given a few days to pack our belongings since we were told we were being sent to a ghetto from which we’d be placed in work camps. Although we were terrified and obviously did not want to leave on April 15th with our small bundles they took the 10 Jewish families from our town to the main ghetto 28km from our town. There 100s of people were pushed into houses and from there on May 1st they took us to cattle wagons—we didn’t know where we were going and put 100 in a wagon and went 4 days without food, water or toilets to Auschwitz, we arrived on a Friday night. But because there were so many trains we didn’t leave the trains till mid Saturday. Obviously the heat was terrible and everyone was crying.⁵⁰

Krausz’s impressions are corroborated by Isabella Leitner’s memory of her deportation from the ghetto of Kisvarda, in the northeast of Hungary, to

Auschwitz. In an example of backshadowing in narrative, she returns to 29 May 1944, the day before her deportation: “tomorrow is deportation ... My skull seems to be ripping apart, trying to organize, to comprehend what cannot be comprehended. Deportation? What is it like?”⁵¹ In response to an SS directive to be up at 4:00 AM for deportations, otherwise her family would be shot, she’s outraged: “A bullet simply for not getting up? What is happening here? The ghetto suddenly seems beautiful. I want to celebrate my birthdays for all the days to come in this heaven. God, please let us stay here. Show us you are merciful ... We want nothing—nothing, just to stay in the ghetto.”⁵² Leitner’s impressions of the ghetto as a preferred location render it, in comparison to the violence of roundups, as a safe space rooted in the repetition of familiar routines. Recalled retrospectively, these accounts seek to impart an aura of fear about the unpredictable destination of roundups. The emphasis on physical contact, force, threat, and abuses characterized this stage, but what anchors guided deportees on their foot journeys to assembly areas?

In Motion: To the Collection Points

Movement from ghetto residences to assembly areas was the second stage of departure. In this stage, mapping of the self and the collective forced movement are depicted in descriptions of battered and bloodied landscapes, destroyed buildings, and violent encounters in the streets. Hospitals, synagogues, prisons, assembly squares, and platforms at railway stations are the signposts in this traumatic, mainly urban, geography. In the Lodz Ghetto, Oskar Rosenfeld’s description of the impact of the outsettlement order depicts the congested mobility of frenzied and forlorn journeyers. The “street” is in constant motion with the trafficking of journey provisions, transit, and death:

The “outsettlement” of the newly settled from Berlin, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Vienna, Prague and Luxemburg [*sic*] began on May 4, 1942. A bleak, rainy day, intermittent snow flurries. Impression of a November day ... The street has changed. No more aimless scurrying about, no more bundled-up faces of corpses ... Something new. From everywhere people with bundles and sacks on their backs, bags and baskets, knapsacks and little bread sacks, rushing toward some destination ... all around, people who are accompanying those who are in a hurry, supporting them or guiding them ... old people and children ... carts loaded with bundles, the streetcar carries the human masses ... Bundles in all colors ... from gray-white to black green ... Suddenly they arrive in front of the central prison. The deportees who had already been “drafted” pass over the wire fence clothing, overcoats, blankets, and other meager belongings, which they don’t dare take along, to their relatives and friends, attempting to exchange these items for a few grams of sausage or bread or margarine ... The human chains

are mostly soundless, all are prepared ... Some fall dead to the ground ... others put an end to their lives before embarking on the journey by hanging themselves ... But the street hears little about this. It does not care about individual fates. It belongs to everybody. It is just. Those who fall remain lying there. We have no time. Hunger pushes on, death awaits.⁵³

Waiting for trains in assembly areas, courtyards, and railway stations further reduced deportees to various states of unease, anxiety, expectation, and depression. These reactions were also typical, if not more intense, in the interiors of synagogues, public buildings, and factories. The depiction of deportees as an internal crowd struggling with lack of food and sanitary provisions features in several testimonies. Anna Heilman's march to the Umschlagplatz followed the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto in May 1943. She provides a traumatic map of the ruined streets, resistance efforts, and indelibly, the smell of memory. Arrival at the intermediate destination of the train station reinforces the passivity and submission of the group to order: "We were marched through the still-glowing ruins of the ghetto, the smoke and acrid smell of burned bodies in our eyes and noses. Nobody talked, nobody cried, we went like robots, only our feet moving, our hands shifting the heavy knapsacks on our backs that contained all our earthly possessions ... We entered the Umschlagplatz and joined a sea of humanity. Everybody was sitting on the floor, hugging their possessions, families keeping together, waiting."⁵⁴

Joseph Kutrzeba describes his waiting scene inside the Umschlagplatz: "In that building waiting for the deportation, every room was smeared with blood, or people having vomited, bloodied everywhere, because as it turned out, when the order came to be herded onto the freight train, the SS and the Ukrainians, who so ever didn't move fast enough, shove them or beat them."⁵⁵ The brutality prompted Kutrzeba to reconsider his options: "I began to change my mind with regard to hanging around and coming onto the freight train, because seeing what happens in the process of loading, I didn't know whether I would enter a cattle car still alive."⁵⁶

Frank Stiffel applies a temporal distinction to the different uses of the Umschlagplatz. For him it was the passage to the Umschlagplatz that marked the boundaries between before and after, and familiar and hostile territory. He depicts how the ordinary waiting area became an extraordinary repository of despair: "It was not far to go. We were now approaching the Umschlagplatz. I was thinking how different the same place can be if it is seen on different occasions. It didn't even resemble the Stawki hospital in which I had worked for three months and which I had known so well. Now it was a set of gloomy buildings surrounded by barbed wire and inhabited by a huge crowd of Jews who had been brought there before us."⁵⁷ Stiffel describes the scenes in the Stawki hospital: "People were everywhere: sitting

people, standing people, lying people. The corridors, the wards, the stairways, all smelled of people and their excrements. People were sitting in their own feces, jealously clutching their bundles and their bread. They had been waiting for four or five days for the deportation transport to arrive.”⁵⁸ His comment about the deliberately inhumane lack of provisions also depicts the work of excrement in preparing deportees for the conditions of transport.

Away from Warsaw, deportees provide corroborating testimony about waiting to board the trains. Elie Wiesel recalls the metamorphosis of places of worship into scenes of terror. Buildings of religious observance assumed an extraordinary function, housing crowds who anticipated their own fate by initiating transgressions that would later intensify throughout the journey: “Our convoy went toward the main synagogue ... The synagogue was like a huge station: luggage and tears. The altar was broken, the hangings torn down, the walls bare. There were so many of us that we could scarcely breathe. We spent a horrible twenty-four hours there. There were men downstairs: women on the first floor ... Since no one could go out, people were relieving themselves in a corner.”⁵⁹

Scenes of distress were also reported by Gerald Jacobs, who wrote about the Holocaust experiences of Miklos Hammer and his deportation from Nagyvarad in Hungary in May 1944. Walking toward the synagogue, Jacobs wrote that Hammer “felt thankful he had no sweetheart, wife or children. And he felt ready for the transport, for a new regime of terror ... Nothing, however, could have prepared him for his last few hours in Nagyvarad.”⁶⁰ Hammer depicts the everyday functions of the ghetto synagogue and its transformation: “On this May evening, the gallery was filled to overflowing, men and women indiscriminately bundled along the gateways and the benches ... The heat from the mass of bodies was oppressive. A murmur of voices was rising with panic and excitement. A few men up at the front of the stalls were praying, an art of sublime incongruity.”⁶¹ Then the synagogue doors were shut: “A sudden wailing resounded like a wave around the walls, broken by individual screams. The atmosphere was stifling. People stampeded for places to sit or lie down.”⁶² The impact of immobilization was confined to these locations, where people were forced to abandon their usual, socially conditioned behaviors: “The drone of sounds in the darkened synagogue, the coughs, screams, laughter, whispers and moans of despair, merged with impressions of the past and future.”⁶³

Following his roundup, Simon Klein was detained for eight days in a brick factory before his journey from Hungary to Auschwitz. He describes the sources of immobilization as bodily and structural:

Toward the end of June one midnite [*sic*] the police raided the house. On July 2, 288 people were dragged [*sic*] away to a brick factory which could house 2000.

40,000 people were crowded in here. There was no room for anyone—no sanitary accommodations, no food and many of the older people were exposed in mud and rain, lost their minds and killed themselves ... From all the neighboring small towns the people were herded; it was a very sad reunion. We were kept there 8 days and then crowded into cattle cars. I was put into the last transport with our family.⁶⁴

Cecilie Klein-Pollack, deported from the Khust ghetto in Hungary to Auschwitz, described a humiliating violation before her deportation. Marched to what she thought was a brick factory, she was forced to strip naked and searched for valuables. Her clothes were returned before boarding the train.⁶⁵ Kay Gundel emphasizes the pain of separation in the assembly area before her deportation from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz in August 1942:

The group was assembled in the large yard for inspection. Once again, the same scene of tears, sobs and clutching hands as people were torn away from each other to meet still another demand of Nazi business. The SS guards stomped about and screamed with rage for the people to settle down; with brutal shoves and slaps and deep jabs of their gun butts, they pushed and squeezed a herd of frightened people onto that first cattlewagons [*sic*] poised on the tracks. An engine rolled up and under heavy armed guard, the wagons rolled out of the ghetto toward ... no one knew.⁶⁶

Fear of the impending transport was also evident in accounts that testified to psychological ruin through depression, fatalistic behavior, and emotional despair. Karol Jonca includes a selection of such testimonies in his article on the deportation of Breslau Jews from Silesia in late 1941 to Theresienstadt and Auschwitz. In one example, Karla Wolff reported on the collective despair that prefaced deportations, listing 108 Jews who committed suicide before the impending liquidation of the Breslau Jewish community. She recalls the indelible scene:

It was February 27, 1943. I don't remember exactly how everything began. But all of a sudden everyone knew: this was the day of the complete liquidation of the Jewish community. I was busy with my duties at the old-age home whose windows faced the courtyard of the "Stork" synagogue ... Families and groups assembled in the cold courtyard, people were busy packing up and sorting. Many however were sitting apathetically on their boxes, staring blankly. Initially, people tried to preserve their dignity [and] personal dignity. Everyone still retained his own human countenance. But with every passing hour the familiar faces faded away; one's own face got blurred. They turned into bundles of fear and bottomless despair.⁶⁷

These foregoing accounts are more than reportage. They are also commentaries on the perpetrators and their approaches to roundups, the disregard

for deportees, and the impact of the resettlement premise to solicit deportees' compliance to board trains.

Leaving and Boarding

The final stage of departure, the loading of deportees into the trains, reveals common sentiments of relief and anticipation. It was the image of the train at the station, of an endless constellation of freight (and sometimes passenger) cars, or the guarded cattle car transport, that represented a new variant of frontier journeys between the known and tolerated ghetto existence, and despite the rumors, a still unconfirmed future. The train station lingers as a traumatic arrival and departure motif in testimonies, evoking its power as a historically ubiquitous construct of modern transit, adventure, and discovery. It also features in modern literature and suspense fiction as an enduring marker of danger, tragedy, and unfulfilled promise. Railway historians Jeffrey Richards and John MacKenzie contemplate this fascination: "What was it about the station that was so fascinating? ... The station was truly a gateway through which people passed in endless profusion on a variety of missions—a place of motion and emotion, arrival and departure, joy and sorrow, parting and reunion."⁶⁸ Railway stations were administrative shelters of departure and entry to the modern city, and also attempted to cultivate a feeling of domesticity, community, and familiarity through their design as residences. Consisting of porches at the front, shelters inside, verandas at the back, chimneys, and windows, modern stations invited temporary comforts that not only assisted in the institutionalization of modern transit but also in the pacification of Holocaust deportees at departure. They personified an order that was civic and social in design, but regulatory in purpose: "the station, with its timetables, tickers, uniformed staff, and ubiquitous clocks, is an inherent supporter and encourager of discipline and order ... it has over time acquired a more disciplinary, structural and organizational connotation."⁶⁹

Michel Foucault's perspective about administrative functions of the station can be applied to their use in the Holocaust: "panoptism was a technological invention in the order of power ... it involves surveillance, and the institutionalization of surveillance, first on a local level and then greater."⁷⁰ The long and narrow platforms at many stations permitted the control of deportees through intimidation, brute force, and compliance. In critical writing about deportation, stations and platforms are represented as powerful cultural signifiers of endings and abandonment. Writing about deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto, Jaroslaw Rymkiewicz asserts, "it is on the Umschlagplatz that the history of Polish Jews came to an end, was arrested and seemingly terminated."⁷¹

This sentiment is grounded in the testimonies of deportees, who provide intimate evidence about the multiple assaults and enclosures they endured. Irrespective of the departure location, whether at the Umschlagplatz in the Warsaw Ghetto, at Westerbork transit camp, Radogoszcz outside Lodz, Drancy transit camp, Salonica in Greece, and others, deportees recalled cruel acts of compression, beatings, and occasional assistance from others to get on to the trains that were often one meter or more from the ground. There was occasional restraint in the use of force, especially when the pretense of safe travel had to be maintained where rumors about deportation's fatal connotations were not as widespread.

Josef Buzminsky recalls the sadistic methods that accompanied his deportation in November 1942 from the Umschlagplatz:

Surrounding us were the SS men with dogs, and a group of men stood before the entrance to the wagon. An elderly woman stood there and at a particular moment a SS man set his dog on her. The dog jumped on her and tore off a piece of flesh from her buttocks and brought the piece of flesh to his master. She screamed in great fright and jumped into the high wagon, on top of the people. All these Germans laughed a great deal. We were loaded—more than one hundred people—into this wagon and they slammed the door.⁷²

Stanislaw Sznapan concurs, describing in detail the actual assault of transport even before the main destination of Treblinka had done its death work. He recalled that in Warsaw people were loaded onto

freight cars, one hundred or more to a car. The cars were packed so tightly that people had to stand squeezed together, unable to move. There were no benches. People tossed out their knapsacks, suitcases, and packages to save room. All the doors and windows were bolted and sealed. There was a terrible heat wave, so it was absolutely stifling inside the cramped cars, and there was not a drop of water. Many people died in the railroad cars for lack of air.⁷³

In his account, *Surviving Treblinka*, Samuel Willenberg reported that he was marched eighteen kilometers from the market square in the Opatow Ghetto to the railway station, with this march resembling a much shorter version of the punishing evacuations of camp inmates at the end of the war. The expendability of Jewish life is described in graphic terms, as people who could not continue were shot, and “with each shot, a shattered skull sent a fountain of blood splashing onto the earth.”⁷⁴ Rudolf Reder, one of the few survivors from Belzec, was deported from Lemberg in one of the first actions in August 1942. He confesses that the fatal destination of Auschwitz was not a secret: “Nearly two weeks before deportation everyone was talking about it as an imminent disaster. We were in despair, since we all already

knew what the word *Aussiedlung* (Jewish resettlement) meant.⁷⁵ It is often recalled in testimonies that delays in departure of trains after loading further contributed to the fear. Reder reported:

in the general scramble we trampled those who were below. We were all in a hurry, wanting to have all this behind us. On the roof of each truck sat a Gestapo man with a machine gun. Others beat us while counting 100 people to each car ... Our transport contained many men, including some who had the so-called "secure" work permits, young girls, and women. Finally they sealed all the trucks. Squeezed into one trembling mass we stood so close to each other that we were almost on top of one another. Stifling heat was driving us mad. We had not a drop of water or a crumb of bread. The train started to move at eight o'clock.⁷⁶

The irreversible effects of deportations on Jewish ethnic futures in Eastern Europe were repeated in Southern Europe, with the deportation of the almost fifty thousand Jews from Salonica to Auschwitz between March and May 1943, of whom almost 80 percent were immediately gassed upon arrival.⁷⁷ Aron Rodrigue and Esther Benbassa argue that these deportations destroyed the historically and culturally vibrant Judeo-Spanish centers in Greece, and dealt a death blow to the Judeo-Spanish language of Ladino.⁷⁸ In accounts of the persecution and public ridicule of Jews, the conditions of deportation were widely commented on in relation to the inadequate provisions made for deportees and the inhumane methods of transport. These accounts provide a corroborating witness narrative to many deportee testimonies. A document from the Directorate of Special War Services attempted to quantify the human compression that was standard for deportation. A report from April 1943 detailed that

2700 men, women, old people, infants, handicapped and injured persons were packed like crates, 60–80 at a time, into box-cars of the type normally used for transporting animals and left Thessaloniki without luggage and with one oka (1280 grams of bread) each. That was the only provision made by the Germans for the six-day trip facing the persons being exiled in this manner. The box-cars were sealed from the outside before the train departed.⁷⁹

The capacity of trains to inflict suffering on deportees was also noted by Erika Amariglio, who was deported from the Baron Hirsch ghetto in Salonica, Greece, in March 1943. Her focus on the number of wagons underscores the volume of people being deported in one convoy as well as the industrial capacity of the railroads to achieve it. She recalled that "with a sense of great anxiety and misery our second day in the Baron Hirsch ghetto came to an end. The next day everyone was talking about the railroad cars at the train station. Michael Molho writes in his book *In Memoriam* that

there were 40 railway wagons. Forty wagons! An endless line, and they were waiting to be loaded.”⁸⁰ Although Amariglio uses Michael Molho as a postwar empirical validation for her memories, no such validation is needed to interpret the following reactions during loading, the “screams, yelling, wailing, in front of the railway car doors ... people were disappearing, disappearing into the depths of the cars, more and more.”⁸¹

The loading process itself was often fatal. Deportees sometimes deliberately taunted the guards, defied orders, while the older ones were overcome by extreme physical stress. The stress is clear in the following account of the deportation of Jews from Didymoteichon, a prefecture of Evros:

On 4 May 1943, all the Jews of Didymoteichon were loaded on to box-cars, the men, women and children being placed, 80 at a time, in separate cars. Each Jew was entitled to bring effects to a total weight of 30 kilos. During the loading, three persons died of heart attacks. The destination of the train was not announced, but may be Poland. It is believed that these Jews will be eliminated during the course of the journey.⁸²

The deportations continued until May 1944, with Jews of Greek, Spanish, and Portuguese descent arrested in Athens and taken to the Rouf railway station. One of these deportations was witnessed by an observer:

They were packed with suffocating tightness, 80 or 100 at a time, into 37 closed box-cars to be sent north. The box-cars were sealed, and gangs of station workmen put barbed wire and planks of wood across the slit windows. People were piled on top of one another: pregnant women, children, invalids and old people, all calling for help. In separate though equally crowded box-cars were the Jews of Spanish nationality. Their windows were not blocked, and the Germans allowed their Ambassador to give them a little food.⁸³

The procedure of loading deportees in Warsaw and Salonica is corroborated in accounts from the Netherlands, Hungary, and Transylvania, which recall trauma, separation, and the ominous appearance of train carriages at stations. These testimonies mourn the loss of the familiar and bear witness to the transformation of deportees into itinerants.

Etty Hillesum's diaries and letters from the Westerbork transit camp in the Netherlands provide a tour of loading and its distressing impact on herself and for the deportees. Trains circulate as a central motif of freedom and incarceration in her diary entries, as she constantly speculates about who will gain a temporary reprieve from deportation during the roundups. In one respect, Hillesum is a detached and observational chronicler, in another she is that community's witness-activist as she reports mournfully on despairing street scenes in the camp. Temporalities are fused in her writing, as she

is unable to separate the historical persecution of Jews from their present journeys: “We are being hunted to death all through Europe ... I wander in a daze through other barracks. I walk past scenes that loom up before my eyes in crystal-clear detail, and at the same time seem like blurred age-old visions.”⁸⁴ The train is an industrial instrument that severs the camp community, as depicted in Hillesum’s letter of 24 August 1943: “The camp has been cut in two halves since yesterday by the train: a depressing series of bare, unpainted freight cars in the front, and a proper coach for the guards at the back. Some of the cars have paper mattresses on the floor. These are for the sick.”⁸⁵ Westerbork’s population is further compressed into cattle cars at the “Transport Boulevard,” the station platform, and the closing of the cattle car doors seal the victims’ final abandonment. Hillesum shrieks:

My God, are the doors really being shut now? Yes, they are. Shut on the herded, densely packed mass of people inside. Through small openings at the top we can see heads and hands, hands that will wave to us later when the train leaves. The commandant takes a bicycle and rides once again along the entire length of the train. Then he makes a brief gesture, like royalty in an operetta. A little orderly comes flying up and deferentially relieves him of the bicycle. The train gives a piercing whistle. And 1,020 Jews leave Holland.⁸⁶

At the conclusion of the loading, an odd normality and camp rhythm return: “The tide of helpers gradually recedes; people go back to their sleeping quarters. So many exhausted, pale, and suffering faces. One more piece of the camp has been amputated.”⁸⁷

In deportation testimonies from Hungary, the train carriage inspires mournful commentary on the geography of temporary security and uncertain transit futures. Anna Koppich was deported from Kolozsvár in early June 1944.⁸⁸ She describes the peripatetic life of deportees affected even further by the incarceration appearance of cattle cars, and the agony of leaving: “The day of our departure arrived! We were loaded with heavy backpacks ... It was hot, and we had winter coats on as we started our exit from the brick factory ... Pretty soon we were loaded into the cattle cars, thirty-six of us in one; only nine of these made it in the camp. We said goodbye to Kolozsvár. It was very painful.”⁸⁹ Exile from the familiar is evident in Isabelle Leitner’s testimony:⁹⁰ “We drag ourselves to the railroad station. The sun is mercilessly hot. People are fainting, babies screaming. We, the young and healthy teen-agers, are totally spent. What must the old, the sick, feel? Totally stripped of our dignity, leaving the town we were born in, grew up in—what happens after this long wait? Where are we off to? I am ready to go. Away from my cradle of love.” Leitner’s lament recalls de Certeau’s mapping of trauma in terms of narrative routes: the station, the theater of

loss, and impending departure from the community. Her fragment is told as a persistently relived experience, returning herself and the reader to wartime with verbs of transit such as “drag,” “going,” and “leaving.” While describing the appearance of exhausted, frail, and anxious deportees, Leitner presents a map without a destination, “Where are we off to,” suggesting an elsewhere without location, through the action of “away.”

Deported from Győr, Hungary, Eva Quittner writes of her return journeys to wartime captivity: “my mind reproduces still pictures from the film of stored memories of 11 June 1944. The pictures are in black and white: we stand frozen, my family and I, together with all the Jewish people of Győr and its surrounding areas ... The line of railway tracks extends as far as the eye can see in front of us. Cattle wagons wait, their doors wide open like gaping mouths.”⁹¹ Quittner’s fragment is an example of mapping described by de Certeau; she recalls the image from her past and imposes an order over the space and visibility of departure. She depicts the images of unfamiliar transit, with the people from Győr on the one side, and the cattle wagons on the other. It is the crossing of the space between them that signals the first of many transgressions.

Piri Bodnar’s loading was prefaced by an arduous march to the station, where the image of the cattle car provoked regret that she had not followed through on family offers of emigration. Deported from a small ghetto in Hungary in June 1944, she recalls that “finally, after hours of exhaustive marching, we arrived at a station where a convoy of cattle cars was waiting for us. When I saw those cars, I knew our journey would take us farther away from home than I had ever been, and I remembered my uncle who had offered more than once to bring me to his home in the United States.”⁹²

Olga Lengyel invokes the image of the endless train to organize her boarding scene. Deported from Cluj [Kolozsvár] in 1944, she recalls the deception she felt at the platform, and the circuitous continental journeys of the cattle cars: “We had no inkling of the treachery of which we were the victims until we all stood together on the platform in the railroad depot ... There was a nightmarish quality to the scene. On the tracks, an endless train awaited. Not passenger coaches but cattle cars, each filled to bursting with candidates for deportation. We stared. People called to each other fearfully. The insignia on the car indicated their points of origin: Hungary, Yugoslavia, Rumania.”⁹³

Deportees’ testimonies about the stages of mobility are not as discrete as I have implied in this analysis. The roundups, marching, and assembly, and loading onto trains are commonly represented as an endless transit memory of fused landscapes and experiences. Deportees give understandably more attention or emphasis to encounters and scenes that were violent, emotional, and embodied. The purpose of making interpretive incisions into

these descriptions is to chart the impact of mobility on perception and sight-based witnessing. The incisions are also designed to highlight the various scenes, experiences, landscapes, and traumas that constitute deportees' memory maps. Their maps are emotionally charged inventories that comprise objects, people, and encounters, culminating in an irreversible expulsion from the familiar. In the three stages of departure—roundups, movements to the station and waiting, and boarding of trains—testimonies reinforced the importance of a visual perspective, mapping emotional and spatial stresses. This visual perspective is grounded in somatic responses and traumas. Reading deportation through victims' voices acknowledges the impact of reduced personal space and mobility as a profoundly unsettling frontier of experience and representational geography in Holocaust testimony.

Although the locations of departure from ghettos and villages varied across Europe, the collaborative work and claims of these testimonies is multiple. First, they locate forced individual and group displacement from one's community in historical and cultural time and place, providing an anguished version of urban ruin that refigures the Holocaust's geographies of persecution in demystified, material, and spatial terms. Second, these testimonies initiate the reader into an experiential history of corporeal distress. Finally, these testimonies subvert the bureaucratic image of a controlled and distanced human contact between victims and perpetrators. Pushing, shoving, screaming, shouting, and beating: deportation was nothing if not personal.

Unsure of the destination of the trains, many victims desperately clung to the hope that the words written in letters (and later, etched into the walls of train carriages) would find readers. This was especially true for the deportees at the moment of exile from the ghetto and their former life. Just before entering the trains, and almost immediately after boarding, they scribbled notes to loved ones, family, and friends. Susan Beer's knowledge of the destination of Auschwitz meant little to her:

On July 22, 1944, after three weeks in prison, we were told to pack up our few belongings and prepare to leave. At the time, I didn't know what that meant, although I assumed it would not bode well. I found a postcard in my bag, and scrawled a message to my boyfriend. I wrote that I was being taken to Auschwitz, not wanting to disappear without a trace. Along the way, I dropped the postcard, hoping that a passerby would find it and throw it in a mailbox.⁹⁴

Hans Behr, writing his address as "letter written on cattle train," in between concentration camps in France, and dated 3 March 1943, wrote to his wife: "My dearest Edith, so tomorrow we are leaving, destination still unknown. This is my last sign of life, for the moment."⁹⁵ Lisa K.'s letter, written on a deportation train, Convoy 61, from Drancy to Auschwitz,

fears the future. Her words provide a strikingly accurate prediction that was not known or believed by most deportees: “My Dearest, the day before yesterday I received your letter. I have no more strength to cry. Tomorrow Thursday at 2 o’clock after midnight they will finish us up. We are here 1000 people. Among us are many old people and small children. Where they are going to take us, we do not know.”⁹⁶

Notes

1. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 03, “Jewish Communities,” Rosa Miller, “The Destruction of Salonica Jewry: A Personal View,” RG-03.008*01, p. 19.
2. For Warsaw Ghetto chronicles, see Raul Hilberg, Stanislaw Staron, and Josef Kermisz, eds., *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow: Prelude to Doom*, trans. Stanislaw Staron and the staff of Yad Vashem (New York: Stein and Day, 1979); and Josef Kermisz, ed., *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor: Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives “O.S.”* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986). Other ghetto chronicles include Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps, 1939–1944*, trans. Barbara Harshav (New Haven: Institute for Jewish Research, 2002); Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides, eds., *Lodz Ghetto: Inside a Community under Siege* (New York: Viking, 1989); Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto: Notebooks from Lodz*, trans. B. Goldstein (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002); Isaiah Trunk, *Lodz Ghetto: A History*, ed., and trans. Robert M. Shapiro (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).
3. See “Call for Resistance by the Jewish Military Organisation in the Warsaw Ghetto: January 1943,” in *Witness to the Holocaust*, ed. Michael Berenbaum (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 152. On Jewish resistance movements in Eastern Europe, see Daniel Feierstein, “The Jewish Resistance Movements in the Ghettos of Eastern Europe: Reflections on the Relationships of Force,” trans. Stephen A. Sadow, in *Life in the Ghettos during the Holocaust*, ed. Eric J. Sterling (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 220–57. Feierstein undertakes a political analysis of the problems of resisting the social practice of genocide, focusing on Jewish armed urban resistance in the Vilna, Warsaw, and Bialystok ghettos.
4. See “An Appeal: Bialystok Ghetto Resistance Organisation,” in *Witness to the Holocaust*, ed. Berenbaum, 153.
5. Testimony of Ya’akov Gurfein, *Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, vol. I, 333.
6. For an interpretation of a “ghetto death,” see David Patterson, “Death and Ghetto Death,” in *Life in Ghettos*, ed. Sterling 160–76. A staggering 1.5 million children died in the Holocaust and increasing scholarly attention is being devoted to their experiences. See Sue Vice, *Children Writing the Holocaust* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2004); Lynn H. Nicholas, *Cruel World: The Children of Europe in the Nazi Web* (New York: Knopf, 2005); and Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children’s Lives under the Nazis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 170–98 and 415–19. Stargardt’s chapter on “Deportation” mainly considers children’s experiences in the Vilna, Warsaw, and Lodz ghettos.
7. On the *Oyneg Shabbes* archive see Samuel D. Kassow, “Vilna and Warsaw, Two Ghetto Diaries: Herman Kruk and Emanuel Ringelblum,” in *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and Other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts*, ed.

- Robert M. Shapiro (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1999), 171–215; and Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History: Emanuel Ringelblum and the Oyneg Shabbes Archive* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007). See also David G. Roskies, *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 26–40 and 180–83.
8. Gabrielle Spiegel, “Memory and History: Liturgical Time and Historical Time,” *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (May 2002): 155.
 9. Emanuel Ringelblum, “Oyneg Shabbes,” in *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe*, ed. David Roskies (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 390.
 10. Ibid.
 11. Alexandra Garbarini, *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 4.
 12. Garbarini’s work builds on that of David Roskies and David Patterson, both of whom addressed how writing in the ghettos questioned prior archetypes of suffering in Jewish history to explain the unfolding catastrophe. See Roskies, *Literature of Destruction* and David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).
 13. The topic of spatial history is explored in an issue of *Rethinking History*. See Philip J. Ethington, “Placing the Past: ‘Groundwork’ for a Spatial Theory of History,” *Rethinking History* 11, no. 4 (2007): 465–93. On spatial approaches to the Holocaust, see Tim Cole and Graham Smith, “Ghettoization and the Holocaust: Budapest 1944,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 21, no. 3 (1995): 300–16; Tim Cole, *Holocaust City*, and Andrew Charlesworth, “The Topography of Genocide,” in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2004), 216–52.
 14. J. Krzysztof Lenartowicz, “Architecture of Terror,” *Kultura Współczesna* 4, no. 38 (2003): 63–83.
 15. Barry Curtis and Claire Pajaczkowska, “Getting There: Travel, Time and Narrative,” in *Traveller’s Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, ed. George Robertson et al. (London: Routledge, 1994), 199.
 16. Bartkowski, *Travelers, Immigrants, Inmates*, xxiii–xxiv.
 17. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 115.
 18. Ibid.
 19. Ibid.
 20. Ibid., 116.
 21. Ibid., 119.
 22. Avraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears: a Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). Havi Ben-Sasson and Lea Preiss have analyzed missing excerpts from Avraham Lewin’s diary that they found in the Yad Vashem Archives. They argue that the diary’s combination of personal narrative with general commentary of interest to the wartime Jewish public make it one of the most important testimonies about the communal life of Polish Jewry under Nazi occupation. See Havi Ben-Sasson and Lea Preiss, “Twilight Days: Missing Pages from Avraham Lewin’s Warsaw Ghetto Diary, May–July 1942,” *Yad Vashem Studies* XXXIII (2005): 7–60.
 23. Lewin, *Cup of Tears*, 136.
 24. Ibid.
 25. Ibid., 138.
 26. Ibid.
 27. I thank Omer Bartov for this reference.
 28. Ibid., 143–45.

29. *Ibid.*, 150.
30. Josef Zerkowicz, "In These Nightmarish Days," in *Lodz Ghetto*, ed. Adelson and Lapides, 342.
31. Stanislaw Sznapman, cited in Michał Grynberg, ed., *Words to Outlive Us: Eyewitness Accounts from the Warsaw Ghetto* (London: Granta, 2004), 107–8. See especially, "Roundups, Selections and Deportations," 101–203.
32. Sznapman, quoted in *Words to Outlive Us*, 110–11.
33. Ringelblum, "Oyneg Shabbes," 390.
34. *Ibid.*, 393.
35. The following entries from the Ringelblum archive are from Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*. "Death Camp Chelmno" (682–86); "First Day of the Deportation 'Action' on No. 3. Dzika Street" (691); "Ten Days of the 'Trans-Settlement Action' of Warsaw Jewry" (696), "The Destruction of Warsaw (701–3), "The Last Stage of Resettlement is Death" (703–8); "Some Information about Treblinka" (709–10); and "Reminiscences of a Treblinka Escapee" (710–16). On escape from Treblinka, see Edi Weinstein, *Quenched Steel: The Story of an Escape from Treblinka* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002).
36. Ringelblum, "Ten Days of the 'Trans-Settlement Action' of Warsaw Jewry," 698.
37. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," American Gathering Conference Collection (AGCC), Zofia Pollak, RG-02.002*22.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. On the believability of early reports of deportation destinations, attempts at "Germanizing" Lodz, and violence in the ghetto, see Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944*, trans. R. Lourie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), xx.
41. Zerkowicz, "In These Nightmarish Days," 321–23.
42. Riva Chirurg, *Bridge of Sorrow, Bridge of Hope*, trans. Arlene and Jerry Aviramp (Berkeley: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 1994), 85.
43. Dawid Sierakowiak, *Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Lodz Ghetto*, ed. Alan Adelson. Trans. Kamil Turowski (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 214.
44. Chaim Rumkowski, "Give Me Your Children!" speech of 4 September 1942, in *Lodz Ghetto*, ed. Adelson and Lapides, 328–31.
45. Sierakowiak, *Diary*, 215.
46. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," American Gathering Conference Collection (AGCC), Magda Willinger Weisberger, "I Shall Never Forget," RG-02.002*05.
47. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," Gizel Berman, "The Three Lives of Gizel Berman," RG-02.157; Acc. 1994.A.0235, p. 107.
48. *Ibid.*
49. Lotte Weiss, *My Two Lives* (Netley, SA: Griffin Press, 2003), 24.
50. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," American Gathering Conference Collection (AGCC), Anna Heyden Krausz, RG-02.002*10.
51. Isabella Leitner, "Fragments of Isabella: A Memoir," in *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust*, ed. Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (New York: Paragon House, 1988), 67. Dorota Glowacka reads Leitner's testimony as conveying the frustrations of organizing wartime experiences into impossible linearity, what she calls "vacillations of memory, in frequent disregard of chronology." See Glowacka, "The Shattered Word: Writing of the Fragment and Holocaust Testimony," in *The Holocaust's Ghost: Writings on Art, Politics,*

- Law and Education*, ed. F.C. DeCoste and Bernard Schwartz (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2000), 41.
52. Leitner, "Fragments of Isabella," 37.
 53. Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto*, 40.
 54. Anna Heilman, *Never Far Away: The Auschwitz Chronicles of Anna Heilman* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2001), 64.
 55. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Miles Lerman Collection, Joseph Kutrzeba, RG 50.030*328, Tape 6 of 12.
 56. *Ibid.*
 57. Frank Stiffel, "Treblinka," in *Images from the Holocaust: A Literature Anthology*, ed. Jean E. Brown et al. (Chicago: NTC, 1997), 234.
 58. *Ibid.*
 59. Wiesel, *Night*, 33.
 60. Gerald Jacobs, *Sacred Games* (London: Penguin, 1995), 75.
 61. Jacobs, *Sacred Games*, 76.
 62. *Ibid.*, 76–77.
 63. *Ibid.*, 77–78.
 64. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 10, "Small Collections," Simon Klein, "Letters, 1945–1946," RG-10.129; Acc. 1994.A.0328.
 65. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Interview with Cecilie Klein-Pollack, RG-50.030*107.
 66. USHMM, RG-02.004*01; Acc.1986.019, Gundel, "Reborn," p. 90.
 67. Karla Wolff, "Ich blieb zurück," as quoted in Karol Jonca, "Deportations of German Jews from Breslau 1941–1944 as Described in Eyewitness Testimonies," *Yad Vashem Studies* 25 (1996): 304.
 68. Jeffrey Richards and John M. MacKenzie, *The Railway Station: A Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 7.
 69. *Ibid.*, 14.
 70. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 71.
 71. Jaroslaw Rymkiewicz, *The Final Station: Umschlagplatz*, trans. Nina Taylor (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994), 3. For a contemporary perspective on traumatic roundup locations in Lodz, such as the Radogoszcz station that served as the major deportation site for Jews from the Lodz Ghetto, and the deserted hospital on Łagiewnicka Street from where patients were forcibly removed for deportation, see Piotr Piluk, "Łódź Bałuty. Memory of the Shoah in an Urban Landscape," *Kultura Współczesna* 4, no. 38 (2003): 10–16.
 72. Testimony of Joseph Buzminsky, *Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, vol. I, 390.
 73. Sznapan, *Words to Outlive Us*, 108–9.
 74. Samuel Willenberg, *Surviving Treblinka* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 38.
 75. Rudolf Reder, "Belzec," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry: Facing the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* 13 (2000): 270.
 76. *Ibid.*, 271.
 77. Mark Mazower writes that the majority of Salonica's Jews were deported between 15 March 1943 and the beginning of June, although the last transport left in early August. Records of Auschwitz-Birkenau show that 48,974 Jews arrived there from northern Greece; of these 37,386 were immediately gassed. See Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941–44* (New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2001), 244.
 78. See Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th–20th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 159–91.

79. Document 94, "German Persecution of Jews in Greece," in *Documents on the History of the Greek Jews: Records from the Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, ed. Photoni Constantopoulou and Thanos Veremis (Athens: Kastaniotis Editions, 1998), 270.
80. Erika Myriam Kounio Amariglio, *From Thessaloniki to Auschwitz and Back: Memories of a Survivor from Thessaloniki* (London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000), 45.
81. *Ibid.*, 51.
82. Document 94, "German Persecution of Jews in Greece," 271.
83. *Ibid.*, 278.
84. Ety Hillesum, "Letter of 24 August 1943," in *An Interrupted Life and Letters from Westerbork* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), 348.
85. *Ibid.*
86. *Ibid.*, 353.
87. *Ibid.*, 354.
88. Koloszar (Hungarian) and Cluj (Romanian) are the same town in Hungary, however, I have retained the names as survivors use them.
89. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 04, "Concentration and Other Camps," "Anna Koppich: Letters from Auschwitz, 1945," RG-04.048, p. 58.
90. Leitner, "Fragments of Isabella," 68.
91. Eva Quittner, *Pebbles of Remembrance* (Sydney: Kerr Publishing, 1993), 226.
92. Piri Pirotska Bodnar, *Shadows: The Legacy of a Holocaust Survivor* (Santa Barbara, CA: Fithian Press, 1998), 36.
93. Olga Lengyel, *Five Chimneys: A Woman Survivor's True Story of Auschwitz* (St. Albans, Hertfordshire: Granada, 1973), 15.
94. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies" Susan Beer, "To Auschwitz and Back: An Odyssey," RG-02*144; Acc. 1994.A.073. p. 18.
95. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 10, "Small Collections," Hans Behr, "Letters and postal cards, February–March 1943," RG-10.148; Acc. 1997. A.0008.
96. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 10, "Small Collections," Lisa K., "Letter," 30 October 1943 (Trans. from Yiddish into French by unknown person in 1945, and then translated into English by Charles Infeld in 1992), RG-10.054*01; Acc. 1992.A.058.

IMMOBILIZATION IN “CATTLE CARS”

Come, friend, let us walk through those rushing cages. Look, here is the sad and desperate human throng sitting and standing, plunged into a deep, nightmarish meditation. The monotonous sound of bumping wheels is heard, it lies on the heart, it lies on the heart like a heavy burden and harmonizes perfectly with the atmosphere of weirdness. It seems as if the trip had lasted a whole eternity already. We boarded the eternally traveling Jewish train, directed by strangers.¹

With this letter, Zalmen Gradowski, a worker in a Sonderkommando unit at Auschwitz, issued an invitation. Enter the “eternally traveling Jewish train,” he asked, a plea that is not limited to wartime trains if one looks at the image of the freight car housed in the permanent exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, DC (see Figure 4.1). The image of the freight car fuses historical space and contemporary memory practices. By looking at the platform of Auschwitz from the departure side of the rail car, the photo promises an Auschwitz arrival to the museum visitor. It also denies it. Through an alternative route in the permanent exhibition, the museum visitor can have an optional cattle car experience and arrive at the Auschwitz installation that follows the deportation exhibit.² It is as if present and past transits are too intimate: the rail car’s promise of re-enactment—by entering that smelly, decaying space—tempts the museum visitor with experiential identification yet also constructs it as a trespass or violation of memory. The controlled journey is also reinforced in the erection of fences inside the railcar, barriers that preserve the boards of the carriage from excessive treading. The visitor thus departs and arrives; the passage through seems a violation for having entered in the first place, and yet the visit is too brief, for the imagination conjures deportees’ fears not unlike Gradowski’s description. The rail car’s stimulus for reenactment becomes an unsettling portal to historiographical representations of the journey as a transport between the ghetto and the camp. Visitors cannot linger too long with the possibility of immobility.

Notes for this chapter begin on page 122.



Figure 4.1 View through the freight car, Permanent Exhibition, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (WS N02433). Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.

The photo of the freight car from the USHMM exhibit image provides a frame for the objectives and content of this and the next chapter. This chapter enters the train carriages and critically interprets the victims’ responses to transit, while chapter 5 delays analysis of the representation of arrival at camps to consider the tellability of the journey. This approach immobilizes testimony to consider the impact of motion, feared geographies, and uncertainty on the postwar representation of the self as a mobile victim and sensory witness.

I begin this chapter with a commentary about the construction of train journey experiences in testimonies and my interpretation of their evidentiary utility. The majority of testimonies used are postwar representations shaped by diverse cultural, temporal, and national frameworks. They are mediated by language, the location of survivor refuge or migration, fictional allusions, and literary and oral skills. In relation to language, the majority of the testimonies I use are from the post-1970s period; many are products of institutionally directed initiatives, spoken or written in English or translations. The tellability of deportation experiences at a linguistic and geographical distance from their occurrence brings into view the neglected analysis of English as a “refuge” language.³ This refuge language has also contributed

to a Holocaust consciousness of a contradictory nature where a “surfeit of memory” exists, yet remains ostensibly inaccessible through keywords such as “unspeakable” and “incomprehensible.”⁴ Although I do not adhere to the unspeakable position, I also do not suggest that the Holocaust is uncomplicated in its representational potential. Testimonies of transit convey a sense of rhetorical familiarity, especially in the survivors’ designation of train journeys as “cattle car” transit, with this familiarity produced partly from retrospective knowledge, reference to other memoirs and historical writing, and accrued traumatic memories.

The application of retrospectivity in telling life experiences, which evokes Bernstein’s concept of “backshadowing,” returns in narrative form as the predictability of the deportee’s fate. The attempt at recreating a sense of the traumatic aura of spatial shock, in foreboding scenes of panic and deprivation, is undermined by the representation of the known destination—Auschwitz, Sobibor, Treblinka, and Majdanek—which in the majority of deportee testimonies defied that experiential possibility. Thus, the terror of captivity in trains is structured with the destination as the origin to the traumatic claims of entrapment and corporeality. This sameness is not so clearly delimited or familiar in early postwar testimonies such as those from the David Boder collection where keywords or experiences for what is now known as the “Holocaust” were far less certain, rhetorical, or defined.

The tellability of transit is also dependent on the genre of narration. Experiences of deportation have been told in many types of testimonies, including postwar memoirs, film, war crimes trial testimony, unpublished accounts and letters, oral, video, and sound recordings. One prominent example of testimony making was the American Gathering Conference Collection (AGCC), a repository of survivor reports initiated by Elie Wiesel during the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in Washington, DC in April 1983, which followed the World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in Israel in June 1981.⁵ The Washington event attracted 20,000 survivors and their families. The gathering was a significant monumentalizing event in the assembly of American Holocaust survivors, and in the speakability and press coverage of their experiences.⁶ The Washington event capitalized on the gathering of survivors, and created a bonded community of witnesses and many first-time testifiers. Survivors were asked to submit a report of their life experiences under the Nazi regime, a biography that reflected a prevailing model of writing and telling in the sequence of prewar, wartime, and postwar experiences.

The storytelling framework of the AGCC project recovered the everyday, if not ordinary, Holocaust survivor autobiography. Although the memorial and documentary imperative was sincere, the AGCC project was predicated

on, and intellectually limited by, brevity. The handwritten and typed testimonies that reside in the AGCC archive depict displacement or dislocation where time periods and actions are fused in devastatingly unreflective fashion.⁷ They also vary markedly in length; some are incredibly brief recollections whereas others are excessively long expositions, which ignore the suggested three- to four-page limit of submitted testimonies. Arguably, the lengthy testimonies were symbolic of the trauma of recall itself. Many were disjointed in structure, yet attempted to follow a sequence of incarceration from prewar to postwar life. Indeed, these AGCC testimonies, by their narrative simplicity, exemplified the limitations of instructed recall. The writers seemed overwhelmed by the urgency to bear witness, with many of them admitting the futility of language to render what they perceive as a truthful and valid narrative.

It is possible that the literary ordinariness of these testimonies has contributed their utility as forgotten remnants, consisting of banal and inconsequential memories that cannot alter the ostensibly widely disseminated truths of victims' experiences. At times, the writer's focus on the deportation train journey takes center stage, yet more commonly, the confinement emerges as an indistinct interval in an otherwise extraordinary story. In many of these testimonies, the deportation journey is represented as a three-stage interval in terms similar to recollections in published accounts: the violent entry into the carriage, the battle to secure personal space amid the crowd of other deportees, and the fraught adjustment, or lack of it, to the confined conditions of transit and lack of provisions. Pearl Spiegel's testimony from the AGCC is a remarkable compression of several transit stories:

On May 18th, we were loaded onto a freight train—80 men, women, and children into one car. We were given a kettle of pea soup for all of us and for the balance of the trip, no other food was given to us. After two days of travel, we arrived in Auschwitz on May 20th, 1944. We were told to leave all of our belongings in the railroad car. Then we were told to line up—men and boys to the left and women and children on the right.⁸

AGCC testimonies also prompt frustration because of their abrupt observations. Selma Engel's deportation from Westerbork to Sobibor receives brief attention. Of her trip she recalls that someone "put some straw on the ground, and a bowl in the corner," and that with sixty people in her car, "we were all very nervous."⁹ Regina Hoffman writes of the destination as a returned intrusion:

Eventually, the Nazis herded us like animals onto cattle cars, stripping us of what little dignity we had left within our hearts. It was a living nightmare on that train, looks of bewildered people everywhere, children screaming, and the

Gestapo yelling “Mach schnell! Mach schnell!” as people were shuffled about like just so much cargo. As the vicious circle continued to turn, like the incessant rotation of the wheels of the train, another memory, from my past played itself out once more. When the train either slowed down or stopped, good-hearted people attempted in vain to get food and water to us. The Nazis knocked these items out of their hands and severely beat them for their efforts. Eventually, our predetermined destination, the Auschwitz concentration camp, came into view. From a distance we could see smoke billowing from chimneys, but we did not know at that time that the smoke was the result of men, women, and children being burned in the crematoriums. The Nazis spoke only of being relocated. As we entered the barracks, we saw the now infamous sign over the front gate, “Arbeit Macht Frei.”¹⁰

Rosa Ferera was deported from the island of Rhodes to Greece and then to Auschwitz: “In mid July 1943, men, women and children were transported by two cargo boats which after a most horrendous journey landed in Athens. Three days later we were transferred into cattle trucks without water or food and hardly any room to breathe—destination Auschwitz.”¹¹ Jenny Zavatzky’s three-day trip was memorable for the lack of a “bathroom”: “In August 1944 they loaded us into cattle cars with no windows, bathrooms for a trip that took three days and was a nightmare. People were hungry, thirsty no bathroom so people went where they sat. The heat and odors were unbearable. We finally arrived at our destination which was Auschwitz.”¹²

The train journey was also a frontier of death in the woeful lack of adequate travel provisions. This is evident in Sam Profetas’s testimony about his harrowing eight-day trip. He was forced into a Greek ghetto with his mother and sister and was soon deported to Auschwitz in March 1943: “After two or three days we were taken and shoved into cattle cars, 80 people in each one, with a barrel for our bodily functions, and very little food. The trip lasted eight days. Many old and sick people died during that trip.”¹³ The psychological impact of the journey was evident in the testimony of Salomea Hannel, deported in the winter of 1942, following a massacre: “I went to Sobibor with the surviving Jews, on a journey that lasted three days and three nights. Many of us went mad, others died. A child was killed and many women envied the mother, their children were still to suffer. Every time the train stopped, we bought snow from the Poles to quench our thirst; we paid up to 200 zlotys each. We were 300 people.”¹⁴

The brevity of these testimonies contrasts to those with an extended focus on the self as besieged. In the following examples, the stresses of the train journey are told in reports of spatial shock, excremental assault, insanity, births in the carriage, and the death of fellow deportees. The testimonies of Gisel Berman, “The Three Lives of Gisel Berman,” Eva Gross’s “Prisoner 409,” Olga Lengyel’s tellingly titled chapter “8 Horses—or 96

Men, Women, and Children" from her book *Five Chimneys*, and Zalmen Gradowski's "Letter to a Friend" and "The Czech Transport: A Chronicle of the Auschwitz Sonderkommando," all confirm the experiences of other witnesses. These authors' plunges into captivity see the literary creation of the self as imprisoned and afflicted. The truth claims of the captive witness vary in intensity according to the different models of life writing, such as written prose texts and reports, and life telling, such as oral- and video-testimony recordings. Anxious life writing of the train's entrapment also occurs in poetry, where the addressee appears to be private and familial. Rose Herstik's "The Train" portrays the fragile grip of deportees as "The hands were holding on to window rims, / Like little dead birds with broken wings."¹⁵ Itka Zygmuntowicz's "A World That Vanished" places the reader into a scene of no escape:¹⁶

The freight trains are taking us on a journey
 For most it is their last ride
 My brothers and sisters are burning
 There is no more place to hide
 The final solution is sealed
 We're trapped in a world of hell
 I can hardly understand
 How we survived this story to tell.

Omissions of deportation transit from the survivor's war biography prompt disbelief, for what happens when the transport is ignored by the interviewer, himself an experienced historian? Henry Levis recalled that his deportation from Ioannina in northern Greece to Auschwitz in early 1944 took nine days. However, the only question the historian asked about it concerned the type of carriage used. Levis's nine days inside the train are ignored as a potentially important testimony about the immobilization of deportees.¹⁷

These examples of the different genres used to write and speak about deportation train experiences have sometimes worked against their tellability, and have possibly contributed to a rhetorical story of relocation, confinement, and transit trauma that allows for minimal narrative departures or escapes. The vocabulary used to describe the train journey, such as language that refers to bodily expulsions, entrapment, and the anguished quest for personal space, challenges the claim that words can speak for themselves, yet it is the word that remains a dominant negotiator of the body's restless memory to produce traumatized testimony. Anthropologist Veena Das has characterized the tellability of body stories and memories into language as "transactions in the construction of pain."¹⁸

If deportees profess difficulty in finding words to communicate their embodied experiences, then the use of fiction in testimonies adds another

complexity to their truth claims. Survivors' reliance on fictional allusions to anchor their transit experiences evokes the decades-long debate about the adequacy of language to capture the Holocaust's veritable aura. An oft-cited reference in Holocaust testimonies is Dante's "Inferno" from *The Divine Comedy* and its scenes of epic voyaging into decline and corporeality. The poem is an allegory for the descent of the deportee into an abyss. When viewed through a sampling of citations, the "Inferno" provides a seemingly accessible story by which the writer/narrator seeks urgent identification with a fictional journey as the basis for his or her Holocaust truth. In reference to loading and departure from the Lodz Ghetto during the "Sperre" actions of 1 September 1942, Dawid Sierakowiak reported that prior knowledge of the destination of deportation transports created scenes of intense desperation among the vulnerable groups in ghetto hospitals: "Because we already know from the stories told by those brought into the ghetto how the Germans 'deal with' the sick, a great panic has risen in the city. Scenes from Dante took place when the sick were being loaded. People knew that they were going to their deaths! They even fought the Germans and had to be thrown onto the trucks by force."¹⁹

To Hayden White, Primo Levi's journey to Auschwitz is modeled on Dante's journey into Hell, and his postwar passage out of the camps in "The Truce" is the path to purgatory. This modeling raises the issue of emplotment, the "theoretical issues having to do with the extent to which a literary treatment of a real event can lay any claim to realism or historical verisimilitude."²⁰ White asks "what is the status of real events presented as describing the plots of the kinds of stories found in folklore, myth, and literature?"²¹

The survivor's appeal to fiction to anchor their transit truths, whether at departure, inside the train, or upon arrival at the camps, is also at odds with the very real, foreboding, and clinical presence that trains occupy in testimonies. As a vehicle of terror like few others, the powerful effects of train transit can be read against Edith Wyschogrod's conception of the death-world, as discussed in *Spirit in Ashes: Hegel, Heidegger and Man-Made Mass Death*. Wyschogrod connected the death work of the trains as a mode of delivery to the death camps. She highlighted deportations as a new and efficient strategy of mass death, yet neglected the train carriage's hidden work as a shell of spatial trauma that initiated deportees into, and disconnected them from, their camp experience. Wyschogrod, similar to other philosophers, contended that the camps produced an unprecedented form of social existence in which the death-world paradigm found full expression. This existence was prefaced by the life-world, which Wyschogrod envisioned as a three-tiered field of experience: the inanimate world, which is given in primary sensation and practical transactions; the vital world where human beings are characterized by self-motion, self-differentiation, and self-boundedness; and the social sphere in

which other persons are apprehended as interacting with varying degrees of impact on the self.²² The genesis of Wyschogrod's conception of the death-world is that as the life-world and its system of symbolic continuities that sustain and nurture life collapses, the durability of life emerges as its most paradoxical feature. This paradox is challenged in deportees' representation of cattle car trauma as an epic battle between the civilized self and the "other." This battle was evident in how deportees represented their train journey as leaving embodied imprints and sensory memories, and producing intellectual discussion, escape attempts, and physiological decline.

The following interpretation aims to relocate the origins of Wyschogrod's model of the death-world from the camps and to the trains. I outline the main themes of decline and recovery created by this epic human battle inside of them. The European-wide origins of deportations are fused in this journey, a merging that recognizes that despite the continental points of origin, varying dates, and climates of deportation, accounts of train journeys are often represented as a rhetorical and corroborating trauma with frustratingly little elaboration on taboo or shameful topics. This feature of a rhetorical transit by no means negates those moments of exceptional-ity in deportation transit, where deportees were transported in passenger trains, had room to move, were placed with few others, and carried plentiful food provisions. In this analysis, I have interpreted deportees' initiation into the death-world of transit as a three-stage sequence: the boarding and loading of the carriages, the unsuccessful adjustment to the lack of space, and the decline of the civilized self through sensory assaults. I also interpret the impact of train journeys as reducing deportees into a "bare life" before the camps claimed that power over human experience.²³ These stages were by no means discrete. Deportees struggled valiantly, but often poorly, with varying degrees of excruciating confinement. The erosion of personal space reduced the possibility for privacy. Deportees were gripped by severe hunger, deteriorating health and hygiene threats, the destabilization of sight, and the overpowering and choking stench of excrement, urine, and vomit.

Inside the Trains: The Assault on Space

The forced entry of deportees into the train carriages is undoubtedly a formative theme in testimonies. It is the first of many shocks. The overcrowding shaped perceptions of mobility and intimacy, provoked critical commentary on deportees' coping mechanisms, and raised rumors about the location of a shared, yet mostly unconfirmed, fate. Entry into the cattle car was reported as abrupt and distressing, and both reactions are imprinted in the testimony

of Marek Sznajderman, who was deported to Majdanek in April 1943. His depiction of the cattle car's interior is filtered through impressions of the train's use as a carrier of human traffic. The train's carriage walls are engraved with evidence of past deportees:

Finally, one by one, we reach the train platform. I cannot describe the bestial scenes that are taking place as we enter the wagons. Finally, we are inside the wagon. There are 75 of us. That is not many. Supposedly, 120 to a wagon went to Treblinka. On the walls, one can see the various inscriptions left behind by people who were bidding farewell to the world in this way. In the evening, it becomes suffocating. The window is nailed shut. Movements become heavy and sluggish. There is no air to breathe. We throw everything off, sprawling passively on the floor. Old women and some children fall to the ground. They are dying. Dr. Groziński pulls out a vial of poison. He stares blankly at his wife with a crazed look and at Dr. Hayman and his wife as well. However, he does not have the courage to make use of it.²⁴

Chaim Engel's memory of deportation from Lublin to Sobibor is told through a disordered spoken voice. He repeats the identity of the perpetrator as "they" and the train's parallel impacts of industrial advance and personal assault: "They took us to the freight trains ... they pushed us in the freight trains ... the whole night we travelled in this train ... people fell down ... people had to go to the bathroom, and there was a mess you cannot imagine ... but we had no other choice."²⁵

Adjustment to confinement emerges as a shared dilemma in the testimony of Ya'akov Gurfein, who was deported in January 1943 from the Sanok Ghetto in Galicia to Belzec, and escaped during transit: "When they put us in all together into the wagons, there was no place to stand or sit. Some of the people sat on the floor, some stood and then every hour we exchanged positions."²⁶ Zofia Pollak's use of the present-tense voice to describe her deportation to Belzec produces an uncomfortable trespass. The feeling is generated by the delay of the movement of the train and the responses of deportees to its deprivations once moving. Pollack's choice of words of unrestrained movement, such as "stretch," is undercut with images of breathlessness:

The doors of the cars are shut, it is dark and tense, impossible to stretch out your arms, absolutely no air to breathe. Everybody strangles and chokes and you feel as if a rope were tied around your neck, such a terrible heat as if the fire had been set under the car. About ten people from our group are placed near the door, whoever has hairpins, nails, fasteners, starts to bore between the boards to get a little bit of air. People behind us are in much worse plight, they take off their clothes and as if obsessed by bestiality and madness, they are hawking, choking, and driven into utmost despair. After a long waiting, the train is in motion, a sigh of relief emanates from the mouths of those who are still alive, they hope that

now more air will find its way into the car, or maybe it will start raining and a few drops will penetrate through, but none of those miracles happen. I notice that there is more and more free space, people die and we are seated on their dead bodies. The remaining are raving and wild, mad from suffering. They quarrel between themselves about water that doesn't exist. Mothers hand their children urine to still their thirst. We have in our car no more than 20 people still alive.²⁷

Gisela Sachs was deported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz on 19 October 1944. The shock of her adjustment is rendered in words such as "shoved" and "squeezed" as she tried to find a seating place for her mother. Not unlike other survivors, she uses "travel" to describe the transport experience in a non-reflective and uncritical way:

We were shoved into cattle cars. I was able to secure a seat for her on the only bench available. I sat nearby on the floor, squeezed among many people. I looked around and saw written on the wall of the car 'Arrived in Auschwitz' on such a date ... I now knew for sure where we were headed, yet I did not tell anyone. If others saw the writing, they didn't tell either. We traveled two nights and a day under the most horrid conditions. We had not enough air, no water, no toilet facilities and were practically sitting on one another. People were fighting with each other making matters even worse.²⁸

The deadly meaning of "Auschwitz" in the cattle car provoked a conspiracy of silence. Sachs and her companions were forced to adjust to the divisions of space, which are manifest in her description of actions of struggle, and consequently, characterization of adjustment as a primal battle scene.

Feelings of entrapment and torment linger in the following brief accounts of deportees. Rose Bohm describes her abrupt departure from a local marmalade factory in a Czech ghetto in language such as "herded" and as denied "room," language that indicates a dehumanizing process: "The next morning, they just herded us into a cattle car. I could not tell how many. It looked like 80 to 100. There was scarcely room to sit down. The children were crying. They did not like being pushed together. My little brother was still hungry."²⁹ Other recollections also confirmed the urgent need to adapt and impose a code of spatial exchange. Primo Levi offered that "one must take turns standing or squatting," for "lying down was out of the question, and we were only able to sit by deciding to take turns."³⁰ Similarly, in Charlotte Delbo's carriage, "the aged were silent and dazed. All of them formed groups, sharing their blankets, rolling up clothing to use as pillows,"³¹ while Eva Quittner reported that "some of the people stood up to stretch their numbed bodies and give the ones sitting down a little more room. This was to become the routine for the duration of the journey."³²

The long journeys from Greece produced a corroborating impression of confinement among deportees. Transported from Salonica, Erika Amariglio wrote about disappearing and mute deportees:

Packed together, dragging their children and luggage, people disappeared into the railway cars. On each car a sign specified: "Capacity 40 soldiers or eight horses." The cars were painted in a rusty red color, they had no windows at all apart from a skylight, very high up, left and right, protected by wire. As the doors shut you could not see anything inside; you could hardly hear anything. You saw only an occasional hand through a skylight.³³

A plea for understanding compression is evident in Leon Cohen's account, although the compression was somewhat tempered through uncommonly plentiful food provisions. Like other deportees, Cohen used "packed" in reference to the sensory feeling of confinement:

Seventy of us were packed into each cattle car. Their sole contents were two dustbins for relieving ourselves (under scrutiny of our guards) which could only be emptied at the next station. For seventy people, our only ventilation was a small opening, about 40x70cm, which was crisscrossed by barbed wire. But we were also amazed to find masses of fresh food—bread and fruit as well as two water containers.³⁴

Itzchak Nechama, deported from the Baron Hirsch Ghetto in Salonica in April 1943, was at a loss to describe his journey, making a futile plea to the court at the Eichmann trial to imagine being with seventy-seven other deportees in his carriage: "The situation was terrible. Imagine, men and women, young men and girls, how could they live in such conditions. We had been told we were going to Cracow, take with you what you want. Some people took umbrellas because it snows there and rains, so one needs an umbrella. There was so much baggage that one could not move. We could not sleep at all."³⁵

Harry Gordon's following comment speaks to the unavoidable force of bodies during transit: "they pushed us into the cars like herrings. There was no room to sit or lie down ... the pressure of bodies held us up."³⁶ Miso Vogel's reflection on the twenty-four arduous hours in his cattle car is unexpectedly brief but familiar: "It was jam-packed, uncomfortable, people were fighting for places, and hardly anyone could lie down."³⁷ Kate Bernath reported: "You couldn't sit down in the wagons ... some people were sick, out of their minds ... if somebody had to go to the bathroom ... man and woman together ... it was just so humiliating."³⁸

One of the more difficult challenges for survivors was to convey the traumas of deportation journeys to postwar audiences. This challenge was

not only for the purpose of cultivating an ethics of empathy in listeners and readers. It was also premised on the belief that subjective truths could have an objective measure, and perhaps a utility beyond oneself. One method was to give embodied experiences of feeling and touching strangers in the freight car a numerical measure. For Chiel Rajchman, who was deported to Treblinka, traumatic compression is presented as an immobilization: "We are with 140 people in the car; it is very crowded, the air is heavy and foul; people are pressed against each other. Men and women are together and everyone had to relieve himself on the spot where he or she happened to stand."³⁹ Other attempts to assert the spatial trauma of trains in numerical terms often failed. The dissonance between an empirical truth and somatic assault was evident in Abraham Kolski's uncertain estimate of the number of deportees in his carriage from the Czestochowa Ghetto to Treblinka, on 2 October 1942. His transport was "120, 130, who knows how many people ... stayed in the car ... it was so hot ... and overnight, there wasn't anywhere to stay."⁴⁰

Transport Shame

The shock of spatial compression produced further battles between maintenance of the civilized self, or at least its image, and relentless primal threats. The compression was predominantly represented in embodied terms, with language often declared futile to describe the emissions of the most private bodily acts: excretion and urination. The performance of these necessary functions contributed to the psychological ruin of deportees when combined with the heat of bodies and overflowing outlets for the disposal of human waste. In freight cars, the latrine bucket was the symbol of the consignment to death. It evolved from its basic function as a container for excrement into a motif for the degradation of life. To defecate and urinate publicly was shameful, a break with the bounds of civility. More often than not, it was the public performance of this act, which most deportees must have made at least once during the journey, which represented the closest of parallels to what they perceived as immodest, deeply traumatizing, and on par with animal or animal-like behavior. People lied down on floorboards of freight cars to find the smallest crack, desperate to inhale air unpolluted by excrement, urine, vomit, and dead bodies. The excruciating need for water "got so bad that people began drinking their own urine,"⁴¹ which would sometimes "burn the throat."⁴² Others, like Rena Gelissen, unsuccessfully tried to avoid the degradation of public excretion: "I'm sorry ... but I could not hold myself any longer. Some people are shocked, hiding their eyes in shame but sooner or later one must follow suit or mess themselves."⁴³

Lack of provisions for the disposal of waste in freight cars exposed what were normally hidden or private acts. Rena Gelissen's incredulity at the lack of provisions is compounded by uncertainty about the journey's aftermath:

The cars were closed and in each car there was a bucket to use as a toilet and a bucket of water. One bucket of water for all the people. In the evening the trains started to move. We had to take turns going to the bathroom, it was very difficult. All of us had some kind of food with us except people who were caught on the street without anything, but whoever was picked from their house, for the most part, people who did have something with them. As I said we were fortunate, we had some cabbage, bread and some other food. Again, under those conditions we were afraid to eat. We were afraid to eat everything because we didn't know what was going to happen tomorrow ... We traveled, I don't remember how long.⁴⁴

The overflowing latrine bucket was a foremost sensory memory of transport shame. Where was the train headed, when would it stop, and what would be done with those who died in transit? Although such questions concerned the victims, they were overtaken by the excrement bucket's unavoidably putrid smell and spillage, worsened by the jerking movement of the train: "the sound of the improvised lavatory soon became unbearable. At every jolt, there was a worrying ploshing noise," and "the stinking air was unbreathable, the ventilation nil."⁴⁵ Abraham Kszepicki wrote that "it is impossible to describe the tragic situation in our airless, closed freight car. It was one big toilet, the stink in the car was unbearable,"⁴⁶ and "nobody thought about food, only about air and water."⁴⁷ Moshe Garbarz recalled that "we were so weak and unnerved that we'd lost control of our bowels, often, we couldn't hold out long enough in time to get to the pail,"⁴⁸ while Alexander Donat recalled that his car's occupants "were famished, but the worst part of the journey was the filth ... we were lice-ridden."⁴⁹ Eva Quittner repeats the feeling of other deportees:

The worst thing was the lack of privacy in performing bodily functions. A pail had been placed in a corner of the wagon to serve as a lavatory for eighty people. That represented the most humiliating, appalling ordeal for me as well as the others. In our code of behaviour, modesty and propriety were carefully observed ... to be forced to obey a call of nature in public was utterly shameful.⁵⁰

The burden of relief is stressed in Victoria Ancona-Vincent's account of her almost week-long trip from Fossoli transit camp in Italy to Auschwitz in May 1944.⁵¹ Her description exemplifies a moment of Bernstein's "back-shadowing" in the inclusion of the destination as a further incitement to interpreting her journey as traumatic:

The wagon doors were sealed and the train set off. We had no idea where we were going. We were so cramped in the wagon that we had to take it in turns to sit with our legs stretched out. All that was provided was a metal drum for us to relieve ourselves in front of each other. It was humiliating in the extreme. At least three people died during the journey in our carriage. We nearly suffocated from the stench and the lack of air. We had to take it in turns to breathe fresh air from the small grilles, near the top of the wagon, climbing over each other's legs. Our train was destined for Auschwitz-Birkenau and during the terrible, six-day journey from Fossoli, the doors were only opened once for us to empty the latrine drums. We were given another bucket of water, but no food. The SS did not take the dead out of the wagons.⁵²

Female deportees from Hungary remarked that it was in the freight cars where the deprivation of intimate, private space had an indelible impact on standards of modesty and feminine behavior. Gisel Berman agonized over excreting in public, as well as the internal anxiety of getting to the bucket:

Each time the train stopped, the bucket for waste, and the bucket for water would be emptied and filled respectively. This meant that we all had to perform our most private needs in public, men and women alike. I remember thinking, "I will wait until dark—but in the dark accidents can happen more easily. What if I'm thrown off balance? What if several people need to go at the same time?" I couldn't stop thinking about this one subject, and about how lucky we were to have claimed a spot well away from the corner where the toilet had been placed.⁵³

Eva Gross represented her journey to the toilet bucket as an emotional marathon course:

I stole myself into another world. My sleep was too short. I awoke in a sweat and had an urge to go to the pail. I stood up, but immediately, I was down again. There was no foot path on what seemed to be a kilometer-long obstacle course. I reach out with both hands and poked in the dark. There was no place to take a step. When I thought I had secured a spot for one foot, I discovered something like an arm beneath it. Then I stepped on someone's chest. In desperation, I decided to grope ahead with my hands before putting down my feet again. Bending low, the strong body odors nauseated me.⁵⁴

With the crushing of bodies and luxury of standing space, Gross remembered that she

felt like an acrobat balancing on a high wire ... by the time I finished, I was in tears. The way back was just as difficult. I stood swaying like a sapling tree in a windstorm, trying to reach for a steady object. I was too far from the wall. I stretched my arms some more. The train rocked and knocked me down. I was on

the top of arms, legs, necks and noses. The same shock had jolted the toilet pail. Those who slept close to it awoke screaming, spitting and fighting. Many didn't even stir, they just lay there, sleeping peacefully in the stinking slush.⁵⁵

The shame involved in performing normally hidden actions persists in Judith Kalman's description of her journey from Hungary:

We were taken into freight trains with two buckets for 80 people—one bucket for water, the other for a toilet. Each person was allowed to take 50 kilograms of personal possessions including food for the trip. We felt very embarrassed to perform our personal functions while everyone else was watching, but eventually this became secondary, as we had little space to put our bodies, and those that ate their food so quickly had nothing to eat as the trip went on, and then they started to fight and beg. My mother gave me more than she had taken for herself.⁵⁶

Responses to Confinement

The second stage of the train journey witnessed deportees' attempted management of confinement through observation, occasional conversations to interrupt the feeling of estrangement, and intellectual reflection. These responses highlighted Wyschogrod's death-world paradigm as a space of contradictions. The conditions of transit incited ambivalence and community in fleeting and inconsequential encounters to moments where deportees also acted according to a rough moral code of care for the other, not entirely embracing the push to degradation that overcrowded train cars intended.

A dominant theme in testimonies is that the feeling of entrapment in freight cars was similar to the utilitarian transportation methods of sheep or cattle, presumably to their deaths in an abattoir. The difficult management of these conditions is described by deportees as a state of becoming unhuman, so as to provoke a contemporary reference to the anti-modern usage and effects of trains. The analogy is clear for Gisela Sachs: "Have you seen sheep transported in cattle trucks, crammed together in a compact mass? We were packed into our wagons exactly the same way ... slowly people began to accommodate themselves to the tight confinement. They squatted on the floor in remarkable silence."⁵⁷

The attempted management of whatever space could be secured and attempts at familial care were evident in Katarina Feuer's account of her deportation from Hungary:

[t]he infamous "wagonisation." 80 people in one transport wagon; we were humiliated, treated like animals. Inside the wagon we couldn't move. God, I thought, this must be a nightmare, and soon we will awake, will we not? But a

look at my father's tortured face I realized that it was the horrible reality: he was holding his youngest, reassuringly, looked at his beloved wife with tearful eyes, and then at his gorgeous [*sic*] 17 years old twin-daughters. It was this memory that I took with me to the hell of hells ... May be [*sic*] it was this that gave me strength later, when I wanted to compensate my father for all that sorrow. The train wheels were shrieking, and we were approaching the final stop. Inside the wagons people were in a horrid state. By the time we arrived, they were already half dead.⁵⁸

Magda Weisberger's sight of her ailing grandmother tormented her:

The memory of our deportation to Auschwitz is very painful. I shall never forget my beloved grandmother. As she tried to find a spot for her weary body in that crowded cattle car she moaned and groaned with pain. She rambled on and on trying to figure out what was happening. She was practically out of her mind as we tried to comfort her. For days we went without food or water. There was no disposal of human waste. This was the beginning of our total dehumanisation. But it was only a sample of what was to come.⁵⁹

The psychological decline of the transit community was largely undiscussed among the deportees at the time; those who exhibited symptoms of transit disorder or pathology more audibly and physically than others were punished. This included those who lost their minds, and were heard screaming, shouting, and ranting, becoming a further torment to other deportees. The imposition of physical order or restraints on deportees occurred in Elie Wiesel's transport and against one woman in particular, Madame Schächter. Wiesel recalls, "we could stand it no longer, some of the young men forced her to sit down, tied her up and put a gag in her mouth."⁶⁰ The attack on Madame Schächter's apparent hysteria was justified as an act of compassion for the group, yet by other standards it was clearly physical assault against her apparent mental weakness. Such assaults occurred frequently in freight cars. In addition to frustration with other passengers for "non-compliance," other motivations included acts of revenge and retribution, theft of provisions, and arguments over space and room.

The need for crowd control—which was expressed by the desire to have a fair distribution of food and provisions, and as described in Wiesel's journey, by violent attacks against unstable passengers—was particularly apparent in long journeys. Leon Cohen's journey is memorable for its needless conflict:

I prefer not to dwell too much on that interminable journey punctuated by ridiculous quarrels and insults; these were instigated by a few who still believed that they were entitled to home comforts. Some wanted to eat and drink at will, as if the food was theirs. Others wanted to use drinking water for washing. God

knows that was scarce! Others took as much room as they could and did their best to invade everyone else's space by incessantly turning over. These small inconveniences embittered our life to such an extent that six of us, all from Haidari camp, decided to enforce strict discipline before it was too late. From then on, everyone would eat once a day and drink a cup of water three times a day.⁶¹

The need for crowd control was also a safety measure intended to minimize intrusions and random shootings from German and Ukrainian officers who guarded the trains. Zvi Baumrin reported that in his journey from Lvov, from which he escaped:

The lack of air caused people to cry out loud. The Germans shouted at us to keep quiet, but the people—in spite of everything—began to yell even louder. In response, the Germans shot a random salvo from the outside into the wagon. A dozen people were killed and some wounded. All of us were conscious that this was to be our last way and although all were desperately loosing [*sic*] hope to survive, and in spite of the warning from outside that they would shoot again if we would not keep quiet, the loud crying and shouting increased because the people were hopeless. The dead bodies and the wounded fell to the floor. People had no other choice, but to stand on the bodies and on the wounded. There was no first aid care. The wounded could not take the heavy weight of the people standing on their bodies. After a short while they expired their last breath and they died.⁶²

If the psychological stability of the transit community was artificially and intermittently maintained by a few leaders within the freight car, then the threat of bodily disorders was its undoing. The emergence of sensory witness—touching, tasting, smelling, and hearing others—can be traced to testimonies that consistently portray different types of invasions and the preoccupation with decline as pathologies of the train journey. Pollution, contamination, and suffocation persist in the quest for elusive fresh air, which intermittently breezed over the desperate deportees in the carriage. Disorders of experience are recounted in Vera Laska's rendering of her deportation from Czechoslovakia:

Vignettes from the mosaic of memories. Nightmares follow one another. The eyes register but the brain resists belief. Cattle cars fit for eight animals jammed with a hundred people. No water. Food, yes all smells melting into one nauseating wave that engulfs me. My precious orange peel is overcome by garlic. A little window, nailed shut with pine boards. Laboriously I split away part of one with my fingers. Air. I see the name of a station. Polish. Days glide into nights. Three? Four? I am with people I do not know. We are the result of emptied jails and ghettos and police stations. The woman next to me is dead. Now she takes up two spaces. I have to stretch over her toward the slit in the window.⁶³

Laska's impressions are smothered by the all-consuming disgust of excrement; the oxygen of her memory:

The stench of excrement is overpowering. The woman on the floor emits a putrid smell. There are over a dozen corpses by now in the wagon. They are taken off, thrown on the platform. A bucketful of water is hurled in, cooling those at the middle. Perhaps they were able to swallow a mouthful. Most of the precious liquid drips down through the floorboards. It only intensifies the stench of human waste and vomit. Women cry, shriek, tear their hair. One is hysterically laughing. I will myself to think of ice and snow melting in my mouth, but my palate is dry, my tongue glued to the roof of my mouth. I repeat to myself: *cogito ergo sum*; as long as I think, I still exist. But thoughts are becoming hazy. Perhaps I am not even here. But I am hanging on to the large hook over the window, not high enough to hang myself. No, I have no intention to oblige the unleashed demons of bestiality and do away with myself.⁶⁴

The multiple defilements of stench were also recalled by Kay Gundel, who spoke about the concentrated effect of the pre-camp variation of Des Pres's "excremental assault." She recalled, "early in the trip I kept my hopes that the next destination would not be any more crippling than the two years at Theresienstadt. But my thoughts were lost soon from the stench and odor of human defecation within the closed car. I started to feel sick. My stomach was cramping so badly I got dizzy and twisted my way to the latrine."⁶⁵ Errikos Sevillias, deported from Athens to Auschwitz, depicted the terror of his journey in a chapter of his book titled, "The Tragic Train." Although food provisions were plentiful for the long trip, on account of food donations of biscuits, sweets, and chocolates from the Red Cross, this indulgence (compared to deportees on other journeys) was no compensation for forced entrapment. Cramped space entailed placing the toilet barrel in one corner and concealing it with a blanket to maintain some pretense to privacy. But it was soon after departure that "the first torture began. The toilet began to give out a stench that got greater and greater and became unbearable inside the closed car. The stench was to become the greatest burden during the entire long voyage. A real nightmare. By turns we stuck to the small window to breathe a little fresh air but even there the stench still followed us."⁶⁶ The inhalation of the smell prevented long bouts of sleeping, and although the train stopped en route at Larissa, guards added to the torment by not permitting the emptying of the barrel.⁶⁷ The pollution of air by excrement, and its work of ruination, dominated the thoughts of afflicted deportees:

The train started to run on again monotonously. The stench increased and our spirits fell even more. Oh, if only we could empty our barrel. We thought of the two small windows of the car, but with such a crowd it would have been impossible

for us to move the barrel and impossible to empty it because the small windows were so high. So we clung with frenzy to the windows in order to catch a breath of air and there were some real battles for a place there. Some stuck their mouths against the door in order to breathe.⁶⁸

These testimonies about the shame of “going to the toilet” were evidence of the epic battle between maintenance of the civilized self and the disorder of primal threats.

Sensory Assaults

The trauma of trains was not limited to smell. The occasionally effective management of uncontrollable deportees’ verbal outbursts did not extend to the ominous sound of the successful physical immobilization of victims: doors closing, the clunky wheels of the train, whistles blowing, and brakes screeching. The audible reminders of motion were intrusive and indelible; they were the sounds of modern death transit at war with the cries of deportees. It is these acoustic torments that are revived, like that of stench, as the deep memory of the body, always returning uninvited through the sensory stimulus of everyday life. The sounds of trains leaving, in transit and arrival, function as markers of entrapment. Erika Amariglio recalled the forced enclosure of deportees:

Bamm! Bamm! The doors closed one after the other. We too got in. Our car was completely filled. There was no place to stretch our legs. Men, women, children and elderly people were talking, crying, complaining all at the same time. In one corner of the railway car there was a sack full of biscuits, wormy figs and olives. In the middle of the car was a pail for our “bodily necessities.”⁶⁹

Deported from Hungary, Piri Bodnar evokes the sound of motion as “rhythmic clanking,” an aural memory that is a trigger to a heated bodily compression similar to earlier testimonies of adjustment:

My mother, Aunt Gisele, Sharu and I were jammed into a cattle car with about ninety men, women, and children. There was hardly any room to stand, and only the elderly and sick were allowed to sit where there was room. Soon we heard the rhythmic clanking of the train’s wheels, and our unknown journey began. A lone square window barred with planks of wood prevented escape and kept fresh air from circulating in the car. The heat was stifling. I was surrounded by acrid bodies dripping with perspiration. Two pails stood in a corner to be used for human waste. At first everyone hesitated to use them, for it was so degrading to relieve oneself in public; but we soon realized that there was no alternative. Often the

bucket was too full, and its contents overflowed. People sat in their own feces and urine, and the stench was unbearable.⁷⁰

Sounds of motion also signified endings, albeit represented with retrospective knowledge. Viktor Frankl recalled the train's whistle as a preparation for the effect of the word "Auschwitz" on group psyche:

Fifteen hundred persons had been traveling by train for several days and nights: there were eighty people in each coach. All had to lie on top of their luggage, the few remnants of their personal possessions. The carriages were so full that only the top parts of the windows were free to let in the grey of dawn. Everyone expected the train to head for some munitions factory, in which we would be employed as forced labor. We did not know whether we were still in Silesia or already in Poland. The engine's whistle had an uncanny sound, like a cry for help sent out in commiseration for the unhappy load which it was destined to lead to perdition. Then the train shunted, obviously nearing a main station. Suddenly a cry broke from the ranks of anxious passengers, "There is a sign, Auschwitz!" Everyone's heart missed a beat at that moment. Auschwitz—the very name stood for all that was horrible: gas chambers, crematoriums, massacres. Slowly, almost hesitatingly, the train moved on as if it wanted to spare its passengers the dreadful realisation as long as possible: Auschwitz!⁷¹

Zalmen Gradowski's observation on comparative transit experiences makes reference to the whistle as suggestive of untouchable and disconnected mobile populations:

We are, from time to time, awakened by the whistling of a train passing us. Everybody throngs to the little window to see those who are also rushing into the endless night ... One sees free, civilian people. A deep pain transfixes those who are looking out of the window. It would seem that they are just like us, innocent people. They are traveling and so are we. But what a difference in our roads.⁷²

These traumas were not alone in undoing the deportees' mental health and physical coping strategies. The heat of compressed bodies, the presence of sick, dying, and dead deportees, uncontrollable children, and periodic bouts of violence, sex, and selfishness were other reminders. Despite these aggravations, deportees found diversions in developing a kind of transport etiquette through sharing food, water, and space, and also having conversations. These conversations produced a somewhat artificial and forced openness, scenes of momentary yet memorable togetherness. They were also evidence of the moral dilemma of deportees who were faced with emotional withdrawal or participating, however limited, in the transit community. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's speculations on "forms of togetherness" can be used to think about the responses of deportees to confinement in trains,

a space where margins of personal freedom did not just shrink but became radically corrupted and refashioned.

A Space for Ethics

In his essay “Forms of Togetherness,” Bauman suggests that certain contexts provide for a degree of distancing among people. Forms of togetherness can be *mobile*—found in a busy street or a shopping center, a site of passing by, of momentary closeness and instant parting.⁷³ In this form of togetherness strangers are obstacles, encounters, nuisances, and delays. There is another form of togetherness, though unwanted, the *stationary* togetherness of the railway carriage, the aircraft cabin, or the waiting room. This is a “site of suspended animation, of refrigerated encounters,” as the invitation for encounters is not extended, because “the passenger-style togetherness thrives in a complicity of silence, and loud speech pierces the protective shell of conspiracy.”⁷⁴ For Bauman, other forms of spatiality are the *tempered* togetherness of an office building or factory floor, the *manifest* togetherness of a protest march, a football crowd, or a disco—togetherness only masquerading as instrumental, a space without encounters.⁷⁵

Bauman articulated the transformation from the episodic, fragmentary, and refrigerated nature of encounters experienced in regular, non-wartime railway journeys to encounters of consequence, for example, in the cattle car, as a state of “being-for.” This transition, caused by a transgression of the boundary from the contained space of the ghetto to the extremity of the carriage, represented “a leap from isolation to unity; yet not towards a fusion, but to an alloy whose precious qualities depend fully on the preservation of its ingredients ‘alterity and identity.’”⁷⁶ The state of “being-for” is as much physical as it is psychological: “The eyes stop wandering around and glossing over moving shapes, eyes meet each other and stay fixed—and a commitment shoots up, apparently from nowhere, certainly not from previous intention. The emergence of commitment is as much surprising as its presence is commanding.”⁷⁷ This form of togetherness, based on a commitment, is apparently motivated by concern for the other, an admission of empathy. This state of “being-for” also silences conversation. The harrowing conditions of the train journey provoked such reaction from victims: of commitment, concern, and moral responsibility. Bauman contends this reaction is a demand for love, but in the space of the cattle car, it might also be a demand for an affirmation and validation of life, an acknowledgment of each other’s powerlessness, a realization that “once identified with the realm of being-for, the realm of morality is enclosed in the frame of sympathy, of the willingness to serve, to do good.”⁷⁸

The return to the primal moral scene of train transit saw deportees develop anxieties about action and inaction, caring and ambivalence. The "being-for" characteristic is a form of moral utopia; it starts from the "realization of the bottomlessness of the task, and ends with the declaration that the infinity has been exhausted. This is the tragedy of 'being-for'—the reason why it cannot but be death-bound while simultaneously remaining an undying attraction."⁷⁹ It would be affirming indeed if the state of "being-for" was a sustainable reaction of deportees during transit. Disparate in their pasts, uncertain of their future, deportees were bound by a "being-for" obligation that was only valid for the duration of journey.

Bauman's comments assist in understanding deportees' encounters with each other and how they contemplated morality and ethics in extreme conditions. Bauman's description of "being-for" the other helps to explain one aspect of the victims' response: that of the moral dilemma in a situation of powerlessness. Encounters between people in contexts of normality, as Bauman has described (taken to mean when there is no threat to individual livelihood), are fragmentary and episodic. The encounters occur as if they had no past and no future; whatever there is to the encounter tends to be caused and exhausted within the temporal span of the encounter itself. The most important consequence of the episodic nature of the encounter is the lack of consequences—encounters tend to be inconsequential in the sense of not leaving a lasting legacy of mutual rights and/or obligations in their wake.

The state of "being-for" was evident in episodic encounters such as the forging of friendships, the alternation of sitting and standing space, and the desire to care for strangers. Primo Levi recalls how an ordinary conversation with a fellow female deportee toward the journey's end assumed special significance: "we said to each other things that are never said among the living. We said farewell and it was short; everybody said farewell to life through his neighbour. We had no more fear."⁸⁰

Optimism in the carriages was evident in the immediate forging of friendships. Fania Fenelon recalled sharing plentiful provisions as a source of bonding: "while devouring our luxury fare, quenching our thirst with Roederer brut, we swore never to leave one another, to share everything."⁸¹ This sharing included the singing of songs when small girls start humming "Marlborough s'en va-t-en guerre," however Fenelon's sarcastic rendering of "Lying in the Hay" "ruined everything."⁸² Ernest Michel responded with a desire to give, recalling that "we shared precious water and rationed it to a few drops for everyone."⁸³

Singing and joke telling were critical affirmations of community according to some accounts. Irene Awret, reporting from the Malines transit camp in Belgium, heard the singing of Zionist Youth Movements, French patriotic marches, and Flemish chants among deportees loaded in the train carriages

at the departure platform.⁸⁴ Lotte Weiss recalled that during her journey, “we all huddled together just to keep warm ... after we had been traveling for some considerable time, some of the girls started to sing Jewish songs.”⁸⁵ Anna Koppich’s journey from Hungary in June 1944 confirms that the availability of provisions and trade was part of the pretense of resettlement. Koppich managed to “buy some food at various stations. A comforter bought a quart of milk and a half-pound of butter. A set of sheets was exchanged for two pounds of bread and a few radishes.”⁸⁶ Leon Cohen’s long journey from Athens to Auschwitz was accompanied by an unusually sympathetic train guard, who opened the doors of the car at all stops. This relief was complemented by the youthful profile of some deportees, who raised the spirits of the others through laughter, which was “enough to keep our morale up for most of the journey. When we felt low, we sang folk songs. They were also entertained by cards, magic tricks and a guitar.”⁸⁷

Jehoshua Büchler’s actions during his journey as an adolescent conveyed youthful immaturity, and possibly aggravated the shame deportees felt about the lack of privacy. He recalls that

in the railway cattle cars everything was closed, even the windows. I didn’t know where they were transferring us to ... We the children and youths found the journey amazing. We lay on the hay that was spread on the floor and ran and stepped and bumped into the bodies of adults, who were lying on the floor. We annoyed the people when we skipped and jumped over them. We burst out laughing when we saw two adults going to the toilet in buckets, and we peeped when women and young girls went to the bucket. We had a special place from which we could peep without them noticing.⁸⁸

Some journeys also produced conversations among deportees about what they perceived as the causes and effects of Jewish territorial homelessness. Regina Kahn, deported from Czechoslovakia, recalled a conversation about why her family had been fated to die. She overheard her parents talking in the cattle car, and reacted angrily, confronting her mother: “the only reason for which we are going to die is because we were born Jewish,” to which her mother replied, “no not because we are Jewish, we are going to die because we don’t have a country of our own and there is nobody to protect us. It would happen to anyone without a country.”⁸⁹

Although train journeys promoted many “being-for” conversations on diverse topics, passengers also withdrew from these artificial commitments, as emotional distance and detachment were perceived as critical to survival. While on the journey from Hungary to Auschwitz, upon surveying the mass of people in the carriage, Miklos Hammer encouraged his companions to disregard the suffering of others, particularly a sobbing woman: “Ignore her. You must not even think about her. Or the man who died—or any of

these snivelling children in here ... Remember what Weisz used to tell us, Ede. Don't get involved. There are no luxuries here, and that includes the luxury of worrying about other people. Your best chance of getting through, of overcoming these terrible conditions, is to shed everything that is not part of yourself."⁹⁰

Withdrawal from the social space of the carriage was also expressed in suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. Although suicide was not uncommon as a reaction to persecution, its occurrence during deportation journeys plunged fellow deportees into a radical, and sometimes unwanted, state of "being-for" the other. Josef B. reported that "in my wagon was over hundred people together" who "couldn't breathe, and they locked the doors, there was barbed wire and small windows, and the train started to move, and one man he hanged himself in the train with a belt, and they tried to cut him off."⁹¹ Clara L., deported from Hungary to Auschwitz, saw that the doctor of the ghetto had smuggled "an entire hospital supply of morphine" onto the train, and used it to take his own life. As the train journeyed closer to Auschwitz, Clara asked her mother "if she would want to have this way out, and she said no. She was a very religious woman and apparently decided this is what is going to be."⁹²

The sheer force of spatial compression caused many deaths. Deported to Majdanek, Helen K.'s video testimony tells of her family's death and the struggle to avoid it. Ending with the words "you know," she made a frustrated plea to her interviewer to recognize the deathly captivity in trains: "My brother died in my arms. My younger brother and my husband's two sisters. There was not enough oxygen for all those people. They kept us in those wagons for days. They wanted us to die in the wagons. You know the cattle cars with very little windows?"⁹³

The analysis of morally motivated responses in train encounters was not limited to Bauman's condition of "being-for." In *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*, Terrence Des Pres contended that the will to communion is a constitutive element of humanness. In extremity, moral and caring behavior that contravenes the commands of the death-world "emerges without plan or instruction, simply as the means to life."⁹⁴ Although it is tempting to find moments of human affirmation, expressions of care and commitment in extremity, these should also be contextualized with other responses. Wyschogrod's analysis of encounters in the death-world assists in elucidating these responses. She does not overemphasize the flashes of light or unauthorized values in her reading of the camp as the signature expression of the death-world. Acts of humanity and care occurred in spite of the virtual destruction of the life-world through an understanding of the other, according to a rough moral code, with the effect that acts contrary to those proscribed by the system represent "a breach in the system of significations forged by that structure."⁹⁵

The Fatigue of Time and Transit

These affirmations of the life-world occurred in transit to the death-world. Features of this transition were expressed in what I call “journey fatigue,” a challenge to deportees’ ability to perceive time, which emerges as the need to admit and manage intermittent perceptual breakdowns in order to survive the journey. In *Time: An Essay*, Norbert Elias posed questions that relate to “journey fatigue,” asking “how can something be measured that is not perceptible to the senses?”⁹⁶ Although DRB timetables facilitated the departure and arrival of transports to camps, time lost its power to organize deportees’ sense of self during transit. For the duration of transit, deportees commonly testify to fatigue and an inability to place the self in journey time. This inability to find empirical measures of lapsed journey time was exacerbated by the often-unknown geography of countries that the trains crossed.

The perceptual unknowability of time and place added a dramatic sense of closure to cattle car space, magnifying the immediacy and meaning of action in a collapsed present. The rupture with the continuity of the life-world is initiated when “the mode of temporalisation in the death-world closes off the future of its inhabitants and becomes enforced at the vital level of existence by the system of compulsory enclosure which removes the individual from familiar surroundings and reduces mobility.”⁹⁷ The loss of measurable time inside the trains shaped experiences of journey time as indeterminate: the unknown duration and direction of transit, the long, uninterrupted hours of darkness and sometimes pedestrian-like speed of the train, were further evidence of the decivilizing effect of the train journey.

The erosion of symbolic structures of the life-world, which create ties to the past and options for the future, is expressed in testimonies as the need to adjust to journey time in order to survive. Rena Gelissen’s comment that “in this dark and fetid car I determine what I must do to survive” illustrates a tacit acceptance of this,⁹⁸ as does the comment that “everything that reminds me of what once was—my childhood, my past, my life, must be locked away in the recesses of the unconscious where it can remain safe and unmolested ... the only reality is now. Nothing else can matter.”⁹⁹ The incomparability of past Holocaust traumas to the extremities of the freight car alarmed Eva Quittner: “things were happening around me which simply had never occurred in my life until now—my past and my present had hardly anything in common.”¹⁰⁰ The painfully slow speed of the overcrowded trains also produced temporal eternities. For Alexander Donat, on his way from Warsaw to Treblinka, “a trip that normally took three hours took six or eight. We lost all track of time, the night seemed endlessly long.”¹⁰¹

Deportees’ difficulties in estimating the duration of their train journeys in empirical time have sometimes been used by historians to undermine the

credibility of witness testimonies. The expectation that deportees should know the duration of their journeys proceeds from a misreading about how they interpreted time. Train journey time was not measurable; it was felt as a void. Edith Farben recalled her deportation from Hungary to Auschwitz in May 1944: "We were on the train ... 2 or 3 days, we lost track of time."¹⁰² Gisel Berman evoked the ominous sounds of the train: "The train bumped on and on. It seemed as if we'd been traveling forever. I ached to be still for a moment, to get some water, to breathe some fresh air. Yet just as ardently I wanted the ride never to stop. As long as we continued like this, we existed."¹⁰³ In contrast, Kay Gundel was just desperate to get off the train: "We travelled throughout the night ... I didn't know how long we'd been riding nor where we were going but I felt so sick I didn't care any longer. Just let me off and let me lie down."¹⁰⁴

The immeasurability of journey time was especially acute for deportees such as Lily Malnik. She was deported from the Malines transit camp in Belgium to Auschwitz in May 1944, and believes that she was in the train for three to four days from origin to destination, although historical records indicate her transport took two days.¹⁰⁵ It is possible that her experience of transit, where people "lost control of themselves" impacted on the bodily feeling of "denaturalization" because of entrapment.

Journey time was a perceptual destabilization and removal from reality as deportees had known it. Train transit was profoundly disruptive. It is remembered as having no real time and fixed place, a disorienting experience in which momentous life events were fused, collected, and reinterpreted, and for some deportees still remain beyond understanding. This displacement from reality is evident in Bessie K.'s video testimony about her child, abducted from her by a Nazi at deportation point in the Vilna Ghetto in 1942. The impact of that abduction is conveyed in the work of the train as origin and end point of her life:

Actually, I don't recall how long I was in the train because it was a terrible thing to me, because it seemed to me that [I'm] losing everything that belonged to me and it was a hard fight for us. I was alone, within myself. And since that time, I think all my life I've been alone. To me, I was dead. I died and I didn't want to talk about it. And I didn't want to admit to myself that this had happened to me. I don't know how long we were going in the train, but to me it was a lifetime. The way I felt is I was born on the train and I died on the train.¹⁰⁶

Journey time also contributed to heated discussions about the future, namely, the train's possible destinations, as if arrival somewhere would return deportees to real time, or a familiar landscape. These discussions were based on speculation, denial, rumor, and reports from ghettos, and intensified conversations about imagined futures. In a letter written in 1946, Simon

Klein claimed to know his train's destination, a knowledge that appeared subordinate to the excruciating heat, inconsolable children, and the cruelty of the train's guards:

When we were loaded on the train we were told we were being shipped to work in the fields, but when the train started moving Eastward toward Poland we knew we were being taken to our death. The car doors were sealed and the heat became unbearable, no water, small children screamed hysterically, men and women tore off part of their clothes, and then a guard appeared and began beating and robbing us of the few possessions we might still have had. Then we were turned over to the S.S. in that terrible heat, no water, 2 day [*sic*] and 2 nights many died. The bodies were removed at the next station, by this time we were no longer human beings.¹⁰⁷

In her interview with David Boder, Fania Freilich presented a letter from her daughter Charlotte, who was interned in the Drancy transit camp, as a testimony of speculative time and destinations. The letter also represents a direct correspondence from Charlotte's temporal world of captivity, and a belief that the letter, thrown from the train, would be retrieved and posted to its addressee, and back to real time. The urge to escape entrapment is written from the knowledge that if Charlotte's words are not heeded, her parents will also meet her fate:

My dear parents: We are being deported en direction inconnu. Do you know what that means? We are being deported to an address unknown, inconnu. We are being transported like cattle in locked cars. We have no food, nor drink; we have no things. However, our morale is good, and we are strong. I am in the best of health. Don't cry, Mother, and tell the children not to cry. I am young and I will come through. I am young and I hope we will see each other again. I kiss you. And see that you do not fall into the hands of the Germans. Hide yourselves. Get away from Paris. Hide in a village. Hide so they should not trap you as they have trapped me. And I hope we will see each other and I will come through because I am young.¹⁰⁸

Jumping Back into Time: Escapes

Escape attempts from trains were an empowered act of inserting oneself back into time—into the time of real-world physical places and, unfortunately, hostile territory. Several deportees attempted to reverse the fate intended for them by escaping from moving trains, sometimes alone and also with others. Escapes represented an affirmation of life in the context of the emerging death-world, and their outcomes were by no means predictable or secure.

Unlike suicide and death, escapes were an illustration of departures from transit at their most extreme: defiant, risky, morally ambiguous, sometimes heroic and occasionally reckless, and dangerous for the remaining deportees. Escapes also symbolized a primary rejection of the conditions deportees were forced to endure, and occurred from and beyond deportees' initiatives. One of the most revered wartime acts of escape-as-resistance occurred on 19 April 1943, coincidentally the same day as the beginning of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. This act of resistance occurred during a deportation of Jews from the Mechelen transit camp in Belgium en route to Auschwitz. Train 801 left the camp with 1,631 Jews, and was the twentieth transport from the camp. A tiny Jewish resistance cell consisting of three young men—Youra Livchitz, Jean Franklemon, and Robert Maistriau—who among them were armed with a single pistol, a hurricane lamp, and a few pairs of pliers, held up the train. Partisan groups discouraged the plan because it was seen as too dangerous, which further reinforced its success as a "unique coup."¹⁰⁹ The desperate intervention of Livchitz, Franklemon, and Maistriau to open the freight cars assisted in the immediate escape of 17 deportees, and as the train edged closer to the German border, an additional 231 had jumped from the train, and 23 died in the attempt.¹¹⁰ This external intervention was unfortunately all too uncommon, in contrast to the internal attempts at breaking out. Deportees' testimonies reported that escape attempts risked the survival of the self and those remaining, as accompanying guards on the roofs of trains halted the transport and shot indiscriminately into the freight cars.

The risks involved in jumping were physical, moral, and navigational. As Jews in Europe were, by their very identity, enemies, they were also visible targets by witnesses who saw escape attempts, bribed the train's escapees into silence, and on occasion, offered shelter. If deportees were familiar with the territory being crossed or route of the train, they could determine the distance from the train to the ground and thus minimize physical damage while still risking being shot at. Some deportees chose not to attempt escape, fearing the impact on family members and feelings of lifelong guilt. Others feared the consequences that entailed running, hiding, and avoiding the clutches of Nazis, denouncers, and local collaborators for years to come. Escapees jumped from one zone of captivity into possibly countless others.

Escape was not gender specific, but it can be analyzed in representational terms. Women who survived escaping from trains described their feats in heroic terms. Itka Radoszynska threw herself out of a train destined for Treblinka. In a letter dated 4 December 1945, she represented herself as defiant and courageous, exceptional in her escape and survival when other members of her family were killed:

Dearest Auntie, you are certainly curious how I escaped from the hands of the German murderers ... Imagine that my mother and sister and her children died being shot in the cemetery by the Germans (those cats) after having been tortured by them. She has been so scared of death. I hope that now she has peace in heaven ... Uncles Moishe and Icchali together with families were taken to Tremblinka [*sic*], the camp where they were burned alive, piecemeal or gassed to death. Nobody's life was saved in Tremblinka [*sic*]. All this happened in August 22, 1942. Three months later the rest of the people were taken to Tremblinka [*sic*]. Then having nothing and nobody else to lose, I jumped out of the car. Even though the train was going very fast the fear of death and the desire to live was so strong that I had so much courage that I didn't even notice [*sic*] that jumping out of the car I sprained my hand and leg and despite the cold, in the morning I went to town and later left for Warsaw where I hid and struggled for two years.¹¹¹

Janett Margolies was one of the jumpers from Tarnopol in Ukraine on a train bound for Belzec.¹¹² Her testimony describes the relentless surveillance, intimidation, and killing threats awaiting escapees that I analyzed earlier as trying management traumas for commanders of trains. Margolies reports that once inside the railroad car, she discovered that someone had smuggled a file to cut the bars. As she recalls, there was no shortage of potential jumpers: "When the job was finished, and the bars cut, each candidate, in order to jump, had to stand on the shoulders of the other, with legs through the window, then hold on with their hands, later with only one hand, and with a strong swing, jump in the direction of the running train."¹¹³ The consequences were severe, with many deportees killed by trains approaching from the opposite direction, others shot by Gestapo guards, and those who succeeded were later caught by railroad watchmen. Margolies believes she was the only surviving Tarnopol train jumper. During her jump, she became entangled in the barbed wire of the train window. Her screams from the pain alerted the guard, who shot at her. Luckily, he missed:

At the same moment I noticed a locomotive running straight toward me. With my last strength, I rolled over downwards into a depression. All this lasted just a few seconds. I was saved, but badly injured, bleeding from my head and hands. I tore out a little frozen grass, putting it on my wounds. I succeeded in stopping the bleeding. Later I wiped it off my face, bringing myself to order.¹¹⁴

Bertha Goldwasser was deported from France to Auschwitz in mid-1942 with her infant daughter. Her interviewer, David Boder, seems frustrated with what appears to be incomplete or contradictory content in her testimony, perhaps itself symptomatic of the traumatic results of her jump from the train, which killed her infant daughter: "I had also been deported. And when I found out where the deportation was going, I jumped from the train with the

child in my arms. And, God's woe, my child was killed on the ground when I jumped down. And I, too, was very severely wounded, but some French people picked me up. I was with them nine months and was cured."¹¹⁵ Boder then tried to solicit more information about her escape, but was impeded by Goldwasser's explanation: "I told myself, 'Once and for all. I am going to death, of course. And here I might be able to save my life' ... "But, alas, I lost the child while jumping off. With my own hands, I had to gather the child, separate pieces of its body, and left it thus in the forest."¹¹⁶

Bauman's concept of "being-for" that I discussed earlier also applied to escape attempts, albeit with incredibly unpredictable results. This unpredictability is especially highlighted in men's testimonies about escaping. Joseph Kutrzeba's escape attempt was one of many that occurred in regions where ghettos were in close proximity to extermination camps, such as the sixty-kilometer distance between the Warsaw Ghetto and Treblinka. Kutrzeba recalled that making the decision to jump jeopardized the safety of other deportees inside the train and at arrival at the camps. Still, he recalls that "somewhere in the middle (of the journey) I was determined to jump, despite the fact that rumours had it that every fifty or hundred yards, the railroad tracks were guarded by Germans so that no-one would escape."¹¹⁷ Once Kutrzeba made the decision to jump, "then came the dilemma between me and the other kid, who's going to jump first. As I think back, within less than a second I said I will, because in a fraction of a second I always volunteered to be first ... I wanted to be the first one, because survival comes first."¹¹⁸ The risk was worth dying for. Jurek Kestenberg recalled his preparation for escape en route to Treblinka, the scars of which remain on his leg.¹¹⁹ In his interview with David Boder, Kestenberg described how deportees concealed nail files or a similarly blunt instrument in their shoes to cut the train window's iron bars:

And so they cut the bars, and two people jumped from the train. What happened to them I don't know, because I only heard shots. The Germans were firing after them. The main thing is that after ten minutes I had thought it over. I had considered it. I knew that I had left the mother and father at home. And so I ... I decided to jump. This is it! What will happen will happen. I got out on the roof, and the Ukrainians were standing on the steps of the train. They didn't see it, because the windows led to the roof of the train.¹²⁰

Kestenberg told Boder that his own escape from the freight car was possible because people pushed him out, and despite the shooting from Ukrainian guards, fellow deportees did what they could to help others escape. Kestenberg was perched on the roof of the cattle car until it was safe to jump, deciding to leap when the train was going uphill, when the impact from landing would be less severe:

And here it is better to jump, because if one jumps on a level stretch, one can fall under the train. But if one jumps on a hill, one falls, rolls down the hill, right down there. And so, I thought it over well and jumped. I don't remember any more, but I felt that my legs hurt very badly. And I heard a shot. After that I came to. After perhaps two, three hours I came to, and I saw nearby two children are playing with a ... with such a ... such a large hoop, playing, running, jumping. I started yelling, and the children ran away and brought with them, must be, their father, an old Gentile.¹²¹

Not all escape attempts were successful. George Wellers, deported from Drancy to Auschwitz in June 1944, described his aborted escape through retrospective arrival:

I arrived in Auschwitz on the 2nd or 3rd of July; I no longer remember. There was one small detail, but it was a very special detail, because I was in a wagon where there were only men. There were no women, and I had a group of friends; there were a dozen of us and we had decided to escape, to slip away in the course of our journey. We had already prepared this; we had sawed away at part of the waggon [*sic*]. To our misfortune, at a certain point, not very far from Paris, the train stopped and the Germans noticed what we had done.¹²²

Leo Bretholz was an Austrian-Jewish survivor whose reports of escape from a deportation train appear in video testimonies and in *Leap into Darkness: Seven Years on the Run in Wartime Europe*.¹²³ Bretholz escaped with his friend Manfred Silberwasser in transit from Drancy to Auschwitz. His testimonies about the escape are indicative of how sensory memory is performed in video testimony, if not dramatically embodied, contrasting with the ordered sequence of reconstructed events in his written memoirs. Bretholz gives a particularly interesting example of witnessing that is shaped less by vision, and more by what is inhaled and imprinted on his body, and the revulsion that had to be overcome to proceed. In a 1992 video testimony, he tells his experience as an autobiographical war story of courage, and that story recalls his transit experiences on the run from Nazi authorities since his escape from Vienna in 1938 until his capture and transport to Drancy transit camp in 1942. In his recollection Bretholz comments how the atrocities witnessed in Drancy inspired him and Manfred Silberwasser to plan their escape:

There was one bucket in the centre of the car for the uses, to relieve yourself, and that bucket within a couple of hours overflowed ... What we had seen in Drancy, some of the atrocities, my friend and I Manfred Silberwasser, decided if we can we have to get away, and there was no use trying anything in the evening ... During that night, that long night waiting, as to what's going to happen ... We were thinking what can be done, luckily for us, the two windows ... one had bars and barbed wire, and the other had just bars.¹²⁴

He then tells the interviewer how he used the excrement to alter his destiny thirty minutes into his journey:

We took off our sweaters, pullovers, V-necks, and dipped them into that human waste in the bucket, we didn't even have to use the bucket because the floor, they were squatting in it, and walking in it, and inhaling it (signals an inhaling action), and it's still up my nostrils right now when I talk about it. We used these sweaters to twist around the bars.¹²⁵

Advancing to Bretholz's recollection of the same escape moment in *Leap into Darkness*, it is more detailed, and more dramatic, but is divested of the residue of stench and its inhalation. After tugging unsuccessfully for some time at the train's bars with Silberwasser, Bretholz writes about the preparation: "We needed traction, we needed to dampen the sweaters to tie them tighter around the bars. The floor! On the floor was all the water we needed: the collected human waste of our fellow travelers, sloshing about with the movement of the train."¹²⁶ After overcoming his disgust, he continues: "I bent down and dipped my sweater into the urine. Bits of fecal matter floated about. I felt degraded, felt it was the most disgusting thing I'd ever done. In order to save my life, I would first have to violate it beyond previous imagining."¹²⁷ Bretholz's boundary crossing and transgression continue, and finally he and Silberwasser opened the bars wide enough to escape. There is little introspection in the written text, but simply the suggestion that excrement was on him and his clothes, rather than in his sense memory, as in the video-testimony account. The intellectual stylization and emplotment of written narrative seems less capable in finding a place for conveying sensory assault and its heroic mastery, and struggles to incorporate the traumatic surplus of memory's smell. If we return to Bretholz's video testimony, of note is the embodied narrator, the shamed and stench-invaded self: "and it's still up my nostrils right now when I talk about it." Video testimony as a life-telling speech act produces not simply a sensational Holocaust story, but also the visceral performance of reliving the historical moment of its preparation. Bretholz's residue of sense memory challenges the definition of witness as principally conceived through visual references or motifs.

Interruptions to the flow of deportation transports also occurred from other sources. If escape from the train was an empowered act, alienation from the outside world was acute in interruptions to journeys that occurred when transports stopped en route to remove corpses and leave them at the side of railway tracks, and when deportees would enter into negotiations with guards, farmers, or other deportees for food and water. The plundering of deportees' possessions began at the loading platform, and continued during the journey. Marco Nahon recalled that during his journey from Salonica to

Auschwitz, deportees' food and valuables were progressively plundered. In response, deportees chose to voluntarily discard them as an act of defiance: "In all the cars, the prisoners hurriedly gather up their gold and jewels. Some people, preferring not to give their valuables to the Germans, threw them in the fields through the cracks in the planks. Next day, there is another inspection."¹²⁸ These acts highlighted the vulnerability and exploitation of deportees, who tried to negotiate the deprivations of food, water, and in many cases, that which was beyond negotiation and critical for survival—fresh air.

The deportation trains were mobile chambers of death. It is not difficult to reach that conclusion. The conditions inside them produced violations of behavior and morality, as well as primal challenges to deportees' perceptions of themselves as locked in an epic battle between civilization and decline. The struggle to find space inside the train, the adjustment to the freight of other deportees, the psychological and physical fatigue from the train's wear and tear, the deprivation of food and water, the stench, and the loss of time and place during transit were, for many deportees, deeply disturbing experiences without comparison. For others, like Primo Levi, captivity in trains was a prologue for the rigors of the camp world. The intentional deprivation of basic provisions to deportees in train journeys was a "systematic negligence" and a "useless cruelty," "a deliberate creation of pain which was an end in itself."¹²⁹

Notes

1. Zalmen Gradowski, "Letter to a Friend," in *Amidst a Nightmare of Crime: Manuscripts of Members of Sonderkommando*, Jadwiga Bezwinska, ed. and trans. by K. Michalik (Oswiecim: State Museum at Oswiecim, 1973), 78. See also extensive references to Gradowski, who died during the Sonderkommando uprising at Auschwitz, in Gideon Greif, *We Wept without Tears: Testimonies of the Jewish Sonderkommando from Auschwitz* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 20–32.
2. The historical photo in the mural belongs to the visual record of the arrival at Auschwitz of Hungarian Jews from Carpathian Ruthenia during 1944. See Israel Gutman and Bella Guterman, eds., *The Auschwitz Album: The Story of a Transport*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, and Oswiecim: Auschwitz State Museum, 2004). See "The Auschwitz Album," online exhibition at the Yad Vashem Web site: http://www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/home_auschwitz_album.html.
3. For an analysis of the impact of English on Holocaust writing and culture see Rosen, *Sounds of Defiance*.
4. Charles S. Maier, "A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy and Denial," *History & Memory* 5, no. 2 (1993): 137–52.
5. See the Web site "Together: The Voice of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Their Descendants" at <http://www.americangathering.com>.

6. In relation to press coverage, see Ben Cason et al., *The Obligation to Remember: The American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors*, Washington, D.C., April 11–14, 1983 (Washington, DC: The Washington Post, 1983).
7. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," American Gathering Conference Collection, 1940–1983, RG-02.002; Acc. 1991.A.0089. The collection is multilingual (English, German, Polish, Hebrew, Yiddish, French, Russian and Czech) and contains written testimonies, poems, songs, and other materials.
8. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," American Gathering Conference Collection, Pearl Spiegel, RG-02.002*04; Acc. 1991.A.0089, p. 2.
9. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Interview with Selma Engel, RG-50.030*0067.
10. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," "A Void in My Heart: The Memoirs of Regina Godinger Hoffman: A Jewish Holocaust Survivor," RG-02.152; Acc. 1994.A.0237, p. 6.
11. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," American Gathering Conference Collection, Rosa Ferera, RG-02.002*11; Acc. 1991.A.0089.
12. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," American Gathering Conference Collection, Jenny Zavatzky, RG-02.002*27; Acc. 1991.A.0089.
13. Sam Profetas, quoted in Moses B. Altsech, "Y Afrieronos: Greek Jews and the Holocaust," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 23, no. 2 (1997): 56.
14. Salomea Hannel, "From Ustrzyki Dolne to Sobibor," in *Sobibor: Martyrdom and Revolt: Documents and Testimonies*, ed. Miriam Novitch (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980), 128.
15. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," American Gathering Conference Collection, Rose Herstik, RG-02.002*03.
16. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," American Gathering Conference Collection, Itka Zygmuntowicz, "A World That Vanished," RG-02.002*27; Acc. 1991.A.0089.
17. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Interview with Henry Levis, RG-50.030*313.
18. Veena Das, "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain," in *Violence in War and Peace*, 327–33.
19. Sierakowiak, *Diary*, 212.
20. Hayden White, "Figural Realism in Witness Literature," *Parallax* 10, no. 1 (2004): 117. See also Barbara Foley, "Fact, Fiction, Fascism: Testimony and Mimesis in Holocaust Narratives," *Comparative Literature* 34, no. 4 (1982): 330–60. James Young considers the ways in which novelists and playwrights have worked hard to "manufacture their own testimonial authority as part of their fictional discourse," See James E. Young, "Holocaust Documentary Fiction: Novelist as Eyewitness," in *Literature of the Holocaust*, ed. Harold Bloom (Broomall, PA: Chelsea House, 2004), 75.
21. White, *Figural Realism*, 117.
22. Edith Wyschogrod, *Spirit in Ashes: Hegel, Heidegger and Man-Made Mass Death* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 17.
23. The "bare life" of the deportee brings into view Agamben's discussion about human life in locations of incarceration, which he restricted to the camp world. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

24. Testimony of Marek Sznajderman, *The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak*, ed. Wiktoria Śliwowska, trans. Julian and Fay Bussgang (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 240.
25. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Interview with Chaim Engel, RG-50.030*066.
26. Testimony of Ya'akov Gurfein, *Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, vol. I, 332.
27. USHMM, RG-02.002*22, Pollak, no page number.
28. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," American Gathering Conference Collection, Gisela Adamski Sachs, "Unpublished Testimony," RG-02.002*08, frame. 00384.
29. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," Rose Eizikovic Bohm, "Remember Never to Forget Memoir," RG-02.207; Acc. 1996.A.333.
30. Levi, *Drowned and the Saved*, 86.
31. Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 290.
32. Quittner, *Pebbles of Remembrance*, 227.
33. Amariglio, *From Thessaloniki to Auschwitz and Back*, 51.
34. Leon Cohen, *From Greece to Birkenau: The Crematoria Workers' Uprising*, trans. J. Gormezano (Tel Aviv: Salonika Jewry Research Center, 1996), 13. See also Leon Cohen's interview "We Were Dehumanized, We Were Robots," in Greif, *We Wept Without Tears*, 286–309.
35. Testimony of Itzhak Nechama, *Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, vol. II, 856.
36. Harry Gordon, *The Shadow of Death: The Holocaust in Lithuania* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 141.
37. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Interview with Miso Vogel, RG-50.030* 0240.
38. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Interview with Kate Bernath, RG-50.030*0023; Acc. 1990.H.0366
39. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," Chiel M. Rajchman, RG-02.137; Acc. 1994.A.138, p. 1.
40. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Interview with Abraham Kolski, RG 50.030*0113 (tape 1 of 2).
41. Gordon, *Shadow of Death*, 141.
42. Ibid.
43. Rena Kornreich Gelissen, *Rena's Promise: A Story of Sisters in Auschwitz* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 51.
44. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," Rita Kerner Hilton, "My Story," RG-02.164; Acc. 1994.A.0274, p. 92.
45. Gelissen, *Rena's Promise*, 16.
46. Abraham Kszepicki, quoted in Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 63.
47. Kszepicki, in Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka*, 63.
48. Moshe Garbarz and Elie Garbarz, *A Survivor*, trans. J. Garbarz (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 52.
49. Alexander Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom* (New York: Holt & Rinehart, 1965), 251.
50. Quittner, *Pebbles of Remembrance*, 229.
51. On internment policy in Italy's colonial and World War II history, see James Walston's article, "History and Memory of the Italian Concentration Camps," *Historical Journal* 40, no. 1 (1997): 169–83.
52. Victoria Ancona-Vincent, *Beyond Imagination* (Nottinghamshire, UK: Beth Shalom, 1995), 44.

53. USHMM, RG-02.157; Acc. 1994.A.0235, Berman, "Three Lives," p. 111.
54. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," Eva Gross, "Prisoner 409," RG-02.111; Acc. 1994.A.202, p. 187.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
56. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," American Gathering Conference Collection, Judith Kalman, RG-02.002*10.
57. USHMM, RG-02.002*08, Sachs, "Unpublished testimony," frame 00384.
58. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies" Katarina Bloch Feuer, "Diary nearly 50 years later," RG-02.209; Acc. 1994.A.150.
59. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," Magda Willinger Weisberger, "I Shall Never Forget," RG-02.002*05.
60. Wiesel, *Night*, 36.
61. Cohen, *From Greece to Birkenau*, 14.
62. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," Zvi Baumrin, "A Short Autobiography," RG-02.145; Acc. 1994.A.0143.
63. Vera Laska, "Auschwitz: A Factual Deposition," in *Women in the Resistance and in the Holocaust: The Voices of Eyewitnesses*, ed. Vera Laska (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 175.
64. *Ibid.*
65. USHMM, RG-02.004*01; Acc. 1986.019, Gundel, "Reborn," p. 94.
66. Errikos Sevillias, *Athens—Auschwitz*, trans. Nikos Stavroulakis (Athens: Lycabettus Press, 1983), 15–16.
67. *Ibid.*, 16.
68. *Ibid.*
69. Amariglio, *From Thessaloniki to Auschwitz and Back*, 51–52.
70. Bodnar, *Shadows: Legacy of a Holocaust Survivor*, 36.
71. Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, trans. I. Lasch (London: Hodder & Staughton, 1964), 6–7. For an overview of Frankl's controversial background, see Karlheinz Biller, Jay I. Levinson, and Timoty Pytell, "Viktor Frankl—Opposing Views," *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 1 (2002): 105–13.
72. Gradowski, "Letter to a Friend," 87.
73. Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 44–71.
74. *Ibid.*, 46.
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Ibid.*, 51.
77. *Ibid.*, 55.
78. *Ibid.*, 57.
79. *Ibid.*, 58.
80. Levi, *If This Is a Man/The Truce*, 26.
81. Fania Fenelon, *The Musicians of Auschwitz*, trans. J. Landry (London: Michael Joseph, 1977), 13.
82. *Ibid.*, 15. The French title translates as "Marlborough is off to war."
83. Ernest W. Michel, *Promises to Keep* (New York: Barricade Books, 1993), 34.
84. Irene Awret, *They'll Have to Catch Me First: An Artist's Coming of Age in the Third Reich* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 199.
85. Weiss, *My Two Lives*, 25–26.
86. USHMM, RG-04.048, "Concentration and Other Camps," Koppich, p. 58.
87. Cohen, *From Greece to Birkenau*, 15.

88. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," Jehoshua Robert Büchler, "The Expulsion Testimony," RG-02.102 (1994.A.160) p. 2.
89. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," American Gathering Conference Collection, Regina Kahn, RG-02.002*04; Acc. 1991.A.0089, frame 00141.
90. Jacobs, *Sacred Games*, 86.
91. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Interview with Josef B., RG-50.030*0047.
92. See Clara L., testimony, in *Witness: Voices from the Holocaust*, ed. J. Greene and S. Kumar (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 106. Also see Miriam and Saul Kuperhand's report on the state of fellow travelers. Some spoke with their parents, some became hysterical, and others committed suicide with poison. Saul Kuperhand had contemplated jumping from the train, yet he opted not to, citing responsibility to care for family members, especially if there were younger siblings. Miriam Kuperhand and Saul Kuperhand, *Shadows of Treblinka* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 104–12.
93. See Helen K., testimony, in *Witness*, ed. Greene and Kumar, 108. See also the testimony of Hertha Feiner, *Before Deportation: Letters from a Mother to her Daughters, January 1939–December 1942*, trans. Margot Bettauer Dembo (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999). The book contains letters Feiner wrote to her daughters (who, for their safety, were residing in a Swiss boarding school) between 29 January 1939 and 17 December 1942. On 12 March 1943, Hertha Feiner along with 945 other Berlin Jews, was deported to Auschwitz on the thirty-sixth transport. She committed suicide during the trip, swallowing a capsule of potassium cyanide that her companion Heinz Landau had given her. See *Before Deportation*, xxvi.
94. Des Pres, *Survivor*, 147.
95. *Ibid.*, 22.
96. Norbert Elias, *Time: An Essay* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 1.
97. Wyschogrod, *Spirit in Ashes*, 18.
98. Gelissen, *Rena's Promise*, 53.
99. *Ibid.*
100. Quittner, *Pebbles of Remembrance*, 231.
101. Donat, *Holocaust Kingdom*, 162.
102. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Kean College of New Jersey Collection, Interview with Edith Farben, RG-50.002*0067; Acc. 1993.A.0088.
103. USHMM, RG-02.157; Acc. 1994.A.0235, Berman, "Three Lives," p. 114.
104. USHMM, RG-02.004*01; Acc.1986.019, Gundel, "Reborn," p. 94.
105. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Oral History, Interview with Lily Malnik, RG-50.030*146. For confirmation of Lily's arrival date in Auschwitz, see Klarsfeld and Steinberg, eds., *Mémorial de la déportation des juifs de Belgique*.
106. Bessie K., *Witness*, 109–10.
107. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 10, "Small Collections," Simon Klein, "Letters, 1945–1946." RG-10.129; Acc. 1994.A.0328.
108. Boder interview with Fania Freilich, 9 August 1946. There is some confusion about the correct surname. In the interview transcription it is recorded as Freich, whereas in all other references it is Freilich. I use Freilich. Freilich's daughter Charlotte was deported for not wearing the Jewish star and going to the movies when the practice was forbidden. Available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=freil&text=_t.html. The interview is printed in its entirety as "We Have no Courage,"

- in Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, 60–94. See also the edited interview in Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds*, 332–42.
109. Daniel Johnson, "Escape from Auschwitz," *The Telegraph Online*, 7 July 2003. Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/arts/main.jhtml?xml=/arts/2003/07/06/bosch06.xml>.
 110. See Marion Schreiber, *Silent Rebels: The True Story of the Raid on the Twentieth Train to Auschwitz* (London: Atlantic, 2003).
 111. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 10, "Small Collections," Itka Radoszynska, letter of December 4, 1945, in the Joel Citron collection of family materials, 1940–1990. RG-10.114; Acc. 1994.A.0102.
 112. Margolies's testimony, like that of Rudolf Reder, is one of the few accounts of a successful train escape en route to Belzec available in English. Her escape is one part of her sensational story of life in Tarnopol, including ghettoization, "actions," and the occupation. After jumping, she was discovered by two Ukrainians, who took twenty zlotys from her, told her she was fourteen kilometers from Lvov, and indicated two paths of travel: the forest and the highway. I have also utilized the unpublished testimonies of other "jumpers" from trains to Belzec, such as Zofia Pollak and Zvi Baumrin. See also the testimony of Josef Buzminsky from the Eichmann trial. For a full account, see Janett Margolies, "Between Cruelty and Death," in *Alliance for Murder: The Nazi-Ukrainian Nationalist Partnership in Genocide*, ed. B.F. Sabrin et al. (New York: Sarpedon, 1991), 61–75. I am grateful to Robert Kuwalek at the Belzec Museum in Poland for bringing her testimony to my attention. There is a testimony in the Boder archive where the interviewee reports about train "jumpers" en route from Buczacz to Belzyce. See David Boder interview with Rabbi Solomon Horowitz, Spools 120 and 121A, available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=horow&ext=_t.html.
 113. Margolies, "Between Cruelty and Death," 72.
 114. *Ibid.*
 115. Boder interview with Bertha Goldwasser, in *Topical Autobiographies*, vol. II, 3057, available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=goldw&ext=_t.html.
 116. Boder interview with Goldwasser, in *Topical Autobiographies*, vol. II, 3066.
 117. USHMM, RG 50.030*328, Kutrzeba, Tape 6 of 12.
 118. *Ibid.*
 119. Boder interview with Kestenbergs, 31 July 1946, available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=keste&ext=_t.html.
 120. *Ibid.*
 121. *Ibid.*
 122. Testimony of George Wellers, *Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, vol. II, 588.
 123. Leo Bretholz and Michael Olesker, *Leap into Darkness: Seven Years on the Run in Wartime Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Woodholme House, 1998).
 124. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Interview with Leo Bretholz, RG-50.042*0008.
 125. *Ibid.*
 126. Bretholz and Olesker, *Leap into Darkness*, 179.
 127. *Ibid.*
 128. Marco Nahon, *Birkenau: The Camp of Death* (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 22.
 129. Primo Levi, *Drowned and the Saved*, 87.

SENSORY WITNESSING AND RAILWAY SHOCK

Disorders of Vision and Experience

To what extent do extreme experiences call for an extreme historiography? What discourse or critical response can do justice to the corporeal and psychological effects, among many others, of immobility in trains? The telling of such effects is as burdensome for the victim as it is for the person reading, listening to, or watching a testimony. Anthropologist Michael Jackson argues that the ethnographic impulse of “co-existence” with suffering is perhaps the most that can be achieved through an ethical engagement with the other.¹ Still, the quest for explanation remains paramount: “But can the intellectual succeed in accomplishing what the sufferer cannot? Or are our attempts to communicate or publicize the pain of others little more than stratagems for helping us deal with the effects this pain has had on us?”² Jackson’s questions about the interpreter’s dilemma come from his interviews with refugees in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in the late 1990s. His provocations express a dilemma in the interrogator’s quest for soliciting usable anti-genocide testimony and the boundaries that should be recognized in the process. Silence, Jackson claims, might be a more ethical response than talk, a muting of conversation that persists in debates about the Holocaust’s representability. Although I acknowledge the ethical necessity of silence, the advocacy of extreme historiography undertaken in this chapter brings into view the spoken-word tellability of trauma and the undercurrent of “uselessness.” How does one compensate, Jackson inquires, for the “sheer banality of suffering—the fact that though it is so devastating to the sufferer, there is little that he or she can say about it, except recount the kind of matter-of-fact summaries of events ...?”³ Perhaps there is no final vocabulary for doing justice to violating experiences, but there is an argument for rethinking approaches to recovering embodied memories from cattle car transit.

This chapter probes the tellability of the train journey’s somatic traumas based on perspectives from cultural studies of witnessing, the body, and the senses. Through a close reading of testimonies from the David Boder archive,

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I examine how sensory witnessing emerged in the spoken-word traumas of displaced refugees before the Holocaust emerged as a universal motif of persecution. The model of sensory witnessing that I identify with train journeys is also applicable to other intense spatial experiences of forced closeness, such as in the trenches of World War I, bomb shelters, and living in underground sewers, among countless others.⁴ What did the motion and stillness of the train with its overcrowded passengers do to experiences of closeness, touch, and smell? This chapter is a conscious intervention in the interpretation of the train journey's stages of departure, transit, and arrival. In effect, it delays that narrative journey to the camps to become its own moment of suspension.

The chapter is divided into three parts. First, I consider the ways in which Holocaust witnessing has been interpreted in ways that uphold the visual as a normative, secure, and sustainable witness position and truth. Assumptions about the availability of sight-based witnessing tend to marginalize an alternative perceptual truth that struggles with differences in nuance, visual capacity, feeling, and mobile/immobile status. Second, I anchor sensory witnessing in deportation train journeys to the perceptual destabilization generated by the "railway shock" of the nineteenth-century train journeys, and Jewish encounters with modernity as experienced in traumatic encounters with ethnic others. The brief historicization of railway displacements aims to demonstrate continuities and discontinuities in interpreting traumatic transit histories. I do not argue for inevitability in the trajectory of European Jewish transit histories from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, rather I explore the prolonged sensory assault of Holocaust deportation trains as an unexpected confirmation of the potential of what Todd Presner has called "mobile modernity."⁵ Finally, I examine how the sensory traumas of mobile modernity were represented in David Boder's interviews with survivors in displaced persons camps in Europe in 1946. The temporal proximity of Boder's collection of testimony to wartime allowed him to be cattle car transit's first serious interpreter and anthropologist, a role that remains unsurpassed. Like the deportees, Boder was engaged in a representational struggle. His was with the scientific language of psychology and anthropology to explain what deportees told him was their embodiment of the twentieth century's most extreme form of railway shock.

Holocaust Witnesses: Construction and Perception

Analyses of Holocaust witnessing have not extensively explored its sensory sources. Recent studies have explored Holocaust victim testimony production in ghettos as a struggle with literary representability, while others have explored the theory and legacy of witnessing and witness testimony.⁶ Some

of this writing suggests paradoxes with the tellability of trauma, and the ethical and cultural position of the witness. Primo Levi introduced the long-term separation of the victims as the “drowned” and the “saved.”⁷ Froma Zeitlin spoke of fiction and literature as genres of “vicarious witnessing.”⁸ An influential though contestable theme has been a scholarly insistence on abjection in the denial of the possibility of witness. In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman suggested that the Shoah is an event without a witness.⁹ This position is provocatively exemplified by the philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who has generated vigorous debate about the meaning of a witness since the publication of *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*.¹⁰

Agamben mapped the etymology of the word “witness,” its heirs and claims, and its incarnation in the camps. In Latin, he writes, there are two words for witness: “The first word, *testis*, from which our word testimony derives, etymologically signifies the person who, in a trial or lawsuit between two rival parties, is in the position of a third party (*terstis*). The second word, *superstes*, designates a person who has lived through something, who has experienced an event from beginning to end and can therefore bear witness to it.”¹¹ Agamben insists on survivors, particularly Primo Levi, as not the third party of juridical importance, but as a survivor (*superstite*) who cannot judge: “the only thing that interests him is what makes judgment impossible: the gray zone in which victims become executioners and executioners become victims.”¹² Agamben suggests another breach, claiming that the figure of the Muselmann is the ultimate victim of the Shoah and hence its only authentic yet unavailable witness: “the sublime witness whose testimony would be truly valuable but who cannot bear witness.”¹³ But what would this witness reveal in his or her ontological essence that is so extraordinary and exceptional, other than to function as Agamben’s “other,” the objectified witness of eternal silence?

Agamben’s writings on the criteria for authentic witness have prior basis in the work of Jean-François Lyotard, who remains influential in current readings of Holocaust testimony’s utility. After reading Lyotard’s *The Differend*, Jelica Sumic-Riha claims that “what is fundamentally at stake in testifying to the impossible-real is...the destruction of the ‘ability to speak or to keep quiet,’ which threatens to undermine both relations that are constitutive of the witness as a speaking being: the relation to language and the relation to the Other.”¹⁴ Testimony is characterized by a constitutive impasse because the ethical obligation of bearing witness to inflicted wrongs stumbles on the impossibility of phrasing that wrong in the accepted idioms.¹⁵ The impasse not only concerns testimony as constitutive of the subject and a speaking position, but it also reflects a broader conflation of the Holocaust as a historical event and constructed cultural memory re-produced and re-presented across

the generations by primary witnesses (the intended victims) and secondary witnesses (cultural inheritors of their truths).

The responsibilities of secondary witnesses have been discussed by Geoffrey Hartman in ethical terms: “The burden of how to be a witness to the witness—how to attend, interpret, and value the testimonies—clearly falls on all for whom Nazism’s ‘culture of death’ is a frightening riddle. There is a duty of reception. Professional historians often avoid it, claiming that only contemporary testimony...has sufficient authenticity.”¹⁶ Hartman’s plea for an ethics of reception in the creation of a testimonial alliance of affective community is affirmed by Anne Cubilié. In *Women Witnessing Terror*, Cubilié proposes that the vocation of “giving testimony is about being a witness to impossible storytelling, and also a performative act between the mute witnesses, the dead, the survivor witness and the witness to the survivor.”¹⁷ James Hatley suggests that “by witness is meant a mode of responding to the other’s plight that exceeds an epistemological determination and becomes an ethical involvement.”¹⁸ In their analysis of how witness and testimony are produced, Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer offer an explicit distinction: witness is a visually “seen” or experienced event or act, while testimony is “told.” Testimonies are, for them, “representations of witnessing.”¹⁹

These authors focus on the social responsibilities of witnessing rather than the factors that shape its making. The assumption of sight as sustainable in different witnessing environments is by no means unusual given the cultural primacy accorded to vision and the visual in Western culture. The primacy of sight was arguably reinforced by the positivism of the Enlightenment and the emerging visual cultures of the eighteenth century, particularly the rise of typographic culture, and those of the nineteenth, such as the optical and mechanical arts of photography and cinema. The ascendance of sight as an esteemed, objective truth also coincided with the value placed on reason as an intellectual, vision-based cognition. The film theorist Christian Metz introduced the phrase “scopic drive” to describe the desire to see, a desire institutionalized in the cinema as a “scopic regime.”²⁰ He claims that the neglect of the “contact senses” of touch, taste, and smell in favor of the “senses at a distance,” such as sight and hearing, was reflected in the importance accorded to visual and auditory imaginaries in the cultural hierarchy of socially acceptable arts.²¹ The primacy of sight has been described as “ocular-centrism,” a primacy that is repeated in everyday language: “Sight is equated with understanding and knowledge in much of our vocabulary—insight, idea, illuminate, light, enlighten, visible, reflective, clarity.”²² Though I do not use “ocular-centrism” in my analysis of witnessing and visibility, I actively engage with its meaning and impact in constructions of what makes a Holocaust witness. An examination of the neglect of the sensory witness, particularly in an individual’s hearing and smelling capacities, uses insights

from areas that have made minimal impact in the analysis of victims' experiences in the Holocaust: anthropology, sociology, and critical theory.

I draw my critique of the visual from a postmodern approach to truth, knowledge, and narrative. I argue that to deconstruct sight as the preeminent sense of modernity means to unpack how vision and truths of the Holocaust witness are produced and represented. The multilayered assault on sight, particularly in twentieth-century French philosophy, has been discussed by Martin Jay: "Vision, it bears repeating, is normally understood as the master sense of the modern era, variously described as the heyday of Cartesian perspectivalism, the age of the world picture, and the society of the spectacle or surveillance. It will come therefore as no surprise that the critique of modernity would find congenial many of the same arguments against the hegemony of the eye."²³ Sight itself is inherently unstable, informed by embodiment, sensory feeling, and other diverse variants. Sight is, Anthony Synnott asserts, "individually subjective and culturally relative. What we see, and do not see, and how we define what we see, the meanings we impose on visual reality, reflect our personal values and interests as well as our cultural norms."²⁴ The evidentiary privileging given to sight-based witnessing is inherited from scientific visualism, and grounded in the relatively unchanging hierarchy of the senses, that sight, hearing, and smell were human senses, whereas taste and touch were characteristic of animal traits.²⁵ Many historians of the senses see their production and coming into being in cultural and social terms, a mediated process of the civilized world, where perception is the product of a multisensorial experience. David Howes, for example, has offered the paradigm of emplacement to suggest the "sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment."²⁶

The idea of emplacement can be further examined in relation to Ernst van Alphen's reading of visual imprints in Holocaust testimonies, and the epistemological limitations of seeing in the Holocaust. He claims that the Holocaust "disrupted conventional notions of seeing in the visual domain in Western culture. Since the Enlightenment, observation of the visual world has enjoyed a privileged epistemological status: it is a precondition and guarantee of knowledge and understanding. Being an 'eyewitness' automatically implies that one apprehends and comprehends the observed situation or event."²⁷ The issue of the authenticity of the visual is paramount for van Alphen, an authenticity further reinforced in media essentialism: "Vision does not automatically lead to 'authentic' witnessing. For witnessing requires, in addition to seeing, accounting for what is seen, and the problem may be situated in that mediation or transmission."²⁸ For van Alphen, the trauma of the Holocaust remains a "visual imprint" that is evidence of the discordant relationship between vision and comprehension in the encounter with abjection and violence, a recollection not readily tellable or speakable.

This “visual incapacitation” bears direct relationship to the sense memory of traumas as examples of “failed experiences.”²⁹ Van Alphen suggests that narrative memory is retrospective and trauma is embodied and reenacted at involuntary moments, much like the sense memory of olfactory intrusion and narrative returns to spaces of captivity in trains: “The person who experiences a traumatic re-enactment is still inside the event, present at it. This explains why these traumatic reenactments impose themselves as visual imprints. The original traumatic event has not yet been transformed into a mediated, distanced account. It reimposes itself in its visual and sensory directness.”³⁰ Van Alphen isolates sight, and connects it to an embodied memory as visually initiated, but not conclusively determined: “Visuality, the specific power of images, is definingly significant for the specific kind of memory that struggles to survive the Holocaust and remember it, yet transform the visual fixation that assaults into the active visual remembrance that works through.”³¹

Van Alphen’s articulation of visual imprints as being stuck in sense memory, at times a failed vocal or written delivery of unutterable experiences, echoes Charlotte Delbo’s recollection of her body traumas in the Holocaust. Delbo is one of the most eloquent interpreters of sense memory. Captivity in trains is one scene of the undoing of the self, with the attempt at its speakability and orderly presentation in writing as the process of rethinking and making valid experiences from moments and encounters that were beyond understanding at the time. Delbo uses the metaphor of skin renewal to explain the inexplicable: “There comes to mind the image of a snake shedding its old skin, emerging from beneath it in a fresh, glistening one.”³² Yet the shedding of skin through the telling of experience, where the old skin had a “bad smell,” and wore the visible traces of Auschwitz, is never fully exfoliated once the survivor returns to the world of ordinary gestures and regulations of bodily conduct through routines of sleep, eating, and conversation. Delbo writes that she had to relearn her olfactory sense, which was polluted by her memory of Birkenau, where “rain heightened the odor of diarrhoea. It is the most fetid odor I know.”³³ Her question, “how does one rid oneself of something buried far within: memory and the skin of memory?” can be applied to the permanence of body truths of train captivity in survivors. Delbo contends that the “skin enfolding the memory of Auschwitz is tough,” but that “it gives way at times, revealing all it contains.”³⁴ Delbo’s explanation of sense memory fuses the historical with the present self in repeated and subconscious journeys to Holocaust time:

In those dreams I see myself ... hardly able to stand on my feet, my throat tight, my heart beating wildly, frozen to the marrow, filthy, skin and bones; the suffering I feel is so unbearable, so identical to the pain endured there, that I feel it

physically, I feel it throughout my whole body which becomes a mass of suffering; and I feel death fasten on me, I feel that I am dying. Luckily, in my agony I cry out.³⁵

Delbo's ability to emerge from her subconscious journey and articulate it as a past story is explained as an "external memory," an intellectual act connected with thinking processes.³⁶ The pain of her embodied suffering is the "deep memory" of her Auschwitz skin, piercing the present self as a thinking subject. Her equation of deep memory with sense memory as the preservation of "physical imprints" on the degenerative, powerless body evokes many witness experiences of train transit. Though Delbo speaks of her historical self in Auschwitz, she has never left it. In her analysis, what becomes a speakable moment is an attempt to bear witness, to reappropriate the death threat and produce a testifying voice that is marked by incompleteness.

Although Delbo's writings have inspired readings of witness experiences during and beyond the Holocaust, her testimonies are a misplaced literary measure to which ordinary witness testimonies should aspire. The influence of her work in Holocaust literary studies, like the contributions of Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel, reinforces her preeminent witnessing truth and neglects investigation of experiences of body trauma that are not as eloquent, revealing, or sophisticated in their telling. Her insights have been used to explore the possibility and limits of representing embodied truths. Her articulation of deep memory has been critical to Lawrence Langer's anatomy of memory in video testimonies in *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*. The testimonies collated in this book stress the numbing impact of deep memory, rendering it unavailable to historical interpretation. What kind of historiography can be accorded to interpreting deep memory as the embodiment of train captivity? Langer reads Delbo's discourse on skin renewal, and her attempted exfoliations of deep memory, as evidence of the countertime of Auschwitz.³⁷ Rose Kamel reads Delbo's impact as a resculpting of the autobiographical genre in cyclical time, and the depiction of self and other through dismembered bodies and fragmented psyches.³⁸

The discussion about deep memory is not isolated to the Holocaust. Roberta Culbertson argues that sense memory and its impact on postwar experiences of embodied trauma often invites skepticism, for its "undeniable presences appear in non-narrative forms that seem to meet no standard test for truth or comprehensibility."³⁹ Channeling Delbo's wearing of two skins, her Auschwitz and postwar varieties, Culbertson suggests that "the demands of narrative ... operate as cultural silences to this sort of memory ... we lose sight of the body's own recall of its response to threat and pain, and of the ways in which it 'speaks' this pain, because this wordless language is unintelligible to one whose body is not similarly affected, and

because without words the experience has a shadowy quality, a paradoxical unreality.”⁴⁰ Culbertson’s body memories are quite possibly without words and without image, and “obey none of the standard rules of discourse: they are the self’s discourse with itself and so occupy that channel between the conscious and unconscious that speaks a body language.”⁴¹

Modernity as Railway Shock

The fraught tellability of embodied train traumas finds precedent in a range of popular, literary, and medical reports of shock, danger, and derailment associated with train journeys in nineteenth-century Europe. These responses took on an ethno-cultural dimension in Jewish accounts of travel, which commonly used the train journey experience as a metaphor of assimilation from East to West, an itinerary that is complicated with the immobilization of Jewish victims as deportees in the Holocaust. Rejecting the trajectory of the Holocaust as an inevitability of German-Jewish history, Todd Presner has commented that “railways represented progress because they were the technological realization of mobility, speed and exchange. They also became the first mode of transportation to move the masses, from the formation of mass politics to the implementation of mass deportations.”⁴²

The cultural history of the train’s impact as a mover of the masses and creator of trauma testimony was explored in Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century*. Schivelbusch argued that literary responses to train journeys made constant reference to a persistent destabilization of the senses. Critical for Schivelbusch was the way in which essayists and writers interpreted the impact of mechanized motion as a visual assault. He notes that early descriptions of rail journeys divided the railroad and the landscape through which it travels into two separate worlds. This separation was illusory: “the empirical reality that makes the landscape seen from the train window appears to be ‘another world’ is the railroad itself.”⁴³ The effect of the railroad on perceptions of travel is that “the traveller perceives the landscape as it is filtered through the machine ensemble.”⁴⁴ The loss of experience entailed in the new technology is interpreted in literature and journalism of the period as “denaturalization” and “desensualization.” Passengers cannot feel the movement entailed in the new technology except for the speed, which estranges and displaces the traveler from the landscape. This displacement was often represented as a loss of feeling and natural connection to the traversed landscapes.

The train passenger’s denaturalization by train travel was due to the abandonment of animal power in favor of steam, namely, the loss of the sense of space and motion that was based on it.⁴⁵ Because the traveler

cannot feel the attachment to the landscape, the meandering roads of animal power replaced with linear routes of railroads, he or she cannot feel the effort involved with travel. The loss of the traveler's connection to the landscape from horse-drawn power terminated the feeling of being anchored. Schivelbusch argues that while slow, preindustrial travel preserved and savored this space as natural, it virtually disappears on the railroad, for "the railroad knows only points of departure and destination."⁴⁶ The train was perceived as a projectile "and traveling on it, as being shot through the landscape—thus losing control of one's senses."⁴⁷ Features such as size, shape, quantity, and motion that can be objectively perceived in the real world now become the only qualities that the railroad traveler is able to observe in the landscape of mechanized travel. The traveler now experiences not only a loss of feeling or connection to the landscape, but visual perception is also compromised by the train's speed. Schivelbusch used the phrase "panoramic perception" to describe the train traveler's attempt to consume a total view of the landscape:

Panoramic perception, in contrast to traditional perception, no longer belongs to the same space as the perceived objects: the traveler sees the objects and landscapes through the apparatus that moves him *through* the world. That machine and the motion it creates become integrated into his visual perception: thus he can only see things in motion.⁴⁸

Adding to the sensory destabilization of travelers was the train's impact on perceptions of time and space. The concept that more space could be covered in less time was one of most commonly stated ambitions in developing rail networks across Europe. The effect of collapsing time and space through speed was borrowed from transport economics, yet with perceptually unprocessed effects as the annihilation of space and time produces shrinkage of the real world. Schivelbusch suggests:

[T]he notion that the railroad annihilates space and time is not related to that expansion of space that results from the incorporation of new spaces into the transport network. What is experienced as being annihilated is the traditional space-time continuum that characterized the old transport technology. Originally embedded in nature as it was, that technology, in its mimetic relationship to the space traversed, permitted the traveler to perceive that space as a living entity.⁴⁹

For Schivelbusch, the idea that the railroad annihilated space and time owed more to the shock of the new; and contemporary interpretations on the impact of the railroads confirms his reading. In *Remapping Memory*, Jonathan Boyarin argues that new technologies of transportation and communication such as shipping, railroads, airplanes and film, have "changed

the very conditions of our possible experiences of proximity and simultaneity.”⁵⁰ The alteration to the human experience of space and time made possible by the ability of the railroad to cut through landscapes was a prominent theme in the rhetoric of the railroad. Yet it was also the rhetoric of pacification for anxious and fearful travelers. Schivelbusch notes that the “annihilation of space and time is the topos that the early nineteenth century uses to describe the new situation into which the railroad places natural space after depriving it of its hitherto absolute powers. Motion is no longer dependent on the conditions of natural space, but on a mechanical power than creates its own spatiality.”⁵¹

The political and economic advantages of train travel, such as the potential to transform the relationships between nations, cultures and classes, occurred alongside more embodied if not negative effects. Train travelers increasingly expressed symptoms that were somatic, physiological, and psychological in nature. The continuous movement of the train caused a new kind of pathology where muscles and individual organs grew tired from constant vibration. While this physiological assault continued, challenges to perception also undermined travelers’ ability to feel “in place,” or “emplaced” to use David Howes’s reference. The rapidity with which the train’s speed caused optical impressions to change taxed the eyes to a much greater degree than did preindustrial travel and the sense of hearing had to cope with a deafening noise throughout the trip.⁵² The new ratio between traveling time and traversed space aggravated the symptoms of fatigue. The traveler was “subjected to a degree of wear and tear that did not exist in preindustrial travel, not to mention the purely psychological stress.”⁵³

Max Nordau suggested that the stresses of railroad travel of the late 1890s were physiological and symptomatic of the overloading of the nervous system through the pressures of modern life: “Even the little shocks of railway travelling, not perceived by consciousness, the perpetual noises and the various sights in the streets of a large town ... cost our brains wear and tear.”⁵⁴ These pathologies of railroad travel produced an association of the train as somewhat uncontrollable, a sign of the panic, anxiety, and degeneration of modernity.⁵⁵

Responses to nineteenth- and twentieth-century travel such as the loss of experience, the romanticization of the past (as symbolized by preindustrial travel), and the destabilization of travelers’ ability to perceive time and space, reflected a wider cultural anxiety related to modern practices of consumption, travel, and work. The railway’s assault on experiences of transit in the nineteenth century was a microcosm of the transformation of the senses by industrialization and technology.⁵⁶ Urbanization and manufacturing industries produced massive levels of noise pollution, smoke contamination, and

threats to public health, requiring the protection of society's hearing, smell, and sanitation: "The hectic life of the large cities, unhealthy factory labour and above all the new transport and communication technologies were widely held to have a negative effect on sensory perception. People believed they could feel tension all around them, and they attributed the ostensible increase of nervous complaints (notably neurasthenia) to this phenomenon."⁵⁷ Industrialization burdened the senses to the extent that the scopic regime, the growing dominance of sight and vision in all areas of life, was obscured by the impact of pollution. Yet the concern with pollution from urban stresses of uncontained smell and noise in public space was also privatized as a symbolic disorder of the body in need of constant olfactory vigilance.⁵⁸ The need for olfactory vigilance also extended to people travelling in train carriages. Even though carriages were divided according to classes with particular seating arrangements to maintain social order, the unexpected threat of contamination was expressed as the discomfort with the mechanized processes of modernity. The intrusion of the polluted other into ostensibly regulated space was an unwanted and frequent possibility, and consequently, had to be patrolled.

It is worthwhile to recall Michel de Certeau's interpretation of railway architecture and its spaces as anxiety inducing. He described the conditions of railway travel as an administered captivity, interpreting the train's impact on human experience as a "travelling incarceration. Immobile inside the train, seeing immobile things slip by. What is happening? Nothing is moving inside or outside the train ... the unchanging traveler is pigeon-holed, numbered, and regulated in the grid of the railway car, which is a perfect actualisation of the rational utopia."⁵⁹ De Certeau adds a mobile dimension to philosopher Jeremy Bentham's classification of the panoptic tendencies of modern architecture: "Everything has its place in a gridwork. Only a rationalised cell travels. A bubble of panoptic and classifying power, a module of imprisonment that makes possible the production of an order, a closed and autonomous insularity—that is what can traverse space and make itself independent of local roots."⁶⁰

Not unlike interpretations of Holocaust witness experiences, Schivelbusch, Nordau, and de Certeau based their analyses of trauma as contingent on vision of exterior landscapes from inside the train, a sight-based witnessing that was possible although difficult to sustain due to the train's motion. The challenge of vision or visual consumption of modernity and its various landscapes is repeated in Jewish responses to train transit. The experience of inside/outside, the separation of the traveler from the traveled space, railway fatigue, the construction of imaginary landscapes to compensate for lost ones, and the loss of connection to the natural world all converged in potentially traumatic train encounters.

In the work of historian Sander Gilman, the Jewish entry into European or Western society is interpreted as a passage or a journey, from the world of the Yiddish-speaking shtetl culture of the East to the urbanized destinations of Western high culture. The contrast between the Jewish cultures of old that were known, practiced in ideology, ritual, belief, custom and culture, with that of the new, the unknown, different, and the feared, was similar to the encounter with the new industrial form of travel the train offered. The vocabulary of the Jewish encounter with modernity was thus similar to the vocabulary associated with train travel. One talks of passages (from East to West), the entry from one society to another as a form of travel, one makes an entry into that society as one enters a train, and with a ticket, as payment for the journey. To Gilman, “the crossing of boundaries, as in the movement from the Eastern fringes to the centers of culture, such as Paris, evokes the train.”⁶¹

Gilman was invoking Sigmund Freud as a reference point. Freud’s obsession with trains and journeys was a life metaphor; transit was the trauma of modern civilization.⁶² For Jews, this trauma was especially evocative as a space for acting out the ambition of assimilation. Trains were one of the public spaces defined by class and economic power “in which the Jew could purchase status.”⁶³ A ticket bought for these carriages “assured one of traveling among one’s economic equals—but not as racial ‘equals.’”⁶⁴ Gilman contends that the association of trains and the “trauma of confronting one’s Jewish identity is a powerful topos at the end of the century.”⁶⁵

The displacement and estrangement of the journey were especially significant for Jews: the displacement of the anxiety associated with ethnic difference became associated with the train ride, for it is on trains that frightening events occur that reveal the innate difference between the self and the Other. For Freud, the train trip always held the anxiety of the articulation of his own difference.⁶⁶ His lifelong neurosis was about “missing a train” rather than being on a train, of having remained an Eastern European Jew had he not caught it, illuminates the anxieties of assimilation and acculturation and the East/West divide in late nineteenth-century Europe. Like interactions in civil society, the train carriage was but another expression of the potential racial anxiety of assimilation: “the train carriage was the space of confrontations with difference and anti-Semites.”⁶⁷

Freud’s lifelong neurosis about missing a train illuminates a fundamental ambivalence for Jewish encounters in modernity that becomes further complicated with the pernicious use of railways in the Holocaust. The idea of the West—the modernizing societies of Berlin, Vienna, and Prague in the late nineteenth century—always entailed a passage from East to West.⁶⁸ One was caught between his or her own (left, departed) and host (arrived) culture. Entry into modern society became a trade-off—one would have to

give up in order to gain. The passage of the Jews into this society was, like the modern traveler's experience of the train, a culture shock. Thus, the significance for Jews of the trains in nineteenth-century Europe reflects their encounter with modernity: "trains became part of the mental space associated with Jewishness and the trauma of that race."⁶⁹

For Jews on trains, the notion of "panoramic perception" was arguably a trauma of motion that was relocated from visions of the landscape to encounters inside train carriages. It was the traumatic panorama of other travelers that contributed to the railway shock. The panorama induced countless fears about unwanted encounters, strangers, and self-questioning about the social visibility of Jews as an ethnic minority in train carriages. It also inspired several literary reflections on the meaning of Jewish identity in assimilating societies (in East and West, and the routes between), and the creation of literary communities devoted to mapping Jewish journeys and cultural geographies. Railway shock was a thriving, if not portable, theme in Jewish literary history, crossing and deconstructing languages, genres, and borders.

The culture clash and somatic trauma associated with train travel have been examined by scholars of Yiddish and Hebrew literature.⁷⁰ Leah Garrett's engaging analysis of Yiddish writing adds a critical perspective to the use of archetypes of spatial encounters, exploration, and discovery to express ambivalent transit encounters. In *Journeys Beyond the Pale: Yiddish Travel Writing in the Modern World*, Garrett explored how writers in Jewish communities in the East from the 1870s to the 1930s—namely, the premodern shtetl world of Russia—welcomed and feared train travel, in particular, as the promise of a new, liberal modernity, as the space for collapsed encounters with other ethnic groups, and also as a scene of writing cultural tourism and anti-Semitism.⁷¹

Yiddish writers including Sholem Aleichem used modernist prose and the motif of the train to critique modernization and urbanization, as the railroads delivered the tides of change into and out of the shtetl. Garrett's book shows how a persecuted minority conceived of their transit experiences in ethno-cultural terms, as residents in ambivalent, displaced, and hostile territories, in and outside of train space. Yiddish travel writing produced an alternative, modern, and secular Jewish geography of suffering, a cultural commentary on the traumas of ethnic mobility, belonging, place, and security.

As Garrett contends, railway shock was embodied as a gendered, ethnic, and social assault in train space: the tormenting sounds of grating wheels on the tracks, screeching brakes and blaring whistles, the compartment's intimate dimensions and effects on social interaction and conversation, the representation of the self as an object in an industrial process, and finally, the difficulty in maintaining what was considered civilized behavior from unwanted and transgressive encounters. The response to modernity that

Yiddish writers telescoped through train transit is updated in Holocaust testimonies about the experience of interminable entrapment. Whereas Garrett discussed Yiddish literature as a space for reading identity construction and ethnic relations, Holocaust testimonies report on the destruction of those categories, and occasional resistance to that decline.

If, as Schivelbusch argued, nineteenth-century train travelers felt themselves and their bodies removed from a tactile experience of the landscape and the natural animal power of motion, then forced confinement reversed that disengagement. Freight car transit in the Holocaust resensualized passengers-as-victims to what had been desensualized by mechanized transit in the nineteenth century, namely, the disengagement from the landscape and from other travelers. Tense and volatile encounters in train space foregrounded the notion of embodied and mobile witnesses engaged in representational struggles to describe their journey experiences. Like the impact of nineteenth-century train transit on descriptions of intimacy, estrangement, and perception, the conditions of deportation trains “created their own spatiality, a spatiality that impacted on all forms of perception, bodily behaviours, and cognitive functions.”⁷² Cattle car transit provoked deportees to represent the spatiality of trains as disorientation in motion: the displacement of the scopic regime by acoustic and olfactory regimes of truth, and more intensely, the physical freight of other deportees.

Holocaust Trains as Railway Shock: David Boder and the Traumatic Inventory of Transit

An early archive that analyzed train experiences in the Holocaust was David Boder’s interviews with displaced persons in refugee camps in 1946.⁷³ His interviews raise many issues about narrative convention, speakability, and most important, the repression of transport shame in studies of Holocaust victims’ experiences.⁷⁴ Boder was not looking for explicit episodes of railway shock, but once articulated, they became an important marker of depersonalization and entrapment. In conducting these interviews, Boder was a self-conscious ethical interpreter, a secondary witness of the kind Michael Jackson described earlier. He solicited vivid and disturbing accounts on many aspects of the Holocaust, especially the interviewees’ transit experiences. Still displaced, they told Boder about their experiences in vocabulary that bore little resemblance to the rhetorical familiarity of “cattle car” transit of later postwar testimony.

Boder traveled from the United States to displaced persons (DPs) camps in the American Zone of postwar Europe in the summer of 1946. In the space of two months he interviewed 109 refugees, and over the course

of nine years with limited funding and academic interest in his project, managed to transcribe seventy of them into English. In addition to the transcribed interviews, Boder produced a “Traumatic Inventory”—his clinical assessment of the content of the interviews—which accompanied his “Topical Autobiographies of Displaced Peoples.”⁷⁵ The “Traumatic Inventory” is landmark and novel in its elucidation of deportation train journeys as “railway shock.” Boder frequently used the term “travel” as an indicator of the deportation journey, and he applied an empirical method to build a taxonomy of transit’s stresses. Boder also revealed himself, through his infrequent biographical introductions of interviewees and investigative questions, to be not only a facilitator of a multilingual canon of Holocaust voices. He was also its earliest formative interpreter, an ethical, astounded, and perplexed witness, often giving those reactions repeatedly in the course of an interview. He was aware of the monumental task he was undertaking in recording the magnitude of the stories of displaced persons, and also of his own interventionist role as an archivist of voice in preserving the spoken European-Jewish languages.⁷⁶ Indeed, it was the perplexity of English’s intrusion into interviews conducted in foreign tongues—German predominantly, but also Yiddish, Russian, Spanish, French and Polish—which he sought to preserve in the transcribed written text as a “peculiar verbal structure.”⁷⁷

In his analysis of language in *Topical Autobiographies*, Alan Rosen reads Boder’s shift from recording multilingual original voices to its printed monolingual English text as an exercise in archiving distortion.⁷⁸ My interpretation of Boder does not concentrate on the linguistic nuances and grammatical imperfections of a disrupted Holocaust voice as discussed by Rosen. Building from his analysis, however, I suggest that Boder’s insistence on the preservation of awkwardness is suggestive for an interpretation of transit captivity for four reasons, each of which reveals itself in exchanges between Boder and the interviewees, and particularly so in the examples of the difficult mediation of sense memory through the spoken, if not performed, word.

First, the transcriptions reveal how DPs spoke about, referred to, or were exasperated by, the demands of speaking about their journey experiences, evident in the sometimes combative and clarifying exchanges between Boder and his interviewees. Second, the disclosures in the interviews, preserved in their grammatical imperfections, including the transcription of silences and sometimes stupefied editorial interventions, reveals the spoken (and unspoken) word as the foundations of an experience that Boder believed to be “historically unprecedented” and “unique in occurrence.”⁷⁹ Third, Boder’s comprehension of the content of experiences was rendered in an emerging index of terms, such as “annihilation lager.” This index permits

an investigation of transit's effects before the words "Holocaust," "death camp," and "survivor" became common in the postwar lexicon of Nazi violence. Some of these words make an early appearance. For example, in discussing departures from the Warsaw Ghetto in January 1943, Hadassah Marcus makes a reference to what the word "Holocaust" meant to her. It was the powerlessness of the self:⁸⁰

Marcus: During all that time all the transports went to Treblinka.

Boder: Hm.

Marcus: In the year 1943, the 18th, the first /month/ ...

Boder: Yes?

Marcus: ... there was a great holocaust. They took all the shops away. Everything /was/ liquidated.

Boder: What does it mean, a holocaust?

Marcus: That there was ... nobody could save himself.

Finally, based on the content of the interviews, Boder created a psychological analysis of testimony's content. His anthropology of deportation train journeys isolated their impact as a fundamental rupture, commenting that "the experiences en route form the darkest memories of all those who were victims of this phase of Nazi depravity. Locked up in the crowded box cars normally used for transportation of cattle they made that fearful transition from the known to the unknown. That time was the beginning of the end of meaning to life as they had known it."⁸¹

Boder's analysis of the shifting pace and impact of Nazi policy on the everyday lives of his interviewees gives clear articulation to the genocidal intentions of Nazi deportation policy and its destructive impact much sooner than it was interpreted as such by historians and enshrined as a crime in the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 9 December 1948. Boder referred to the unmaking of the individual as "deculturation," the "gradual cutting down of a human being" through fitting him or her into the model of concentration and annihilation camps.⁸² Despite his extended focus on deportation, he surprisingly omits stating that these train journeys were a distinct contributor to deculturation. Deculturation emerges as an implicit genocidal method in its removal of the individual from an ethnic, biological and religious group, and social community. Deculturation terminates the conditions, environments, and stimuli that are critical to the continuity and regeneration of bonds of togetherness and identity.

Boder's analysis introduced categories that feature as an anatomy of the train journey's impact from the clinical appearance of the freight car to

deportees' unsuccessful adjustments to train space, as detailed in his itemization of the effects of Holocaust transit in the "Traumatic Inventory," of which there were 46 traumata, 116 interpretative expansions, and, in the index, an alphabetical roster of 377 items.⁸³ Those traumata relating to train transit, both cattle and freight cars,⁸⁴ included "bedding during travel," "bowel movements in trains," "dead bodies in travel," "deportation," "locked boxcars," "sanitation and travel," "sex separation on trains," "shelter in travel," "constriction of space in trains," and "toilets during travel." "Interpretative expansions" referred to sub-themes of a particular experience, based on deportees' attitudinal or physical responses.⁸⁵ For example, socio-economic displacement was evident in "the brutal and abrupt removal of a person from most environmental stimuli which have formed the conditioning framework of his everyday life."⁸⁶ The entry included the interpretative expansion of "relocation" to encompass eviction, compulsory evacuation, compulsory transfer of domicile and deportation to camps, but not the means of transportation or the destination.⁸⁷

In relation to displacement from one's community, for example, to and from ghettos, Boder made reference to the lack of recourse to law, and the new human milieu that emerged from "relocations," citing the "break-up of the family or ethnic group due to evacuation, deportation or flight."⁸⁸ His "Cultural-Affective" designation can be applied to multiple locations of persecution. In this designation he included reference to the creation of prolonged states of terror, and included "threats or conjectures of impending traumatization, such as the danger of being assigned to deportation," and in repeated scenes of "mass weeping and wailing (beyond family group) in public places" prior to separation.⁸⁹

Within the cultural-affective realm, Boder also paid attention to corporeal distress. His analysis recalled nineteenth-century anxieties concerning transgressive behavior in intimate spaces and violations specific to cattle car transit: "the abolition of traditions of decency and dignity by suspending the separation between the sexes and privacy for bodily care and processes of bowel movements."⁹⁰ Boder's item "Depersonalization" included the "ignominious treatment of the individual with the utmost disregard for his rights, standards and values."⁹¹ A feature of Nazi policy in general, its appearance in cattle car transit was expressed in descriptions of its violating actions of compression and degradation: people were "like cattle," (not simply in cattle cars), "driven," "shoved," and "not human."⁹²

Section V of the "Traumatic Inventory" concerned "Direct Bodily Violence," in which Boder included "death in travel by train" and "verbalized anguish caused by witnessing brutal acts perpetrated by prisoners on each other due to states of confusion or panic (such as in fights in overcrowded boxcars)."⁹³ The section on "Transportation" most explicitly

alludes to transit. The psychological ruin of deportees occurred, among other causes, from “travelling for days in overcrowded boxcars without facilities or room to sit down, wash, or lie down.” These intolerable conditions were exacerbated by no “toilet facilities in locked cars where men, women and children were locked in together” and in “the absence of regular stop-overs or adequate installations at stop-overs for bowel movements.”⁹⁴ Deportees’ experiences of the cattle car as a death site were further compounded by “the impossibility of removing the dead from the crowded boxcars for days,” and their “accumulation en route beyond the nearest stop.”⁹⁵

Boder interviewed the DPs from the position of the dispassionate, academic observer and psychologist of trauma, yet he was not entirely unaffected by their disclosures. Boder’s own interventions as both interviewer and listener made him directly complicit in the production of distorted voices. His reactions in the testimony bear witness to the limits of scientific methodology to absorb these extreme experiences. Like the deportees, he was engaged in a representational struggle. Unlike them, his was with the empirical aspirations of psychology and anthropology to explain the existential truth of the DPs. This tension was not resolved, but was arguably a core and binding testament to the project. Boder’s archive of interviews reveals frustrations, silences, edits, and a subliminal biography of Boder as a secondary witness to the tellability of the Holocaust.

A close reading of five testimonies that discuss excrement and urine trauma illuminates the olfactory intrusions, spatial assaults, and the tellability of transport shame that are the Holocaust’s version of modern railway shock. The tellability of transport trauma was particularly evident in Boder’s interviews with the following DPs: Alexander Gertner (26 August 1946, Geneva, Switzerland), Adolph Heisler (27 August 1946, Geneva, Switzerland), Jacob Schwarzfitter (31 August 1946, Tradate, Italy), Nechamah Epstein (31 August 31 1946, Tradate, Italy); and Benjmain Piskorz (1 September 1946, Tradate, Italy). Conducted over the space of one week, all five interviewees disclosed stories of transport shame. These differed in content and intensified through graphic descriptions and shock value, with the overflowing excrement and urine on deportees leaving its symbolic defilement on Boder and his vicarious entry into that space through an accruing knowledge of cattle car duress. The trauma of telling survives in Boder’s stunned replies, where he often asked DPs to repeat what they had just said. Boder used flexible interviewing methods, which included “tell all” and “episodic” emphases to economize on limited time, an approach which also undermined the ambition of his project to be a comprehensive oral chronicle. In his interview with Gertner, Boder insisted on full telling.⁹⁶

Boder: Where you have been when the war started and what happened to you. Make yourself comfortable and start telling.

Gertner: From the beginning.

Boder: Don't omit details.

Gertner: Yes?

Boder: We want to know everything that happened.

And so Gertner begins to disclose the evidence of his war trauma: experiences of ghettoization, cramped living conditions, and finally his selection for deportation. Although Boder seeks clarification on the method of transport, eventually the topic of the train journey's provisions and deprivations enters the conversation, for which Gertner's "you understand?" haunts Boder long after the exchange:

Gertner: You understand? We were taken right away to the wagons. There we already saw whole /many/ wagons were standing, maybe dozens /?/ of wagons. And the SS distribute /the people into/ the wagons. There was a superior group leader with a few SS officers. They counted up the /people for the/ wagons, and they did ... I went into the first wagon. We were counted off eighty people, and ... and we went into the wagon.

Boder: What kind of wagons were they?

Gertner: They were freight wagons ...

Boder: Yes.

Gertner: ... used for transportation of cattle.

Boder: A freight wagon.

Gertner: Freight wagon, freight wagons.

Boder: Yes.

Gertner: They were small wagons. We entered eighty, eighty-five people into one wagon, and we were locked in. They said, "Who is missing ... if one will be missing, then the whole wagon will be shot." So said the Hungarian gendarmerie. They said that.

Boder: Hm.

Gertner: And then someone was made the leader of the wagon. He should supervise.

Boder: A Jew?

Gertner: Also a Jew. There were only Jews there.

Boder: Yes.

Gertner: And we were locked in there. On Thursday at twelve o'clock ...

Boder: You were there with whom?

Gertner: I was ... by accident I was able to be with my ... with my relatives, /word not clear/ only with the aunt, because the uncle remained in the hospital. She alone—the others were thrown into another wagon. One couldn't choose.

Boder: Hm.

Gertner: We remained there with strangers, such from the same city, acquaintances [*sic*]. And eighty people in a wagon, a small wagon. For the whole wagon was ... was ... was allotted a jar of water, and a half a bread to each.

Boder: Hm.

Gertner: A small piece *!?* of black bread. This was for the whole journey, and we had nothing prepared *!?*.

Boder: Were you told where you were being taken?

Gertner: We were told nothing. Absolutely nothing was said. The train started moving Thursday noon at twelve o'clock, and we went ...

Boder: Nu, a convenience ...

Gertner: There was nothing.

Boder: ... a toilet.

Gertner: There were in the wagons absolutely no toilets. Absolutely nothing. It was ... we went out /releaved [*sic*] ourselves / ... one ... it was ... impossible to tell.

Boder: Tell it ... how was it?

Gertner: We went out. We had containers or such. We poured it out through the window. One saw another ... we couldn't ... we took a dress, covered there a corner of the wagon and there. When one came out another went in. So in a line ...

Boder: Hm.

Gertner: We didn't have any water to wash one's self and such.

Boder: Hm. One made it on the /in English:/ floor ... /in German:/ on the floor?

Gertner: Right on the floor. The children screamed. They had no water, and the ... on the first day there was still water that had been given, and we could /get/ a little on the way. And then on the second day there was absolutely no water. The children—it was a pity—the children cried. The parents did not drink any water so that it should remain for the children.

Boder: Hm.

Gertner: So we journeyed for four days and four nights till ... till Sunday evening.

Boder: Yes. Where did you come to?

Gertner: Sunday evening we came to ... to Birkenau, to Auschwitz. This is near Auschwitz.

Boder: Yes.

Gertner: And so in the wagons was ... we thought we shall perish from thirst. There were terrible heat spells then, and ...

Boder: Just a moment. /Words not clear./

Gertner: Yes. It was terribly hot, and the wagons were closed ...

Boder: When was it? In June or May?

Gertner: June. The first of June.

Boder: The first of June. Nu?

Gertner: We couldn't stand it. We said, "If we go another night, then ..." We were all undressed, naked, only in the trousers, because of the heat. We arrived on the first of June. We arrived at ...

Boder: Nu?

Gertner: On the first of June we arrived in Auschwitz.

In this exchange, Boder is concerned with the duration of the train journey and its destination. The impact of the journey on deportees—the disposal of excrement through windows,⁹⁷ the management of the toilet queue, the rationing of water, and inconsolable children—makes difficult passage to words that Boder can add to his traumatic inventory. Notably, English intrudes in the exchange to verify the location where people excreted, although its expression itself as “one made it on the ... floor” is testament to the shame of uttering the memory of that action. In relation to depersonalization, the stripping of clothes in front of others to cope with the heat was, in one sense, a symbolic decline of the self, yet it was also a necessary survival strategy.

Boder's insistence on full disclosure continued in his interview with Adolph Heisler.⁹⁸ In relation to Heisler's telling of his deportation sequence, Boder is concerned, as in the Gertner interview, with clarifying the method of transport, its interior design, the number of deportees, and the duration of the journey.⁹⁹

Heisler: And on the next day in the morning we were not permitted to leave the barracks. We saw a great number of rr-cars arriving. And they packed in many /?/ people in those rr-cars, a hundred people to a wagon, without food, without anything, and we were transported ... where we are being transported to nobody knew. We were riding and riding, two weeks in the train. And then we arrived in Auschwitz. We did not know ...

Boder: Yes? Nu ...

Heisler: We did not know about any Auschwitz, about extermina- ... We saw people dressed in prisoner clothes, but we did not know what it meant. Only afterwards we found out the entire story.

Boder: All right. And so let us go back a little. You were put into rr-cars.

Heisler: Yes.

Boder: What kind of rr-cars were they?

Heisler: They were those freight cars for cattle.

Boder: Yes?

Heisler: Not passenger cars. And they were very crowded, without water. They did not supply any water. Food, there was none, because from home we had not been able any more to bring any food along. Because we had already been four weeks in that ghetto, everything had given out.

Boder: How many persons were you in one wagon?

Heisler: We were a hundred people in a wagon.

Boder: Were there any seats, any benches?

Heisler: No, no, just so. They had taken away the bundles. They had taken away everything. We lay on the bare boards.

Boder: Was your father and mother with you?

Heisler: Yes, still there in the rr-car, but ...

Boder: And the two brothers?

Heisler: Also. All of us were still together. Only in Auschwitz, when we arrived, were we all dispersed /separated/.

Boder: One moment. And so you were shoved into the rr-cars. Was there a toilet?

Heisler: Nothing, nothing.

Boder: So then, how did one do it when one wanted to go to ... to ... to relieve oneself or ...?

Heisler: We had a few pots, so we ...

Boder: Yes?

Heisler: ... made a toilet in the pots and poured it out.

Boder: Poured it out where?

Heisler: Out of the rr-car, outside /?/.

Boder: Were the rr-cars open?

Heisler: There was a small opening, through the window ...

Boder: Yes.

Heisler: ... and covered with wire.

Boder: Yes.

Heisler: We could barely put the hand through.

Boder: And how did the men and women use the pots?

Heisler: Well, everything was the same /did not matter/. People there did not look /care/ so much any more.

Boder: Nu. And so, how long did the journey last?

Heisler: Two weeks.

Boder: /With surprise:/ Two weeks?

Heisler: Yes.

Boder: Were the wagons opened every day?

Heisler: No.

Emptying the excrement pots involved a delicate negotiation of the barbed wire, while the shame of excreting in front of others eventually became routinized and inconsequential. Interestingly, Boder's perplexity manifests through the insertion of "surprise" into the transcription as evidence of his own reaction to the duration of train transit ("two weeks"), because this was fairly unusual. The duration provokes Boder to enquire about the society of transit, how people behaved and what they discussed. Heisler's inference that deportees were "already not normal" suggests that people were to some extent conditioned to sharing limited space in ghetto housing:

Boder: Yes. Nu, did all of you ... What did the people do all day in the rr-cars?

Heisler: Nothing. We were sitting. One said we are being taken there, and one said this will happen. We did not know ourselves. We were completely mixed up. We were already not normal from all the "story" that had happened.

Although the interviews of Gertner and Heisler demonstrated that deportees were forced to remove the excrement from the freight cars, the horror of its chronic invasion remained with Boder in his subsequent interviews. Three of the eight interviews conducted at Camp Tradate in Italy contain extensive disclosures about urine and its powerful status as both violator and rescuer of the deportees, particularly thirst-ridden children. These disclosures are repeated over two days in Boder's interviews with Schwarzfitter, Epstein, and Piskorz, the approach to which he stated was episodic, rather than to "take the whole story."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Boder's reoriented interview protocol at Tradate to extract the high points of trauma may have provided speaking and listening room for stories of the "shameful" in transport accounts to be more tellable and intense.¹⁰¹ The episodic, selective approach may have consequently impacted on the disclosure of these scenes of urine trauma after fifty-five interviews already conducted during August 1946. In his quest for the recuperation of traumatic content from the victims, Boder insisted that refugees not rehearse or refine their testimony prior to being interviewed.¹⁰²

A sense of rehearsal also implicates Boder as a perplexed interviewer in the questions he asks. These questions are shaped by his reactions to the graphic and violating stories of urine trauma, as someone who has heard the story before, but nevertheless exhibits authentic shock as a listening witness in relation to variations in its content. Of interest is how Boder attempts to negotiate familiarity and shock in the disclosure of transit truths, of being critical yet compassionately receptive to urine trauma as a unique disclosure.

Boder's perplexity about the witness's claims of urine trauma surfaces in his inquisitive yet disbelieving reaction to its first mention by Schwarzfitter and is repeated, perhaps obsessively so, in his questioning of it as a returning trauma scene in the testimonies of Epstein and Piskorz.

The following exchange between Schwarzfitter and Boder concentrates on Schwarzfitter's numerous camp evacuations during the months of German defeat, from February to April 1945.¹⁰³ Schwarzfitter tells Boder how, incredibly, he survived a six-week death march to Nordhausen, and then moves to his train journey by freight car to Bergen Belsen from a camp in the Harz. Train journeys in the final months of the war as part of evacuations and death marches to camps, and to points of ostensible German refuge, were often more shocking than those to the extermination camps because of the utter deprivation of material provisions, the climate, and the endurance of marathon foot journeys as part of these marches. Although camp inmates were under no illusions about the capacity of guards to inflict violence, Schwarzfitter presents this train confinement as worse than his previous experiences. As in the interviews with Gertner and Heisler, Boder is concerned with the design of freight cars used, as having "four wheels" per railroad car and being old "forty and eight" carriages.¹⁰⁴ Schwarzfitter insists on the authenticity of their appearance and thus capacity to compress human bodies:

Schwarzfitter: But they were fifteen-ton /cars/, so it was written on them, fifteen-ton cars. The entrance had to be perfectly clear. There stood a little cot with a hay sack /hay mattress/ on it, and there slept two SS men. And the capos were two professional criminals, Germans, who had to keep order. They were selected at the departure from the lager to be in charge of surveillance over us. Woe is to the man who falls under a master who was once a slave. With every order /?/? they were beating us /?/?/. We were ordered to embark, to sit down on the floor, and one had to sit down next to the other. But it was impossible to sit ... , to sit that way.

Boder: Hm ...

Schwarzfitter: When somebody dared to complain to a chief, then everybody was beaten. Nobody was spared among us. An incident once happened that, in spite of the fact that we have seen so many cases of death, but I shall never forget that moment when a Jew was beaten, somebody was beaten, and he started saying *Vida* /the prayer of those who are approaching death/.

Boder: Hm ... in the rr-car.

Schwarzfitter: In the rr-car. At that moment went through our mind the old memories. By that time we were not anymore human beings like we remembered from once at home, because all ... , all that belonged to the past. But at that moment a man ... , a man remembered /?/ that once there was a home, /where/ humans died like humans, and not under such conditions, and such circumstances. No food, no drink, were given to us. Not even swallowing /catching our breath?/, standing up was permitted. And so we remained for five days.

Boder: What does it mean? Why did they not permit to swallow?

Schwarzfitter: Nothing. One could not. They were beating, pushing one another. It was an impossibility to swallow /to breath?/. The thirst was so strong ...

Boder: The what? ... ?

Schwarzfitter: The thirst ...

Boder: The thirst ...

Schwarzfitter: The thirst, the thirst ...

Boder: The thirst ...

Schwarzfitter: The thirst /only now the word became understandable due to context/ was so strong that people drank their own urine.

Boder: Was that really so?

Schwarzfitter: That was really so. And people got sick of the so-called sickness of the rose /erysipelas/.

Boder: What is that?

Schwarzfitter: A rose ...

Boder: Tell it in Yiddish ... , Yes a rose ...

Schwarzfitter: Yes.

Boder: Oh!

Schwarzfitter: ... rose sickness. Very many. They had violent fever. Day in and day out; we were traveling /the train was in motion/ three, four to five hours a day. The rest of the time we were standing on sidings /?/, where we had to unload people who died. There happened to be in our rr-car stronger people ...

Boder's first encounter with urine trauma provoked him to seek confirmation, in Yiddish, of what he had just heard: "Was that really so?" The reconfirmation of these disclosures continued in Boder's second encounter with the shame of urine trauma in as many days with Nechamah Epstein, whose transit experience painfully details the effects of "dead bodies in travel." The following excerpt from his somewhat combative interview with Epstein highlights the effects of carrying dead bodies during transit, and of confinement as a discrete death space ("the real death began"), a site of deculturation that does the work of stripping deportees, literally and symbolically, of their humanity.¹⁰⁵

Epstein was deported from the Umschlagplatz in the Warsaw Ghetto and escaped from the train en route to Treblinka with her brother, who was shot and killed during the attempt. Important in the following exchange is not only the presence of the dead among the living. Also excruciating is the entangling of bodies, their heat and nakedness, in the weighted memory of Epstein's crushed body in the carriage:

Epstein: He said to walk in rows of five. We got into the rr-cars. Two hundred persons were packed into one rr-car. Riding in these wagons everyone saw death before the eyes at any instance. We lay one on top of the other. One pinched pieces from another. We were tearing pieces.

Boder: Why?

Epstein: Because everybody wanted to catch ... to save oneself. Everybody wanted to catch air. One lay suffocating on top of another.

Boder: Hm.

Epstein: We could do nothing to help ourselves. And then real death began.

Boder: In the rr-cars?

Epstein: In the rr-cars. After we had traveled for four hours, it became terribly hot. But so fast did the train travel that there was nothing /to do/ ... faster than an express.

Epstein: And we were in that rr-car a whole night. There had begun a great thirst. It became terribly hot. Everybody undressed nude.

Boder: Men and women?

Epstein: Men , ... no. What does completely naked mean? We undressed ... in the shirts we went around.

Boder: Nu?

Epstein: Men, women, children.

Boder: Hm.

Epstein: There were small children who began to cry terribly, "Water!" German guards sitting on top of the trains began to shoot inside:

Epstein: And they began to shoot inside. When they began to shoot inside, very many people fell /were killed/. I was sitting and looking how one gets /hit by/ a bullet, another one gets /hit by/ a bullet. I, too, expected to get hit in a moment.

Boder: Yes?

Epstein: And I saved myself by hiding under the dead. I lay down underneath the dead. The dead lay on top of me. The blood of the killed was flowing over me.

Boder: The what?

Epstein: Blood.

Boder: Yes.

Epstein: I was completely bespattered with blood.

Boder: Hm.

Epstein: There lay a little girl of four years. She was calling to me, "Give me a little bit of water. Save me." And I could do nothing. Mothers were giving the children urine to drink. You know what urine is?

Boder: Is it really true?

Epstein (screaming): I saw it. I did it myself, but I could not drink it. I could not stand it any more. The lips were burned from thirst.

Epstein: From the heat, perspiration /precipitation/ was pouring from the girders. This we ... one lifted the other one up. It was high up, and we licked /the moisture/ off the grinders [*sic*].

Boder: Hm.

Epstein: We traveled this way the whole night, and we were approaching ever closer to the real death. And so my mommie began to cry very much.

Boder: You were liking [*sic*] the perspiration from the cold ...

Epstein: Yes, from the cold girders.

Boder: Yes, from the ...

Epstein: There was nothing to drink.

In this exasperated exchange, Epstein portrays an unrelenting sensory onslaught, which rendered deportees powerless and vulnerable. These actions included the undressing of women, and the guards' killing of passengers, under whom Epstein becomes trapped, provoking allusions to the entwinement of bodies in gas chambers.¹⁰⁶ Boder's interventions in this exchange seek confirmation of the children's cries for water, for which urine is substituted: "is it really true?" This quest for reaffirmation is possibly a reference to his interview a day earlier with Schwarzfitter. Epstein seeks Boder's recognition in the extremity of what she has just said: "you know what urine is?" His disbelief provokes Epstein to claim a credible historical truth in her sight: "I saw it myself."

Epstein's brief testimony about urine trauma provokes speculation about self-representation and truth, particularly about how female deportees might represent themselves as confirming or violating gender expectations in the captive space of trains. In the representation of their responses to captivity, former deportees seem hesitant to go into explicit detail about what was experienced. If they did engage in activities in the train that they perceived as transgressive, testimonies provide an opportunity to recover the self from that space, and interpret their responses as consistent with constructions of femininity.

The urine trauma that Boder traced in his interviews is a disturbing example of disrupted gender behavior and its tellability. Descriptions of urine trauma are a stress for both interviewee and interviewer. Its telling reaches a distressing climax in Boder's interview with Benjamin Piskorz, conducted on the same day as Epstein's. In his interview, Piskorz described his deportation from the Umschlagplatz, presumably after the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto following the month-long uprising that began on 19 April 1943;¹⁰⁷

Piskorz: So they threw in also the dead people. In ... in the wagón I was still feeling very bad. And also during the ride I was terribly thirsty. So there was there an acquaintance, a comrade of mine whom I begged, from the terrible thirst, /that/ he should for me even ... nu ... I don't know how to say it, because ... urine.

Boder: Yes?

Piskorz: He made urine into my mouth.

Boder: How? Directly?

Piskorz: In the wagón, directly.

Boder: What does it mean, he made directly into ...

Piskorz: He made into my ... directly.

Boder: He urinated ...

Piskorz: Urinated.

Boder: From his ...

Piskorz: From his ... yes.

Boder: From his body?

Piskorz: Yes.

Boder: Into your mouth?

Piskorz: Straight into the mouth, because of the terrible thirst. This wasn't the first case, because all the people drank this way.

Boder: Hm.

Piskorz: And also ... the ... the ... the relief was for me very great, because the urine absorbed the heat of the tongue ... the heat of the tongue, and the tongue became ... the swelling of the tongue went down. I arrived ... sent out ... I was sent out to Treblinka. I have already mentioned before that this was one of the large extermination camps. In Treblinka a selection was made. They looked for people who could speak German. Having learned German at home, because I went to a trade school ...

Boder's perplexity is clear in his own lack of preparation for what he has just heard, despite accounts of urine trauma in other testimonies. His prompting of Piskorz to give utterance to his transgression is evident in Piskorz's shame of "I don't know how to say it," to which Boder replies, seeking clarification, "What does it mean ..." Piskorz's exchange with Boder suggests that the interviewee sought recognition for the transgression, an acknowledgment of the corporeal suffering and the intense throat pain of deportees. Piskorz's abrupt transition from depersonalization to survival at Treblinka through language marks the passage from one corporeal scene to another. From his conversations with refugees, Boder, too, entered this domain of struggle, as a listening witness previously exposed to stories of urine trauma yet unprepared for Piskorz's disclosures. His perplexity registers

in the preserved aura of his shock, enduring quite possibly a destabilization of the cognitive frameworks he initiated to retrieve the authentic, if not episodically isolated experience, in this instance. Boder sought clarification of the source of Piskorz's relief, "from his body." He wanted to be convinced of Piskorz's ingestion of urine. This truth would also reinforce what was, presumably for Boder, the shocking method of its direct delivery, a directness that was more appalling because of its frequent occurrence, which presumably included but remained untold as male-female deliveries, because "all people drank this way."

Boder's interviews highlight the frustrations of telling deep memory as an embodied experience. Deep memory is confined in time and on the body of transit, struggling to become a told testimony, thus complicating its social status as not only the topic of talk and understanding between teller and listener, but also of its place in the history of Holocaust train journeys. These examples from the Boder archive also permit speculation about how train journeys produced gendered behavior and zones of impact. In Holocaust testimonies, experiences of train confinement are told in ways that both secure and disrupt gender roles particularly in relation to choice, compliance, defiance, and compassion. Gendered zones of impact in the trains can be read through actions that motivated care and community, risk assessments relating to escape attempts, particularly scenes of heroism and utter desperation through jumping from trains, the desire to share provisions, and indifference to the suffering of others. Instances of female expression included protecting children; despair at the separation from family, husbands, and lovers; a concern with femininity, body image, and health; and violations of modesty, particularly in references to "going to the toilet." Numerous accounts of ingesting urine, or of mothers giving it to children, while seen as potentially disruptive, were also nurturing acts because of the journey's cruel deprivations, an indication of the environment rather than the ostensible immorality of the action.

If gendered zones of impact were one effect of train journeys, the stench of train space was surely its most universal, if not least interpretable, degradation. Stench was an instrument of defilement in many locations where deportees were located, confined, and forced to suffer. The olfactory assault of the camp world makes an appearance in "The Stench of Auschwitz."¹⁰⁸ Historians of the senses—Constance Classen, David Howes, Anthony Synnott—argued that excrement was associated with decay, and that in the concentration camps, victims' self image of their bodies and minds as morally contaminated was the product of physical inseparability from, and therefore identification with, excrement. The authors analyze other odors in the camp world, such as the burning of bodies in the crematoria, the smell of which would have polluted the air of nearby communities. In the camps,

as in train captivity, bursts of violence and noise could be contained, but smell could not. The minimal critical attention to the olfactory experiences of Holocaust victims is exemplary of the broader status of smell as the silent sense of modernity. Smell is perceived to threaten the “abstract and impersonal regime of modernity by virtue of its radical interiority, its boundary-transgressing propensities and its emotional potency.”¹⁰⁹ The olfactory dimension has particular resonance in the sensory ruptures of Holocaust train transit, where we can read excrement’s presence, expulsion and closeness, and occasionally, taste by deportees as an unquestionable marker of civilizational decay.

The neglected social place of olfactory truths is not isolated to interpretations of Holocaust experiences. In *Charting the Cultural History of the Senses*, Alain Corbin reviewed the relegation of smell in historical assessments of the value of the senses. He explored the divisional work of smell, considering the boundaries of the perceived and the unperceived. Corbin contended that the tension of interpreting the senses’ meaning was social: sight and hearing were rational senses, touch was a fundamental sense, and taste and smell were senses of survival, which revealed the ostensibly true nature of things.¹¹⁰ The senses have also been interpreted as predominantly Western and binary in construct, symbolizing nature and culture, savagery and innocence. The rise of smell as emitting social truths occurs under threat: “it is only when our faculty of smell is impaired for some reason that we begin to realize the essential role olfaction plays in our sense of well-being.”¹¹¹ As deportees often testified, stench was associated with putrefaction, moral corruption, and a regression to primality; stench’s lasting effect was a contaminated transit community. The smell of stench carried both actual and symbolic invasions that were more indelible than torments from other senses. Corbin contends that “it is from the sense of smell, rather than from the other senses, that we gain the fullest picture of the great dream of disinfection and of the new intolerances, of the implacable return of excrement, the cesspool epic.”¹¹² It was not only the emission of smells that was considered foul and disempowering, but also their inhalation, for this, too, confirmed the powerlessness of escape.

Anthony Synnott suggested that smell was the characteristic animal sense, and sight was the dominant human sense, with the development of “erect human posture resulting in the replacement of the nose by the eye.”¹¹³ In what ways are these episodes of intrusion, particularly of the presence of filth and excrement, told in terms of empirical, emotional, and bodily truths? What makes and unmakes body image in the train journeys? The denial of sanitation was a deliberate policy of Nazi officers and guards in degrading deportees, and evident in the attitudes of non-German auxiliary police guards who, on those stops in the journey, mercilessly exploited the

desperate condition of deportees by offering water and clean buckets in exchange for gold and valuables. Deportees were not only reminded of the captivity of the individual in the carriage, of the train carriage in the larger topography of countries held captive or collaborating with the Nazis, but of being held captive to one's psychology and body. The DRB charged the SS for "exceptional filth and damage" to the cars, which implied an expectation of that possibility during deportation journeys.¹¹⁴

The analysis of sensory assaults and their witnessing truths speak to larger issues about what can and cannot be said about daily life in the Holocaust by its interpreters and analysts. Despite the abundant appearance of excrement and urine trauma in testimonies, why are their impacts marginalized in studies of victims' experiences? What can be gained from focusing on them? In his study of Oskar Rosenfeld's notebooks from the Lodz Ghetto, Berel Lang suggests that there is evidence of a variety of discursive taboos on certain aspects of daily life in the Holocaust, such as sex, shit, and status, which consequently pass largely unspoken and unwritten in historiography. He writes that "these 'habits of the mind,' it seems, are sustained or renewed even for the writer committed to Realism in all its facticity and even under conditions as urgent and unmistakable as those constituting the Holocaust as an historical subject."¹¹⁵ The absence of reportage in historical representation betrays its appearance in memoirs, chronicles and testimonies. Lang asks:

Does it require more than an awareness of these rudimentary facts to imagine their effect on everyday life? The consequences extend farther than to the smell or stink: the shit together with the waste and dirt of other kinds—garbage, dead and sick bodies, the refuse of everyday life after anything with the slightest possibility of use had been appropriated and removed? What would be left? And how would its presence be marked?¹¹⁶

To what extent can the olfactory pollution of train journeys be evoked by wiping away the presence and smell of excrement, by the deodorization and cleansing of transit captivity as a footnote in historical accounts? Excrement's grimy presence and stink grounded deportees in abjection. Its recall in conventional language becomes a shameful narrative intervention, polluted by the very attempt of making it tellable. The social taboo on the act of excretion becomes reinforced in its telling and writing, in halting descriptions of it—"bowel movement," "relieve yourself," and "going to the toilet." These euphemisms sanitize the representation of excremental assault, and its memory as a symbolic staining of testimonies is more than simply evidence of the Nazi degradation of its victims. Excrement's stench and ubiquitous psychological terror also undermine the attempted maintenance of social and physical order in the carriage. Studies of embodiment

and olfactory sense witnessing among victims of genocide and displacement and in confined spaces such as prisons, camps, and in this case, cattle cars, have much to gain from cultural theory and studies of the body in crisis and abjection. As Anthony Synnott has discussed in his cultural study of the body and its senses, odors play roles in virtually all forms of social interaction: “Odour is many things: a boundary-marker, a status symbol, a distance-maintainer, an impression management technique ... Odours define the individual and the group, as do sight, sound and the other senses; and smell, like them, mediates social action.”¹¹⁷

Smell was not the only sense that defined the self and the mediation of social action. It was, however, subordinated to the visual as the primary truth in outcasting the racial other. The visual was the preferred sense of Enlightenment philosophers, such as Immanuel Kant, to explain the “different races of man.”¹¹⁸ Racial origins, difference, and hybridity were constructed in primarily visual terms in a color-coded taxonomy that indicated varieties of the human species each with apparently separate dispositions: the four “races of man” were Whites, Negroes, the Hunnic race, and the Hindu race.¹¹⁹ Eighteenth-century naturalists examined the racial traits of the Negro in visual terms, identifying variations in skin color, lips, hair, olfactory stench, and intellect. In the debate between monogenesis and polygenesis about the evolution of the human species, nineteenth-century naturalists expanded their categories of the “otherness” of the Negro to include sex organs, sexuality, civilization, and the fertility of hybrids.¹²⁰ The scopic regime was heavily implicated in the hierarchical construction of the ostensibly different races of men.¹²¹ Jews, too, were included in this panorama of otherness. The historical construction of Jews’ visual difference in European philosophy, literature, and culture was internalized by the turn to the body in the nineteenth-century racial discourses, particularly in medical and race hygiene, which extended difference to include smell and intellect.¹²² This sense of otherness was internalized by Holocaust deportees in the representation of their decline.

Pestilent and fermenting odors of excrement, urine and vomit in transit worked to unmake the body in transit captivity, the symbolic undoing of civilization’s order. Disturbingly, deportees described their body image, health, and hygiene in terms that were removed from the vocabulary of the human. The conditions of transit induced deportees to see their bodies in negative terms as propagated by Nazi anti-Semitism—they were “like cattle,” “like animals,” and “no longer human beings.” This regressive imaging was internalized in the senses, and extended to the smell of the self as “Other.”

In the search for a social place for the journey, testimonies of Holocaust transit deliver a disturbing conclusion: cattle car space becomes a symbolic displacement for the (unknown) gas chamber experience. By their very

survival, camp inmates testify to an experience of death in chambers that was not in the camps, but in the cattle cars. The bodily compression, the stench of suffering, and the unknowable outcome—these conditions are the unspeakable truths of train journeys that for many historians and survivors are resistant to understanding and to social discourse. Unspeakability perpetuates its own taboos of tellability, as indicated by Ruth Klüger's recollection of her transport from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz:

People who have experienced fear of death in cramped quarters have a bridge to understanding the kind of transport I have been describing. As I believe myself to have some understanding of dying in gas chambers from having lived through such a transport. Europeans who have sat in air-raid shelters have something in common with me that Americans don't. Isn't all reflection about the human condition (or conditions) a process of deducing from ourselves to others? What tools are left if we don't compare?¹²³

For Klüger, and many other deportees, transit captivity was a mobile chamber that anticipated, if not appropriated, features of the principal process of killing in camps: forced entry, nakedness and invasion, the crushing and suffocation of bodies, the explosion of hope, and death.

The comparison of experiences of cattle car captivity to a gas chamber death is at first glance curious, because the latter remains an unknown horror for there were no survivors, notwithstanding the Sonderkommando witnesses who assisted in the camps' darkest labors. Yet the comparison is not as disturbing as it may sound given that many of testimonies of transit are a post hoc interpretation. Rather the comparison is a telling comment about why survivors as writers, tellers, and testifiers of transit have felt the need to make that appeal in the first place. The comparison is a critique of the marginalization of the cattle car "death" and its battle to find life in the historiography of the Holocaust. Survivors of train journeys struggled to find social validation for transit's corporeal shock once the horrible reality of the gas chambers in the camps was exposed. This reality was the basis to representations of the camps' horror as the core human geography of the Holocaust, and all other experiences outside of it as peripheral.

The effort involved in breaking discursive taboos on what can be said and written about the daily life of victims is not only the responsibility of the witnesses, but also of interpreters, however extreme or disruptive these taboos might pose to Holocaust historiography. Yet some scholars are not convinced of testimony's possibility for integration, preferring to preserve its existential uniqueness. Paul Ricoeur has discussed the status of testimony in *Memory, History, Forgetting*. He questions whether Holocaust testimony is an exception to the historiographical process: "To be received, a

testimony must be appropriated, that is, divested as much as possible of the absolute foreignness that horror engenders. This drastic condition is not satisfied in the case of survivors' testimonies."¹²⁴ With this quote, Ricoeur positions extreme testimony outside of history, and extends on Michael Jackson's positioning of the listener or reader as oppressed by exposure to victims' experiences of trauma. What happens if the listener or reader is the interpreter charged with making sense of suffering? Indeed, the embodied experience of deep memory continues to be for some scholars a focal point of representation in crisis. Testimony becomes excessive, ruptured by the experiences imposed on it by the speaker or writer. It is such moments of experiential rupture, argues Dan Stone, that make the Holocaust difficult to integrate into conventional historiography.¹²⁵ Stone's assertion, however, requires clarification. Although the historical causes of the Holocaust are interpretable to scholars, it is the witness's deep memory as an embodied, subjective experience—and its unpredictable return as disturbing flashes—that remain the undoing of that history.

Testimony's work in undoing history is not necessarily a negative outcome. For the standards by which the emotional, combative testimony of acoustic, sensory, and embodied traumas can be assessed have yet to be determined or agreed upon. Indeed it is highly questionable that these standards should seek consensus given testimony's personal pain, suffering, and cultural specificity. The testimony of cattle car transit—as the told story of deep memory's body traumas—promotes a rethinking of the form and intention of Holocaust histories that can or should be written, the methodological approaches demanded by that testimony, and the role of the sensory witness in that process.

Extreme experiences call for an extreme interpretive approach. David Boder tried to place the content of DPs' interviews in a traumatic inventory, but he struggled with containment of the surfeit, and the extraction of the unsaid. His was the first project to engage with Holocaust railway shock in its extreme, unrelenting impact, and he developed an innovative, interdisciplinary methodology that took him beyond historical cognition. Boder recognized that with testimonies of deportation, survivors revealed a pain and "larger truth" than the facts of history could provide.¹²⁶

Notes

1. Michael Jackson, "The Prose of Suffering and the Practice of Silence," *Spiritus* 4, no. 1 (2004): 54.
2. Jackson, "Prose of Suffering," 54.
3. *Ibid.*, 55.
4. Santanu Das discusses "slimescapes" in the trenches as a theme in World War I literature. See Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
5. Todd Presner, *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 29. For a study of travel in Germany as cultural memory, see Nils Roemer, "The City of Worms in Modern Jewish Traveling Cultures of Remembrance," *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 3 (2005): 67–91. In a wider context, Jacob Borut has examined the continuity thesis about anti-Semitism in German history through his study of segregationist tourist facilities against Jews during the Weimar period. See Jacob Borut, "Antisemitism in Tourist Facilities in Weimar Germany," *Yad Vashem Studies*, XXX (2002): 1–42. On tourism in the Third Reich, see Shelley Baranowski, *Strength through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
6. On literary representability, see recent works including Garbarini, *Numbered Days* and Zoë Vania Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). On eras of witnessing, see Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, trans. Jared Stark (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), and Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith, *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004).
7. Levi, *If This Is a Man/The Truce*, and Levi, *Drowned and the Saved*.
8. Froma I. Zeitlin, "The Vicarious Witness: Belated Memory and Authorial Presence in Recent Holocaust Literature," *History & Memory* 10, no. 2 (1998): 5–42.
9. Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
10. Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999).
11. *Ibid.*, 17.
12. *Ibid.*
13. See Dominick LaCapra, "Approaching Limits Events: Siting Agamben," in *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the Holocaust*, ed. Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 283. See also J.M. Bernstein, "Bare Life, Bearing Witness: Auschwitz and the Pornography of Horror," *Parallax* 10, no. 1 (2004): 2–16, and Nicholas Chare, "The Gap in Context: Giorgio Agamben's Remnants of Auschwitz," *Cultural Critique* 64 (Fall 2006): 40–68.
14. Jelica Sumic-Riha, "Testimony and the Real: Testimony between the Impossibility and Obligation," *Parallax* 10 no. 1 (2004): 19.
15. *Ibid.*, 17.
16. Geoffrey Hartman, *Scars of the Spirit: The Struggle Against Inauthenticity* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 92. Hartman also wrote about ethics, response and address in "Learning from Survivors: The Yale Testimony Project," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 9, no. 2 (1995): 192–207.
17. Anne Cubilić, *Women Witnessing Terror: Testimony and the Cultural Politics of Human Rights* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 3.
18. James Hatley, *Suffering Witness: The Quandary of Responsibility after the Irreparable* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 3. On the ethics of witnessing

- testimony, see Claudia Eppert, "Remembering Obligation: Witnessing Testimonies of Historical Trauma" in *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning and Ethics*, ed. Roger I. Simon (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 50–64. For a selective reading of contemporary responses to trauma, or an apparent lack of them, see Carolyn J. Dean, *The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004). An insightful reading on spectatorship, empathy, and suffering is Luc Boltanski, *Distasteful Suffering: Media, Morality and Politics*, trans. Graham Burchell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
19. 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), 52.
 20. Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982), 58.
 21. Cinema was one of the socially acceptable arts, yet scholars have mainly given attention to the visual rather than auditory dimensions of its experience. In his study of classical music in the New German cinema of the 1970s and 1980s, Roger Hillman has made a plea for acoustic regimes to balance the cultural specificity of scopic regimes. See Hillman, *Unsettling Scores: German Film, Music, and Ideology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).
 22. Anthony Synnott, *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self and Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 208.
 23. Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 543.
 24. Synnott, *Body Social*, 219.
 25. *Ibid.*, 132.
 26. David Howes, "Introduction," in *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, ed. David Howes (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005), 7.
 27. Ernst van Alphen, *Art in Mind: How Contemporary Images Shape Thought* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 164. See also his "Caught by Images: Visual Imprints in Holocaust Testimonies," *Journal of Visual Culture* 1, no. 2 (2002): 205–21.
 28. Van Alphen, *Art in Mind*, 165.
 29. *Ibid.*, 168.
 30. *Ibid.*, 169.
 31. *Ibid.*, 176.
 32. Charlotte Delbo, *Days and Memory*, trans. R. Lamont (Marlboro, VT: Marlboro Press, 2001), 1.
 33. *Ibid.*
 34. *Ibid.*, 3.
 35. *Ibid.*
 36. *Ibid.*
 37. Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 3.
 38. Rose Yalow Kamel, "Written on the Body: Narrative Re-Presentation in Charlotte Delbo's *Auschwitz and After*," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 14, no. 1 (2000): 65–82.
 39. Roberta Culbertson, "Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Recounting Trauma, Re-Establishing the Self," *New Literary History* 26, no. 1 (2005): 169.
 40. *Ibid.*, 170.
 41. *Ibid.*, 178.
 42. Presner, *Mobile Modernity*, 3.

43. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. A. Hollo (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 27.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*, 25.
46. *Ibid.*, 44.
47. *Ibid.*, *Railway Journey*, 58. On cultural approaches to writing railway history, see Michael Freeman, "The Railway as Cultural Metaphor 'What Kind of Railway History?' Revisited," *Journal of Transport History* 20, no. 2 (1999): 160–67.
48. Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 66.
49. *Ibid.*, 43.
50. Jonathan Boyarin, "Space, Time and the Politics of Memory," in *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Timespace*, ed. Jonathan Boyarin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 13.
51. Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 13.
52. *Ibid.*, 120.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Max Nordau, quoted in Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 124.
55. For a reading of railway shock in Germany, see Andreas Killen, *Berlin Electropolis: Shock, Nerves, and German Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). See particularly chapter three, "Railway Accidents, Social Insurance, and the Pathogenesis of Mass Nervousness, 1889–1914."
56. Perceptual paradigms have been explored in reference to trains and cinema as icons of modernity in the nineteenth century. For a companion to Schivelbusch, see Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997). For an analysis of pre-nineteenth-century transit, see Tzvetan Todorov, "The Journey and Its Narratives," in *Transports: Travel, Pleasure, and Imaginative Geography, 1600–1830*, ed. Chloe Chard and Helen Langdon (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 287–98.
57. Robert Jütte, *A History of the Senses: From Antiquity to Cyberspace*, trans. James Lynn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 183.
58. Alain Corbin, *The Foul & the Fragrant: Odour and the Social Imagination* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 21.
59. De Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 111.
60. *Ibid.*
61. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, 130. Zygmunt Bauman has discussed the process of Jewish assimilation into Western European societies in the early nineteenth century as one of exit visas and entry tickets. Conversion to Christianity—as in the case of Jewish writer Heinrich Heine—was for Bauman, Heine's entry ticket to the modern world. Zygmunt Bauman, "Exit Visas and Entry Tickets: Paradoxes of Jewish Assimilation," *Telos* 77 (Fall 1988): 45–78.
62. For an insightful reading of transit in Freud's "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" and "Moses and Monotheism," see Cathy Caruth's "Traumatic Departures: Survival and History in Freud," in *Trauma and Self*, ed. Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996). She contends that these two works, when read together, "represent Freud's formulation of trauma as a theory of the peculiar incomprehensibility of human survival" (30). On Freud and travel, see Dennis Porter, *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), and "Trauma and Trains: The Testing Ground of Masculinity," in Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*.

63. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, 125.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*, 126.
67. *Ibid.*, 127.
68. John Murray Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity* (New York: Delta, 1974), 40.
69. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, 127.
70. On responses to transit in Hebrew, see Ezrahi, *Booking Passage*.
71. See Leah Garrett, *Journeys Beyond the Pale: Yiddish Travel Writing in the Modern World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), and Garrett, "Trains and Train Travel in Modern Yiddish Literature," *Jewish Social Studies* 7 no. 2 (2001): 67–88.
72. Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 13.
73. These interviews are available at "Voices of the Holocaust" at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) Web site, <http://voices.iit.edu>. I provide individual references when each interview is introduced.
74. On a related theme to my study of transit, Andrea Reiter addresses the restrictions that genre place on the representation of extreme experiences in *Narrating the Holocaust* (London and New York: Continuum, 2000).
75. *Topical Autobiographies* was the first published book of oral documentation of Holocaust testimony in English. Donald Niewyk also published edited excerpts of thirty-six interviews in *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival*. For a contextualization of Holocaust testimony in the immediate postwar years, of which Boder's project was ultimately a part, see Henry Greenspan, for example, "The Awakening of Memory: Survivor Testimony in the First Years after the Holocaust, and Today," Occasional Paper, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001; "An Immediate and Violent Impulse: Holocaust Survivor Testimony in the First Years after the Liberation," in *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, vol. III, ed. John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 108–116, and "Imagining Survivors: Testimony and the Rise of Consciousness," in *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, ed. Hilene Flanzbaum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 45–67.
76. Boder wanted to remedy what he perceived as an emerging disparity between the abundance of visual material collected on war and liberation and the meagerness of first-hand auditory material on the subject. See "Addenda," *Topical Autobiographies*, vol. 26, 2-3161.
77. Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, xiv. Donald Niewyk did not preserve their original imperfections. See Niewyk, ed., *Fresh Wounds*, 6.
78. Rosen, *Sounds of Defiance*, 32.
79. Boder, "Addenda," *Topical Autobiographies*, vol. 26, 2-3161.
80. Boder interview with Hadassah Marcus, 13 September 1946. She was in hiding in a ghetto bunker, discovered just before the beginning of the April 1943 uprising, and deported to Majdanek. She told Boder that thirty-nine people suffocated during her journey, which possibly motivated her to jump from the moving train: "People were fighting to get out, to get out not for the sake of living, but at least to perish in the air." Available at "Voices of the Holocaust" http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=marcu&text=_t.html.
81. Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, xvii.
82. Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, xix. Boder makes an early claim on "deculturation" during deportations as a method of genocide when read through Article 2 of the Genocide

- Convention, particularly items (b): Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; and (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group. Boder's concept of "deculturation" also anticipates sociologist Orlando Patterson's coining of the phrase "social death" to describe a person's initiation into slavery. Patterson says that a person is violently uprooted from their milieu and desocialized and depersonalized in a process of negation. See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 38. Marion Kaplan applied the paradigm of "social death" to Jews in Germany during the 1930s in *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). See also Claudia Card, "Genocide and Social Death," *Hypatia* 18, no. 1 (2003): 63–79.
83. David P. Boder, *Traumatic Inventory for the Assessment and Evaluation of Interviews with Displaced Persons: A Contribution to the Methodology of Content Analysis and Psycho-Sociological Appraisal of Distress Situations*. This laboratory manual was a supplement to David P. Boder, "The Impact of Catastrophe: I: Assessment and Evaluation," *Journal of Psychology* 38, no. 1 (1954): 3–50. See the accompanying explanatory note in *Topical Autobiographies*, vol. 10, 3151.
 84. Of note here is Boder's interview with Jack Matzner from 26 September 1946. In this interview Boder appears more confident in clarifying what he has learned about the journeys from deportees. He questions Matzner's certainty about the number of people in his carriage (eighty-one) and how that figure was arrived at considering most other deportees provide estimates of what it felt like to have seventy to one hundred deportees. He also questions the type of freight car used, as "cattle car," "freight car," or the "French forty and eight cars." In attempting to correct the emerging image of transport, Boder writes in parentheses: "What the D.P.'s called cattle cars were in fact freight cars, closed box cars, also used for the transport of cattle." See Boder's interview with Jack Matzner, available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=matzn&ext=_t.html. Boder also tries to clarify the difference between "normal" and "abnormal" cattle cars in his interview with Helene Tichauer, who claimed that "abnormal" cattle cars were those without roofs. Tichauer was transported in an all-female transport of single women aged up to forty-five to Auschwitz from Slovakia, in an action that promised relocation for work in the fields of North Slovakia. She conveyed to Boder a sense of the direction (Poland), but not of the destination. See Boder's interview with Helene Tichauer, available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=tisch&ext=_t.html.
 85. Boder, *Traumatic Inventory*, i-3141.
 86. *Ibid.*, 1-3142, Item 1.
 87. *Ibid.*
 88. *Ibid.*, 2-3143, Item 4.
 89. *Ibid.*, 3-3144, Item 9.
 90. *Ibid.*, 3-3144, Item 10.
 91. *Ibid.*, 4-3145, Item 11.
 92. *Ibid.*, 1-3145, Item 11.
 93. *Ibid.*, 8-3149, Item 34.
 94. *Ibid.*, 9-3150 (Item 42); 10-3151 (Item 43); 10-3151 (Item 44).
 95. *Ibid.*, 10-3151, Item 44.
 96. Boder interview with Alexander Gertner, Spools 77, 78, and 79, Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August 1946, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=gertn&ext=_t.html.

97. On the disposal of excrement through the carriage windows or openings, see also Boder's interview with Yola (Jetta) Gross, 3 August 1946. Gross was not a forthcoming witness. She endured a three-day journey from Czechoslovakia to Auschwitz from 15 to 18 May 1944, but the exchange about the disposal of excrement does not appear to be emphasized by Boder in comparison to his interviews with Gertner and Heisler. Available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=gross&text=_t.html.
98. Boder interview with Adolph Heisler, 27 August 1946, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=heisl&text=_t.html.
99. In Boder's interviews, the abbreviation "rr-cars" refers to "railroad cars."
100. For another example of the episodic approach, see Boder's interview with Bernard Warsager conducted on 1 September 1946, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=warsa&text=_t.html.
101. I am thankful for Alan Rosen's insight on this point.
102. Boder complains in one testimony that "the tone of the story sounds in places somewhat pathetic. He possibly has told it before, at least in parts. He may have rehearsed it by himself, since after I stayed in a place for a day the people knew that they would be interviewed and some of them may have done some 'self-rehearsing.'" See interview with Ludwig Hamburger, 26 August 1946, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=hambu&text=_t.html.
103. Boder interview with Jacob Schwarzfitter, 31 August 1946, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=schwa&text=_t.html.
104. The reference to "forty and eight" carriages originated with the French military during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–1871 and the capacity of train boxcars to transport forty human beings or eight horses. The designation persisted in descriptions of the suffocating transport of not only Jews during wartime, but also prisoners of war.
105. Boder interview with Nechamah Epstein, 31 August 31 1945, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=epste&text=_t.html.
106. On the theme of entanglement, see Boder's interview with Hadassah Marcus, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=marcu&text=_t.html.
107. Boder interview with Benjamin Piskorz, 1 September 1946, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=pisko&text=_t.html.
108. Constance Classen, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 172.
109. *Ibid.*, 5.
110. Alain Corbin, "Charting the Cultural History of the Senses," in *Empire of the Senses*, ed. Howes, 136.
111. Classen, Howes and Synnott, *Aroma*, 1.
112. Corbin, *The Foul & the Fragrant*, 231.
113. Synnott, *Body Social*, 185.
114. Hilberg, "German Railroads/Jewish Souls," 530.
115. Berel Lang, "Oskar Rosenfeld and the Realism of Holocaust-History: On Sex, Shit and Status," *History and Theory* 43, no. 2 (2004): 285.
116. Lang, "Oskar Rosenfeld and the Realism of Holocaust-History," 286.
117. Synnott, *Body Social*, 183. See also Annick Le Gu erer, *Scent: The Essential and Mysterious Powers of Smell* (New York: Kodansha America, 1994).
118. See Immanuel Kant, "On the Different Races of Men," in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997): 38–48.
119. *Ibid.*, 41.
120. Joseph L. Graves, Jr., *The Emperor's New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 39, 44.

121. On the topic of the scopie regime and racialized, enslaved voices of African-Americans in the nineteenth century, see Jeannine DeLombard, "Eye-Witness to the Cruelty: Southern Violence and Northern Testimony in Frederick Douglass's 1845 Narrative," *American Literature* 73, no. 2 (2001): 245–75.
122. Sander L. Gilman, *The Jews' Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991) is a good introduction to the construction of otherness.
123. Klüger, *Still Alive*, 92
124. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 176.
125. Dan Stone, "Holocaust Testimony and the Challenge to the Philosophy of History," *Social Theory after the Holocaust*, ed. Robert Fine and Charles Turner (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 223.
126. Michael Jackson makes reference to the "larger truth" of personal pain that James Baldwin raised in a seven-hour conversation with anthropologist Margaret Mead. See Jackson, "Prose of Suffering," 54.

CAMP ARRIVALS

The Failed Resettlement

The camps were not the destinations of promised resettlement. They were points of no return in a human-engineered system of death that polluted the landscape and survivors' memories, with flames, smoke, and smell. Would not arrival at the camps offer relief from suffocation and stench in the trains? Preparations for arrival at the camp, and the process of unloading, prompted some deportees to return to the hopes they had when the journey began. But how could the promise of safe arrivals, of deportation as a journey of life, be securely carried into the camp world, considering the torments experienced in trains? Released from their mobile chambers, deportees were unsettled by the incomprehensibility of their first visions of the camp. This unease was strikingly captured in Vera Laska's description of her Auschwitz arrival:

Dawn, the bleakest, most wretched, shocking, mortifying dawn of my life. The apocalypse of a doomsday where forlorn souls loom against the reddish glow. The long train comes to a screeching halt, the doors are being opened. Pandemonium. The living stepping on the dead to get out. Air, breathe deeply, air, as much as you want, air ... Flames from factory chimneys shooting upward and licking with blazing red and orange tongues of the awakening sky. How can red flames spit black smoke? But logic is excused here and now. Strange smells. Stranger people.¹

Deportees' confrontation with the camps generated new challenges for the senses, perception, and truth telling. The image of the Jew as foreign and unrecognizable was part of Kay Gundel's profile of Auschwitz's inmates: "I moved toward the door and saw baldheaded, emaciated human beings, men shuffling along in baggy striped shirts and obeying the guards like silent robots. Their faces were blank. Their bodies stooped and slack."² The Auschwitz climate immobilized her already frail body, for it was "cold. Icy. My body shook from the trials of the train ride, the lack of food and sleep, and the overwhelming, paralyzing fright."³ Ruth Klüger was relieved

Notes for this chapter begin on page 198.

to have the carriage doors opened before the excrement became “truly unbearable”: “We should have been relieved ... to be outside the sardine box where we had been suffocating and to be breathing fresh air at last. But the air wasn’t fresh. It smelled like nothing on earth, and I knew instinctively and immediately that this was no place for crying, that the last thing I needed was to attract attention.”⁴ Anna Heilman’s desperation continued after arriving at Majdanek:

Coming out of the car, there were 120 left from our original 170. Half of them were mad, half beaten up, half-dead from thirst. No food or drink ever tasted as good to me as the mud under our feet when we jumped out of the railway car. It must have rained hard to have left this much water, which we scooped with our bare hands and which tasted like heavenly nectar. Drinking, or rather eating, this mud, little did I suspect that this place would become my first contact with the bitter reality and constant menace of life in the concentration camp.⁵

The descriptions by Gundel, Heilman, Klüger, and other deportees of arrival traumas at various Holocaust camps are the subject of this chapter. I focus on deportees’ encounters with the camp world, and how the camp arrival has become, in representational terms, a scene of writing and embodied terror. Similar to my analysis of the earlier stages of deportation transit, I interpret several themes in the representation of arrival, which reflect transitions in mobile and fixed forms of captivity. The first stage included anticipation and preparations for arrival from within the train carriage, and described deportees’ impressions of the landscape and the noise of the camp. The release from the train onto the platform was the second, if not most terrifying stage, with violent and cruel separations and selections for death. Although deportees often represent these stages without interruption, my interpretation intends to make distinctions between visibility from inside the train, and impressions after deportees were unloaded at the camp. The train’s carriage door remains the marker of spatial separation between these two locations of captivity.

The emergence of the camp as a failed resettlement destination began with the train’s approach into its surrounds. Some deportees commented on the near collapse of others and saw glimpses of what appeared to be lights, fences, and barbed wire. Others were deceived by the appearance of ostensible normality in structures of the modern transit process, such as clocks, timetables, and station platforms. Deportees’ testimonies of arrival at the various camps were, however, not consistent or explicable. Whether in Belzec or Auschwitz, deportees describe the camp landscape in terms of foreignness, otherness, and exile. These descriptions were mediated by the camps’ geographies of scale and order. Deportees were delivered into the symbolic geography of the Holocaust, with certain camps occupying the

margins of that geography.⁶ What geographies of surveillance informed an Auschwitz arrival as opposed to a Treblinka arrival, for example? What was the reception procedure? How did impressions of the physical, natural environment, so geographically distant for many deportees, conflict with the intimidation of the unnatural surveillance detail? If deportees were navigating different perceptual threats at each stage of deportation transit, how did release from the train restore sight as a reliable witness truth to describe events, interactions, and other embodied experiences in these other-worldly locations?

An analysis of Holocaust arrivals in the Operation Reinhard camps, and in Majdanek and Auschwitz, gives a fascinating conclusion to deportation transit's tellability and the conditions that make and unmake the Holocaust witness. An analysis of how deportees interpreted arrival also provides a spatial and culturally significant entry into the camp system, and in particular, confirmation of Wyschogrod's death-world where life was the exception. Such analysis also permits a brief investigation of what happened to deportees who survived selections and were recruited, however briefly, into the camp regime of work commandos. These workers often felt compelled to bear witness not only for themselves but also as proxies for deportees who did not survive selections, and to camp processes of "gray zone" labor tasks, extermination, and plunder.

In his calculation of the number of special trains involved in the transport of Jews, Alfred Mierzejewski estimated that approximately 613 arrived at Auschwitz and 390 at Treblinka as part of the Final Solution.⁷ In terms of numbers killed, Auschwitz was the largest concentration and extermination facility in the Nazi camp regime, and also recorded the largest number of survivors. The testimonies used for the analysis of arrival reflect that outcome. In *Atlas of the Holocaust*, Martin Gilbert reinforced the geographical ruptures and repeated territorial crossings of deportation trains. He argued for the historical singularity of an Auschwitz arrival through visually plotting deportation railway routes across Europe and their convergence in the capital destination of murder.⁸ The meaning of an Auschwitz "arrival," of the finality of the destination as synonymous with the destruction of an ethnic, cultural, and racial minority, has for some scholars, displaced the juridical significance of the Operation Reinhard death camps—Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka.

Treblinka was the most important site for the destruction of Polish Jewry. The physical dismantling of the Operation Reinhard camps during the war has been interpreted as contributing to a discursive erasure of their singular extermination purpose from historical memory.⁹ These camps did not have mass-witnessed liberations from advancing Allied armies, as their dismantling was hastened by resistance movements, in addition to other

factors. The relatively few survivors of these camps in comparison to Auschwitz have also contributed to their marginalization in historical writing. The approximate number of Jewish victims in the camps confirms this: Auschwitz (up to 1,000,000), Treblinka (up to 800,000), Belzec (434,508), Sobibor (over 150,000), Kulmhof ([Chelmno] over 150,000), and Lublin (over 50,000).¹⁰

It is undeniable that testimonies of deportation have assisted in the representation of Auschwitz as a singular topography of the Holocaust's extremity. The writing of an Auschwitz arrival is lyrical, stark, brutal, and spare; the observations meander across witness positions of reportage, self-observation, intense metaphorical associations, and convey disappointment with the failed resettlement promise. Auschwitz is often appropriated as a filter or prism for other camp operations, or has operated as a portable memory substitute for the vanquished witnesses and correspondingly limited testimonial sources from the Operation Reinhard camps. Yet that portability can be qualified. The arrival and reception of deportees at Auschwitz was both continuous and discontinuous with the unloading and immobility that gripped deportees at Operation Reinhard station platforms.

Common themes in testimonies of arrival at different camps include the presence of a starved and weird-looking inmate population, an ostensibly compliant Jewish inmate workforce who participated in disrobing, sorting, and disposal in Sonderkommando units, and the presence of an orchestra to pacify deportees and muffle the death screams of those being marched to the gas chambers. The physical scale of the camps was not so much empirically quantified in testimonies, rather it was embodied as a feared and ever expanding scale of sounds, burning smells, and instructional terror. The impact of arrival varied according to an inmate's opportunities for visual witness, and the spatial proximity of incoming deportees to parts of a camp that were not immediately revealed or concealed, such as barracks, wash rooms, and disinfectant areas. Mobility and proximity affected a deportee's witnessing perspectives, as did sight, a relative construct that did not always permit a corroborative truth about the people, impressions, and landscapes encountered in the camps. The relativity of sight as an available witness truth recalls Ernst Van Alphen's comment about "visual imprints," that what is seen is not always comprehended. In many ways, evidence of the murderous nature of Auschwitz is carried by its witnesses, who in particular, are expected to provide "all-seeing" and "all-knowing" reports about life and death in the huge camp complex, imparting a privileged if not impossible mobility in parts of the camp where access was not permitted. The possibility of a visual truth is therefore not only perceptual but also spatial and authorized; witnessing depends on mobility and access to restricted camp areas.

Preparing for Arrival

Memories of arriving at camps, like those of the journey, had little or no outlet for immediate written recording, a deprivation that is partially recovered in testimonies that attempt to recall the shock of entry. The shock has been represented in scenes and encounters that have become familiar over the years to readers of Holocaust testimonies and memoirs, and viewers of films. These shocks include the foreignness of the camp, its surveillance architecture, the sound of German as a camp language, and the devastating selections of arriving deportees. For those who survived the selection process, reselections, and camp work, and lived to tell it, the traumatic story of deportation transit does not end in the camps but begins there. Most of the testimonies I use are retrospective constructions, and it is clear that the assertion of the camp as a significant place in a deportee's wartime biography allows them to impose order and certainty on their transit experiences. But there are conflicts in experiential and narrative or testimonial time. It was the absence of knowing one's place in experiential time that is reclaimed in narrative or testimonial time.

In the first stage of representing arrival, deportees report being anxious about the location of arrival after arduous and agonizing journeys, sometimes attempting to conceal the effects of transit in minor attempts at reinvention. Some deportees reported changing their clothes, made efforts to clean themselves to appear productive and ready to work. Testimonies also revealed a particularly illuminating conversation about the future, a conversation that testified to the faith of deportees in the deceptive image of resettlement. But how was arrival anticipated from within the confines of the carriage? What factors influenced the representation of the camps of Operation Reinhard as opposed to Auschwitz as feared landscapes?

Belzec was the first of the Operation Reinhard camps to be constructed and its small scale was deceptively lethal. Reports from survivors of Belzec are rare in the historical archive, making Rudolf Reder's account of arrival there a singularly important testimony. He arrived on one of the first transports from Lemberg during the great Aktion, which lasted for two weeks in August 1942 and during which 50,000 Jews were deported. Reder was sixty-one when he arrived at Belzec, and upon arrival was fortunate to be selected to join the Jewish death brigade and to be the camp's odd man. He remained in Belzec for three months. Toward the end of November 1942 he was taken to Lemberg, where he survived, hidden by his former housekeeper.¹¹

In terms of layout, Belzec was divided into two camps: Camp I was the reception and administrative center, and promised deportees an image of future mobility; Camp II was an extermination sector. A long railroad ramp of approximately five hundred meters could accommodate twenty-eight freight

cars. There were two huts for arrivals: one for undressing and the other for storing clothes and luggage.¹² Reder's incarceration in Belzec afforded a unique insight into the transit ruse at the camp.¹³ His account of entry into the camp, and then witness of the arrival of other transports emphasized the physical landscape and its limited modernity. There was underdevelopment, and the sidings "led through empty fields; not one habitable building in sight."¹⁴ The limited development created a specifically fabricated purpose, to secure the deportees' belief in survival and compliance with instructions. Belzec housed a "small station" with a post office, suggesting an open circuit of communication with the outside world.

Descriptions of a Treblinka arrival confirmed its status as one of the most convincing transit images. In Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, survivors made reference to the "Road to Heaven" or "Road to Death," where the "relation between height and visibility of the objects in the death camp was important for the way the Nazis directed the final steps of the Jews."¹⁵ Sections of the road were arranged to prevent prisoners from seeing their internal destinations, a similar deception to that found in Sobibor.¹⁶ Unlike descriptions of the primitive landscapes of Belzec, Treblinka was inviting for deportees; its fields appeared lush, green, and welcoming. Abraham Kolski described Treblinka's station as "beautiful."¹⁷ Miriam and Saul Kuperhand's account of their arrival demonstrates retrospective witness intrusion, of having the death space interfere with the experiential, historical moment of recognition. Visions of the camp and impositions of fatal meaning are conflated in their account of captivity: "Daylight began to come through the tiny windows, and already we could see groups of laborers wearing the Star of David. We were near Treblinka's gas chambers, but at least the sight of the workers confirmed that we would work for the devil for some time before being cast into hell. The train slowed and then stood still for a couple of hours. Then we started to move again, passing through a thick pine forest. In another time we might have been tourists enjoying the lovely scenery."¹⁸

Arrival in the dark of night or early morning added to the sense of foreboding. Chiel Rajchman's account of arrival at Treblinka attempts to recreate the aura of arrival in using the present tense voice. Yet this aura is compromised by his insertion of the destination: "It is 4 AM. We stop, we are close to the station Treblinka ... the cars are locked and we don't know what will happen to us."¹⁹ In what appears to be indecisive urges of the driver, the train knows no destination, yet for Rajchman, death has long been at work:

Suddenly we see a sad and terrible display, a display of death I see looking through the small openings of the car large piles of clothes. I see that already we are doomed. After a short while the door of the car is being opened with devilish screams: "Raus, Raus." [Out!] It is too late. I have doubts about our misfortune.

I grab my sister and try to leave the car fast while leaving everything behind in the wagon.²⁰

Rajchman provides a corroborating visual witness truth about Treblinka's efficient operation and receiving capacity: "Treblinka had been built professionally. It looked like a regular railway station. The platforms are sufficiently long and wide to accommodate regular trains of up to 40 cars."²¹

Richard Glazar's *Trap with a Green Fence* is a critical testimony of camp labor and survival.²² In recalling his crossing into Poland, Glazar emphasized the visual landscape of Treblinka, a physicality that concealed the evidence of its interior operation:

The train often stops, now and then for longer periods of time, especially at night. After the second night, as daylight approaches, we can tell by the signs that we must be somewhere in Poland. Shortly after midday we stop again. There is a small station house identified as "Treblinka." A part of the train is uncoupled. At the curve we can see the front cars turning onto a one-track spur. Forest is on both sides. The train travels very slowly. I can make out individual pine, birch and fir trees.²³

He not only captured the psychological despair of deportees, but also underscored his own survival through selection for labor:

It is difficult to say how many they chose from among the thousands who arrived on our transport—more than twenty, or fewer. A few of the faces disappeared from sight as quickly as I had become aware of them. One was said to have swallowed an entire bottle of sleeping pills. Another put an end to it all the next day in order to follow his wife and child to death.²⁴

In his interview with David Boder, Jurek Kestenberg reported that the confusion of deportees began before the train's arrival. It was the utterance of the word "Majdanek" that caused sheer terror among passengers, for it signaled endings and beginnings:

"Majdanek. Everybody out." The train was immediately surrounded by ... by the gendarmery, and we were all chased out of the train. Into every train /car/ ran a few Ukrainians, and they took and chased everybody with rifles from the ... the train /cars/. They did not look who it was, whether a ... a woman or a man. They just struck, beat with rifles over the heads. They chased out in one line everybody on ... on ... on a ... on a ... such a platform. Chased out everybody and /ordered/ "Run, run fast."²⁵

Like other deportees, Kestenberg was exhausted from the journey, but there was no reprieve. They were all ordered to run to a "house," which Kestenberg

believed to be a gassing facility, but in fact was a bathing area. He recalls running the obstacle course of terror without hydration, with the Nazi guards cruelly imposing a rigorous athleticism on the already fatigued deportees:

How is it possible after riding such a long time where we didn't have a drop of water, were so weakened. Suddenly we were told to ... suddenly here we are told to run. And so we did run. Many people did fall to the sides while running. They ordered /us/ to run still faster, still faster. The bath was a long distance away. Coming to the bath, they said, "No, this is not good, You shall wait. You will be sent to another bath."²⁶

Anna Heilman's arrival scene at Majdanek mixes reportage and reflection. In her video testimony, she described an arrival scene that is more hectic than the same moment she depicted in her book, *Never Far Away*. The embodied performance of her video testimony arguably allows for a visually charged recall of traumatic moments including the violence of guards and disorientation of deportees who barely had time to recover from the journey. The platform becomes the place for regeneration and forced movement:

We arrived in Majdanek. It was raining when we arrived, so I bent down to scoop the mud, to quench my thirst, and I got a crop over my back, and the soldiers were lined up on the road, raus, raus, raus ... from our wagon, there were 170 of us, we left half of the people dead, and others were mad. There was a woman, whose child was killed, and she was running naked, and we had to run, I lost my sister, I lost my father, and we are running through an obstacle course.²⁷

The physical scale of Auschwitz locates it at the core of the camp system. It is also central because of the number of survivors from that location, and because of the retrospective weight that the word "Auschwitz" carries, namely, in popular cultural representations, memorialization, and commemorative practices. But this construction is also grounded in empirical truths: the long distance of Auschwitz from various locations across Europe, the multiple victim groups incarcerated in the principal and sub-camps, and the duration of the camps' operation. Zalmen Gradowski's journey to Auschwitz was prefaced by a long, agonizing report about crossing borders and boundaries, surveying rural development and dismissing the bleak Polish landscape: "We have been traveling such a long time that night has again set in. We stopped once more. From time to time the train starts, going several kilometers and stops again. The oppressive, nightmarish night has put the large, worried and woe-begone mass of Jews to sleep. They realize that they are very near to their goal. According to the timetable they have approached the final stage of their journey."²⁸ The station of Katowice signals that Auschwitz is near, and yet the passengers have "grown used to the monotonous traveling life,

they have become as one with it.”²⁹ That adaptation was soon terminated, as deportees moved toward the door, eager to get out: “The train slowed down and entered some branched out tracks. A prolonged whistle announced our arrival at the last stage. The train stopped. Everyone in the carriage was trembling. All are in a hurry and are pushing towards the exit. They want to breathe in, to suck into lungs some fresh air and also some freedom.”³⁰

Deportees’ impressions of the desolate physical landscape began before release from the carriage, as unloading was often delayed. This waiting time allowed last-minute preparations. Nearing arrival at Auschwitz, Eva Gross and Anna Koppich recall hurriedly getting dressed, thinking that a refreshed appearance would be an advantage, as would layers of clothing. Gross wrote: “The door of the boxcar opened, but nobody moved. Mother opened her suitcase and took out two dresses and put them on. I was puzzled. It was hot enough wearing one dress, let alone three. She told me to do the same, that way the suitcases would be easier to carry. I didn’t argue. She also insisted that I remove my sandals and put on my sturdy walking shoes.”³¹ Koppich remembers that many deportees slept fully dressed in the train on the last night of the journey, as “we wanted to be ready when we arrived. At 3 AM we arrived. It was the Birkenau Station. We did not want to wake the children since we did not know if this was our final destination. When my father saw the barracks, he relaxed, and so did everybody else. Our car was the first one to be opened.”³²

These impressions merged with other signs of arrival, such as the slowing speed of the train, the sound of whistles, and barely visible glimpses of human life and development. Gisel Berman journeyed for three days and three nights before arriving in Auschwitz: “Peeking out the tiny window, I saw SS soldiers everywhere. Just beyond the platform was a charming white cottage with potted geraniums on the window sill.”³³ Berman thought that the train’s arrival meant a new beginning: “The train stopped and the big door opened. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief. At last, we had arrived and could leave the suffocating stench of the miserable cattle car. We could eat, drink, work.”³⁴ Yet the deportees did not alight immediately at the platform. The only visible sign of development and residence disappeared from view, prompting an unanticipated image of a Holocaust destination: “A few hundred yards down the tracks, we made a new discovery. In front of us were high, barbed-wire fences, strung with high-voltage electrical wires. Strange shapes hung on the wires or huddled on the ground next to the fence. With revulsion, I realized that these were human bodies in various stages of decay. We soon learned that these were the people who hadn’t waited for Hitler’s final solution.”³⁵

The train’s creeping entry into the camp revealed a miserable modernity populated with inmates and little sign of cultivation and development.

Susan Beer recalled: "As the train began to slow down, I looked out its windows in the early dawn light and saw men in blue-and-white striped uniforms, working in fields under the eyes of SS guards. I thought we were approaching a labor camp. We disembarked at a nondescript little train station named Oswiecim."³⁶ After unloading she was marched several kilometers to Birkenau, where the desolation was clear: "The landscape was utterly barren; no grass, no flowers, no trees, no birds, no sign of life."³⁷ The difficulty in explaining the new landscape of resettlement was a common theme in testimonies. David Bergman was stunned by seeing violence and countless separations of families: "The train kept slowing down, and then we see barbed wire compound ... what is this, I had no idea, I was not in a camp before ... all of a sudden the train came to a stop ... they opened the doors, and that was when I saw hell ... all of a sudden, I saw Nazis beating people, and dragging children away from their parents."³⁸

The blistering light that most deportees saw when arriving in the evening provided no reassurance of the camp's location. If train journeys were destabilizing because of entrapment in fetid conditions, delivery to the camps introduced a larger scale of confinement, with the residue of sensory assaults of deportation trains relocated into the camp atmosphere. Benjamin Jacobs wrote:

It was light enough to see distant fences. We must be at a camp, and at least at the end of this misery. Perhaps the prophecy of our doom and death was wrong after all. The smoke, with the odor of burning flesh, that we suddenly smelled we passed off as the friction of the train's wheels on the rails. As the locomotive crept forward, we saw strangers on a ridge dressed in striped clothes with marching berets, walking like zombies and staring at our train as though they had been expecting us.³⁹

Light provided a stark illumination of the camp's arrival area. Olga Lengyel interpreted the camp's spectacular electrification as evidence of some form of civilization: "With difficulty, I ploughed through the compact mass of animal humanity to reach the little window. There I saw a weird spectacle. Outside was a veritable forest of barbed wire, which was illuminated at intervals by powerful search lights."⁴⁰ She then tries to describe what she later realizes is beyond imagination: "An immediate blanket of light covered everything within view. It was a chilling sight, yet reassuring, too. This lavish expenditure of electricity undoubtedly indicated that civilisation was nearby and an end to the condition we had endured. Still, I was far from comprehending the true meaning of the display. Where were we and what fate awaited us? I conjectured wisely, yet my imagination could not supply a reasonable explanation."⁴¹ Viktor Frankl describes the incarceration

appearance of the camp: “With the progressive dawn, the outlines of an immense camp became visible: long stretches of several rows of barbed wire fences” and “eventually we moved into the station.”⁴² The constant barrage of instruction was relentless for Frankl and his fellow deportees:

The initial silence was interrupted by shouted commands. We were to hear those rough, shrill tones from then on, over and over again in all the camps. Their sound was almost like the last cry of a victim, and yet there was a difference. It had a rasping hoarseness, as if it came from the throat of a man who had to keep shouting like that, a man who was being murdered again and again. The carriage doors were flung open and a small detachment of prisoners stormed inside. They wore striped uniforms, their heads were shaved, but they looked well fed.⁴³

Frankl believed that many deportees lived under the delusion of reprieve, the idea that a condemned man might get an exemption from death at the last minute, a faith that defied belief given the condition of many transports: “Nearly everyone in our transport lived under the illusion that he would be reprieved, that everything would yet be well. We did not realize the meaning behind the scene that was to follow presently. We were told to leave our luggage in the train and to fall into two lines—women on the one side, men on the other—in order to file past a senior SS officer.”⁴⁴

Off the Trains: A Failed Resettlement

The second stage of arrival involved the physical unloading of deportees and their belongings onto ramps. The alienation of the deportee from prior experiences of arrival at train stations occurred almost immediately on the unloading ramp, an ominous place of life and death. The platforms of train stations at all stages of deportation were represented as places of traumatic encounters—the expectations of deportation as a journey worth taking in the ghettos, and their conclusive destruction in the camps. How did scenes of selection—the separation and isolation that dominated actions on the platform, its energy, visibility, and its genocidal rupture—defy the deportee’s capacity for witnessing and representation?⁴⁵ The frenetic and often disordered pace of unloading contrasted with the slow crawl of freight cars and the resulting fatigue of deportees during the train journey.

The camp system was the political incarnation of state control of the body by ideology, architecture, and industry. But the system’s efficiency was also critically dependent on its human operators and enforcers. Irrespective of the camp’s location, testimonies recall the spectacle, violence, and intimidation by guards. Deportees also described the camps in terms

of foreignness, exotica, primitivism, and disassociation, a distancing reinforced in the look of people who populated it: the passivity, appearance, and adornment of the inmate workforce, and the reinforcement of terror in the presence of guards, dogs, whips, and guns to punish non-compliance. Although many deportees arrived at camps, the majority did not survive. The so-called selections of deportees for life or death were based on subjective criteria of appearance, presumed fitness for labor, gender, age, and usability. This menacing reception is recalled in testimonies in the vocabulary of its original decisive instruction that included “selection,” “left” and “right.” The death work of the camp was described in images of “fire,” which evoked the path to, or temporary avoidance of, a crematorium destination. These words divided populations and deportees, and were genocidal in implication and process.

Similar to other testimonies, Rudolf Reder identifies the platform at Belzec camp as a place of violent encounters and exploded illusions. On the platform, Belzec’s order and authority were administered by the SS men and their dogs. They were assisted by the so-called Zugführer, who were in camp contexts, a group of fifteen or so Jews selected from the death brigade with the task of being present at the ramp to meet each transport as it arrived. They were dressed in everyday clothing without any distinctive marking.⁴⁶ Reder conveys the assault to deportees in terms of a violent removal: “several dozen SS men yelling ‘Los’ opened the trucks, chasing people out with whips and rifle-butts. The doors were about a metre from the ground, and the people, young and old alike, had to jump down, often breaking arms and legs. Children were injured and all tumbled down exhausted, terrified and filthy.”⁴⁷ Reder’s testimony surveys the platform as an initiation into camp labor and the transformation of deportees into workers. The labor force comprised a number of camp occupations for which incoming victims were recruited. One task of workers at the ramps was to relocate those from arriving transports who were aged, ill, women, and small children. They “were thrown onto stretchers and taken to pits. There they were made to sit on the edge, while Irrmann—one of the Gestapo—shot them and pushed their bodies into the pit with a rifle-butt.”⁴⁸

Reder’s testimony about the reception of incoming transports at Belzec corroborates the historically documented process of the continuing deception of deportees, the expropriation of their luggage, and the welcome speech of future journeys, the last of which ended in death. His testimony underscores the importance of a visual truth to describe violent procedure of separations. He depicts the system of separations as both orderly and chaotic. His recollection of death’s motion as accompanied by orchestra music is disturbing, but the practice was not isolated to Belzec. It was a pacifying practice that attempted to drown out the sounds of dying victims:

Each transport received the same treatment. People were ordered to undress and to leave their belongings in the courtyard. Each time there was the same deceptive speech. And each time people rejoiced. I saw the spark of hope in their eyes—hope that they may be going to work. But a minute later, with extreme brutality, babies were torn from their mothers, old and sick were thrown on stretchers, while men and little girls were driven with rifle-butts further on to a fenced path leading directly to the gas chambers. At the same time, and with the same brutality, the already naked women were ordered to the barracks, where they had their hair shaved ... Cries of fear and anguish, terrible moans, mingled with the music played by the orchestra. Hustled along and wounded by bayonets, first the men were made to run to the gas chambers. The askers counted 750 people to each chamber. Before all six chambers were filled to capacity, those in the first had already been suffering for nearly two hours. It was only when all six chambers were packed with people, when the doors were locked into position, that the engine was set in motion.⁴⁹

After Auschwitz, Treblinka was the largest camp for the murder of deportees. It was the primary destination for Jews from the Generalgouvernement, and also for many transports from Southern Europe. In wartime and immediate postwar accounts, its status as a graveyard was readily admitted and mourned. What distinguishes postwar interpretations of arrival is the backshadowing impulse that is invested less in the destination and more in charting the connecting links between locations. If arrival at camps gives deportees an opportunity to anchor their testimonies to the visual, a residual sense of the placelessness of these locations in a human geography persists. This conflict of the camps as an alien geography serviced by a modern and familiar transit infrastructure is a major theme in the tellability of arrival. This theme is not isolated to deportees' accounts, but is also evident in the re-witnessing reports of investigators who toured the camps after the end of World War II. The status of Treblinka as a preminent address of Jewish destruction preceded that of Auschwitz.

In November 1945, Rachel Auerbach, the Yiddish writer and chronicler of the Warsaw Ghetto, was part of an official tour group of the ruins at the instruction of the Central State Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland. This tour resulted in her lamenting report, "In the Fields of Treblinka." Auerbach identified the railway tracks as the arteries to genocide: "The road to Treblinka. Here it is, the saddest of all roads ever to be trod by Jews, the journey made by so many hundreds of thousands of Jews in boxcars wired shut and packed beyond all limits, under conditions worse than any ever imposed upon calves shipped to the slaughterhouses."⁵⁰ If Auerbach mapped the end point, the historian Israel Gutman attempted to return to its origins. As origin and destination Warsaw and Treblinka were embedded in an intimate geography of suffering—the route of Holocaust

death traffic for Polish Jews: “Buried beneath its streets are the material remains of Jewish culture and civilisation. Some sixty miles away in the skies around Treblinka are the ashes of the Jews of Warsaw who were brought in the summer of 1942 by train to its gas chambers. Within hours of their arrival, their material possessions confiscated, their hair shaved, they were gassed and their bodies cremated, sent up in smoke.”⁵¹

The arrival moment at Treblinka was similar to other locations, yet Isadore Helfing’s shock in being so close to the mountain of corpses testified to the flow of transports into the camp and the workers’ carelessness in concealing the bodies from incoming deportees: “The minute they opened up the door I was facing right, there were about 2 storeys of dead people right in front laying there, this was the people that came before, dead in the train, they pushed them out, they didn’t have time to haul away, because another train came in,” and “I see boys dragging dead bodies to the grave, and I jumped right in and started dragging those bodies like I was one of them.”⁵²

Kalman Teigman was deported to Treblinka in September 1942 and remained there until the inmate revolt in August 1943. He remarked that the Nazis were intent on updating the station’s ruse and pacification of incoming deportees. Six months after he reached Treblinka, he testified that the camp’s commandants authorized alterations to the station platform and added flowers. There was also a hut, a large clock, music, a waiting room, railway timetables and large signs, which indicated that deportees had arrived in a trans-migrant community; arrows were visibly displayed, which directed the future journeys from the station: “Zu den Zuegen nach Bialystok und Wolkowysk” (To the trains to Bialystok and Wolkowysk).⁵³ The appearance of Treblinka as any other station is given visual credibility in the photo that depicts the platform and tiny station house (see Figure 6.1), which was discovered in an album that belonged to Kurt Franz, the camp’s deputy commandant. The knowledge of its possession and possible perspective of the photographer provokes thought about what is excised from the photo regarding the platform’s history of activity: of incoming and outgoing deportees, the surveillance, and the chaotic unloading at the ramp.

Similar practices of separation, selection, and relocation were applied in other camps. Platform scenes of isolation, concealment, limited modernity, and sensory assault appear in Moshe Bahir’s testimony about Sobibor, where he arrived in April 1942. Bahir recalled the release from the train and into the sound of order: “All the doors of the carriages were opened. German SS men, in green uniforms, were standing there, as well as Ukrainians in black uniforms. While I was still on the train, I heard the word ‘aufmachen’ (open up), and all the carriages were opened up simultaneously. There was terrible shouting. They began taking us to Camp I.”⁵⁴ Bahir



Figure 6.1 Train station, Treblinka, 1942–1943 (WS 35274). (Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz), Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.

went on to work in the *Bahnhofkommando* (Railway Station Unit), whose job involved removing the plundered belongings of deportees sent to their deaths, and clearing the platform of remaining rubbish and other items so that the “the transport waiting outside would be able to come in.”⁵⁵ Quite possibly, it was this roaming mobility that allowed Bahir to map the layout of the camp. For him, the physical landscape was the camp’s most effective method of concealment of plundering activities, and for hiding bodies and the evidence of death.

Bahir’s description of Sobibor as located in a primitive, uninhabited, forested area, with little sign of human habitation beyond the camp itself is further explored in his charting the sites of death and hiddenness: “Behind the hut extended barbed wire fences which were swallowed up in the tangle of trees. Behind the fence were huge piles of bundles and various personal belongings, flames of fire and pillars of smoke which arose from within the camp and, with their flickering light, tried to brighten the evening twilight, and above all, the smell of charred flesh which filled the air.”⁵⁶

Bahir’s work in the *Bahnhofkommando* allowed him to witness the arriving transports. The importance of being an eyewitness to the arrival procedure is highlighted in the following exchange between Bahir and the Attorney General at the Eichmann trial. He was questioned about the regularity with which the transports arrived at Sobibor:⁵⁷

Bahir: I remember certain periods. I remember a period when there were fewer trains; during the first period, when I was selected for work, fewer transports arrived—two transports came daily; perhaps there had been an instruction not to send many.

Attorney General: I am not asking you about instructions. My question is: What did you see? Who arrived?

Bahir: Later on, there was a time when many transports arrived—two each day, sometimes three. One at night, which had to wait until morning, and two more during the day. There were several such periods. The peak period I can remember was from May to July, August 1942. The second period was from October 1942 to the beginning of January 1943, when there were again many transports, two, and sometimes three, daily.

The marginalization of survivors of the Operation Reinhard camps as Holocaust eyewitnesses was not unusual given these camps were constructed for the purposes of extermination of deportees. Dov Freiberg, a fifteen-year-old boy when he arrived in Sobibor, also testified at the Eichmann trial. He spoke of the anticipation, unloading and separation characteristic of arrivals at other Operation Reinhard camps. These anticipations were misguided, for some deportees thought that direction to the East meant resettlement for agricultural work in Ukraine. Yet, how could these anticipations be convincing? Would they not be destroyed on arrival at the camp, if not beforehand by the fetid conditions in the trains? He recalled that

from the very moment we entered the camp, we were enveloped by a regime of fear. Everything happened at a rapid pace—indeed, there was not even time to think—there were shouts from SS men, from Ukrainian SS men, “Raus, raus” (out, out), and Schneller! Schneller! (faster, faster), and they forced us to run through the fences to a place where there was a small gate, “links, rechts” (left, right) ... In Sobibor, there were no selections for life and for death. Everyone who arrived—was exterminated. This was temporary—only for a few hours, or minutes. Links, rechts, meant men separately and women and children separately.⁵⁸

The promise of future mobility continued after unloading, as deception was employed until the very moment of extermination. Life was advertised in signage such as “SS Sonderkommando Umsiedlungslager” (Camp for Resettlement) and the instructions of hygiene (“to the showers”), and commerce (“to the cash desk”), which directed deportees from their arrival to the closed-in yard. Freiberg described his different witness opportunities in Sobibor as he graduated from deportee to worker. Striking in the following comment is the insistence on a visual truth, of what the deportees looked like, their origins, and the sense of a global war as explanation and internalization of the camp’s killing practices: “We saw what was going on,

but thought the whole world was being destroyed. We saw that transports were arriving in all kinds of ways, the people were well dressed, as if they had gone on a visit somewhere, people from France and Holland, from all sorts of countries, and all this went on, day after day, day after day.”⁵⁹ A particular transport that arrived from Bialystok is seared in Freiberg’s memory: “The freight cars were broken. Inside people were half dead, half alive. The people were naked. The dead, the living—all together, all injured ... it was something terrible.”⁶⁰ Freiberg’s comments support the contention that deception was maintained in the image of transit, particularly in the correspondence of “letter-actions”: “There were transports to whom they gave food and drink when they arrived, and they gave them writing paper and envelopes, in order to send letters home, and then they entered the yard, where they were undressed, and after Michel spoke (possibly a Commandant of sorts), there would be applause.”⁶¹

Arrival at Auschwitz was depicted in testimonies as a fraught discovery, expressed in descriptions of the camp population—the commandants, guards, subordinates and inmates, and particularly the Jewish labor force. But it was also delayed. Sophie Machtinger recalled the interior of the motionless carriage: “The train stood, and we could see in the distance an enormous yard surrounded by concrete pillars and barbed wire. It was getting brighter, and we could make out people dressed in what we perceived as pajamas with blue and white stripes.”⁶² After being instructed to abandon any possessions, she is emotionally paralyzed: “We were engulfed by indifference, and things suddenly lost their meaning, things which we had prepared so many years before.”⁶³

Louis de Wijze, deported from Westerbork transit camp on 23 March 1944, describes his abrupt arrival: “We hear the opening of the sliding doors of the first cars. All tense, we look at one another as the noises come our way. Then our door flies open. ‘Everybody out. All your luggage on the platform. Quick. Quick.’”⁶⁴ The frenzy of arrival threw deportees into even more terror: “we grab our stuff, jump outside, and immediately find ourselves in a raging storm. Men in striped clothes hastily drive everybody off the train. The SS, their Alsatians on the leash, club any prisoners still holding onto their possessions.”⁶⁵ Benjamin Jacobs describes the terror of his unloading from the carriage: “The doors rolled open, and startled us with loud bangs ... ‘Raus ...’ the cement platform was crowded with SS men, yelling and waving us impatiently, out of the wagon. We thought we knew all about Auschwitz’s horror, but we were soon to discover how little we actually did know. Each of us had been quietly evaluating his chance of survival.”⁶⁶ Helen Lewis was also extremely nervous at arrival: “At dawn the train stopped again. The doors were ripped open, and amid obscene yelling and cursing, some wild-looking creatures in striped prison clothes

boarded the wagons and flung us and our bundles out onto the platform, where seemingly amused SS men with fierce dogs received us.”⁶⁷ Moshe Garbarz, deported from the Pithiviers camp in France to Auschwitz, recalls the shouting: “Our train finally came to a standstill. There! We had arrived. Suddenly came shouts: ‘Aussteigen! Los! Los! Leave all your belongings, your own people will come and get them.’ After two sleepless nights, our legs were shaking, our heads were buzzing, our eyes were blinded by the light. The blows they struck woke us right up.”⁶⁸

The extreme shock for deportees of the abrupt unloading was immediately redirected to the camp’s surreal activities. Upon entering the fields of Auschwitz, Lily Malnik reportedly “saw fire from far away,” and was instructed to leave her luggage and stand in line.⁶⁹ Pearl Spiegel arrived at Auschwitz in May 1944 after two days: “We were told to leave all of our belongings in the railroad car. Then we were told to line up—men and boys to the left and women and children on the right.”⁷⁰ For Miso Vogel, his arrival at Auschwitz was accompanied by order, terror, and forward mobility: “The doors of the car were opened and it was the first time they had seen SS guards, each officer had a dog, and saw prisoners in striped uniforms. The separation process: told to line up in rows of 5. We were marched from the station about 1.5 miles to the entrance of Auschwitz with the sign, ‘Arbeit macht frei.’”⁷¹

Descriptions of the procedural similarities at camps were secondary to the traumas of their imposition. The process of order is reinforced in Lotte Weiss’s account: “We continued our sad and fateful journey for many hours and when we stopped again the bolted doors were unlocked. We were driven out by SS men with submachine guns and Alsatian dogs.”⁷² Separation lingers in Sam Profetas’s platform scene: “We reached Auschwitz-Birkenau, where we were ordered to come out, leaving all of our stuff in the railway cars. Then they separated the old people, the little children, and the women holding babies.”⁷³ Deported from Rhodes, Rosa Ferera could not predict her family’s fate on arrival: “Up to this time we had no idea what our ultimate fate would be. However, on arrival at Auschwitz, a selection was made and our parents and all young infants were separated from us and taken to the crematoriums.”⁷⁴

Descriptions of the exotica of the landscape extended to descriptions of the inmate population, and the decay of the train’s corpses suggest a metaphor for the camp ethos. Olga Lengyel recalls:

While we were assembled on the station platform, our luggage was taken down by the creatures in convict stripes. Then the bodies of those who had died on the journey were removed. The corpses that had been with us for days were bloated hideously and in various stages of decomposition. The odors were so nauseating

that thousands of flies had been attracted. They fed on the dead and attacked the living, tormenting us incessantly.⁷⁵

Lengyel's sentiment is repeated in Primo Levi's account. He recalls that "the climax came suddenly. The door opened with a crash, and the dark echoed the outlandish orders in that curt, barbaric barking of Germans in command which seems to give vent to a millennial anger. A vast platform appeared before us, lit up by reflectors. A little beyond it, a row of lorries."⁷⁶ Levi then describes what he saw on the platform: "two groups of strange individuals emerged into the light of the lamps. They walked in squads, in rows of three, with an old, embarrassed step, head dangling in front, arms rigid."⁷⁷ Levi anticipates his future in the form of "strange individuals" of the system, an indelible imprint of the death-world: "We looked at each other without a word. It was all incomprehensible and mad, but one thing we had understood. This was the metamorphosis that awaited us. Tomorrow we would be like them."⁷⁸

If deportees struggled to describe the inmates who walked around as if characters in a bizarre script, they were less ambiguous in their condemnation of the Nazis as sadistic, pathological, and cunning. The Nazis and the supporting staff on the ramps contrasted visually and behaviorally with the inmates in their appearance, power, and potential for brutality: "Every two yards along the platform stood a soldier with a dog and a machine gun aimed at us, while other SS men were driving us from the train with strange whips equipped with iron balls at the end."⁷⁹ Eva Quittner recalled the presence of a women's orchestra who had standing orders to "play at the arrival of every transport ... The Germans, with their flair for organisation and some ingenuity, had worked out that music would help to reassure the newcomers and avoid a general panic."⁸⁰

Ernst Michel remembers the sound of vicious and barking dogs: "after a while—I had no idea how long—I sensed that something was wrong. I heard voices yelling and the train came to a halt. I heard dogs barking. Angry dogs. Dogs that meant trouble."⁸¹ He also describes the violent assaults against deportees, and tried to protect himself: "the beatings began as we jumped from the train. Keeping a small bag under my arm, I jumped down, grabbed a fistful of snow, and shoved it into my mouth."⁸² The mayhem continued in the desperate rush to find and protect family members, which was often futile. Michel recalled that "as far as I could see, there were endless rows of cattle cars being emptied. The old, the infirm, men, women, children, babies, created a seething mass of inhumanity. It was mayhem."⁸³ Michel tries to explain the scene through a fictional allusion, revealing a failure of the witness to describe what he sees as an authentic truth: "it was a scene from Dante's *Inferno*. More and more people joined the procession

that slowly moved forward. I could not see where it was going. Men and women were searching for each other, crying and yelling.”⁸⁴ Ruth Elias continues Michel’s theme of shock and terror at arrival: “At some point in the late afternoon the train stopped. The doors were ripped open and we faced a terrifying pandemonium: shouting, yelling, barking dogs ... Get out, out! Leave everything behind! Get out! Faster, you swine! Line up in rows of five! Faster! Faster!”⁸⁵

Does not the order “Leave everything behind” capture what deportees struggled to do? The SS instruction does not just refer to material possessions, but also refers to how we can interpret deportees’ entry into the camp world. A despairing, melancholy tone saturates many accounts of arrival, and some testifiers cannot divorce the destination of the journey from the interpretation of the arrival location. Although repeated references are made to the often chaotic reception by SS officers, their dogs, and other prisoners, survivors identify the beginnings of deportation and their passage to the camp as a route of mourning. This retroactive witness laments the lost world of before with a mythical, nostalgic aura, even if that world was the incarceration ghetto and its restricted mobility. Helen Lewis reflects on life in the ghetto through the lens of Auschwitz: “Amid the soul-destroying restrictions and deprivations of daily life in Terezin, I had thought of home in Prague, even under the German occupation, as a lost paradise. Now I found myself remembering the ghetto’s ugliness with something like the same nostalgia ... In Terezin, on the ramparts and in the hospital, there had been grass and even a few flowers ... Here nature had died, alongside people.”⁸⁶

The otherness of an Auschwitz arrival was also recalled in the deliberate plundering of material possessions, hope, and orientation. Elie Wiesel mourned “the cherished objects we had brought with us this far were left behind in the train, and with them, at last, our illusions.”⁸⁷ Arrival was a displacement from the past and future, captivity in an endless present. The inexplicability of the encounter with the camp world, of language’s failure to represent the physical landscapes and sensory assault, evokes Ernst Van Alphen’s “visual imprints” to describe the effect of unassimilated witness truths, particularly in references to the Jewish “other” in the camp. The Jewish “other” was represented as decivilized in varying states of alterity, misery, and immobility, for example, as laborers, beleaguered camp inmates, *Muselmänner*, and corpses. In the following excerpts, language struggles to meet the demands of vision. Henja Frydman recalled the visual distinctiveness and foreignness of the Jews:

The first thing we saw were very emaciated men, in bathing suits. And we were thinking, “What could these be? Maybe we are out of our minds?” We could not imagine that these were our own Jews. We didn’t recognize them. They were

marching five abreast, and looked at us with horror in their eyes, and we also could not understand why their faces were so full of terror when they saw us.⁸⁸

Frydman continues her testimony with words that frustrate the attempt at interpretation, again evoking Auschwitz as the center of the symbolic geography: "To tell! That is the hardest things for us. Why? Because there are no words. No way of expressing it, that can describe what happened from the day when we disembarked from the train in the lager Auschwitz until the day of our liberation."⁸⁹ Frydman maps the division of the population, the inducement to volunteer for foot and truck transit to the main camp, and most fearfully, not knowing the fate of that internal journey. At the arrival platform she was

lined up five abreast, men on the one side, women on the other side. German officers, with a stick in hand, with savage outcries which were for us still new, started dividing us up, one to the right, one to the left, whichever way it would occur to them and were instructed to "leave your bundles here; you will return presently. We will just count you up" ... we left our packages, women were separated from men, sisters from brothers, women to one side, and the men away to the other side. They then started what was called a selection. They asked us who were tired, and they told these to step into the trucks which were waiting. They also told us that the old people shouldn't exert themselves by walking on foot, and that they should mount the trucks and they would be driven to the lager, and the young ones should walk.⁹⁰

Helene Tichauer conveys the disorientation of arrival. In her interview with David Boder she recalls what happened after her selection at Auschwitz and ensuing march to a gate:

On the way we saw something that I hardly could describe any more today. It was a most peculiar sight. Half-finished stone blocks /buildings/ surrounded with barbed wire. On the roofs, at the windows, stood striped, living corpses. I can't express myself differently. People without faces, /without/ facial expressions, like...like made of stone. Next to them stood ... today we know they were sentries, sentries so to speak, who guarded these prisoners, and /word not clear/ who ... these were men. When they say us, they were ... when they in some way directed their attention at us, they were yelled at, so that they would not dare any more to turn their head/s/, and continued with their work. At that time, as I understand it now, the lager Auschwitz was being constructed for us, for the women ... to complete it, so to speak, because most of them were up on the roofs.⁹¹

The perceptual assaults of arrival are also recalled in the testimony of Leon Cohen, with the admission of inexplicability becoming his only possible representation. He is able to report basic observations about the

weather on the morning his train arrived, but his camp experience, during which he was a member of a Sonderkommando unit, remains mystifying: “It was spring and the sun was shining, but most of the prisoners only briefly enjoyed the glorious weather before being dispatched to the ovens and reduced to ashes ... For eleven months I experienced Hell on Earth. No words will ever convey the true meaning of my story and I find it impossible to adequately describe the horrors that I witnessed.”⁹²

For the majority of deportees transported, arrival at the camps signaled an end to transit. In his assessment of why deportees boarded deportation trains, historian Israel Gutman asserted that deportees battled two complementary yet fatal visions: a belief in the transit image that was maintained not just in the rhetoric of resettlement and safe journeys, but also in the deliberate representation of mistruths, designed to induce, ultimately, compliance with Nazi intentions:

The truth of the death camp was not conveyed in a vacuum. There were also rumors of greetings, letters, and people who allegedly returned from the deportations. The Germans and their agents deliberately spread these false stories in order to create confusion and disinformation. Poles in the underworld promised that in exchange for large sums of money they would look for and find loved ones who had been deported. Every sign of hope was welcomed. People repressed knowledge of their doom. They desperately, even self-destructively, clung to illusions.⁹³

In this economy of illusions, deportees were victims in the regime of self-expropriation. They packed belongings, goods, mementos, clothes, and food, either hurriedly or expectantly, depending on the abruptness of the deportation action, for what was portrayed as their resettlement journey from the ghetto to point of departure.

The inventory of illusions persisted in the reception of deportees. In Treblinka, for example, the alienness of the camp was not only physical and infrastructural. It was also interpreted in the assembly of Jews from different regions of Europe who did not share languages or customs. For the deportees recruited into work commandos, “arrival” meant being witness-participants in the system of expropriation and plunder, and observers to the bewilderment of arriving deportees. They provided critical commentary about the attitudes and appearance of incoming deportees, who were often cast in ethnically distinct terms. New transports, especially those from Southern Europe, were received with both apprehension and much anticipation. The first group of Greek Jews arrived in Treblinka from Salonica on 26 March 1943. The transport consisted of 2,800 Jews in forty-eight train wagons, which passed through Czechoslovakia and Poland. Among them were academics and intellectuals. Samuel Willenberg witnessed their

arrival and noted the racial exotica of Greek Jews in terms of their skin tone, appearance, and language:

In the beginning of Spring, 1943, the whistle of the train informed us of the arrival of a new transport. From the wagons a slightly weird crowd exited. The people that arrived had dark faces, curly hair and [were as] black as a crow as they spoke a foreign language ... Amongst the arrivals was an especially large number of wealthy people of the intelligentsia, professors and lecturers. Though they made their way to the camp in wagons, they weren't crowded in as usual, and what appeared to us as being the strangest, was that the wagons were not closed and locked, and not labeled ... They all went down from the train cars relaxfully and completely calm. Women dressed finely, nice children, and men straightening and fixing the wrinkles of their elegant clothes, passed calmly from the ramp to the transport amassment area.⁹⁴

The deportees' belief in resettlement appears reinforced through Willenberg's shock that the wagons were "not closed and locked, and not labeled."⁹⁵

Work in an arrival commando, as described by Richard Glazar in Treblinka, also permitted a close analysis of racialism and recycling that dominated the camp's logic. Glazar noted a distinct difference between the allocation of care and community for a transport from the West and those from the East. For example, the maintenance of a transit ruse was perceived as necessary for those deportees from the West, who were sometimes transported in passenger cars, and were generally perceived as more socially assimilated and educated. This perception contrasted with views of deportees from Poland, who were seen as racially and socially inferior. The solicitation of compliance of deportees from the West was arguably more necessary because their distances and transport routes were much more noticeable to local populations who might have objected to the disappearance of Jews from their communities. Glazar commented that transports from Darmstadt, Theresienstadt, or anywhere in the West, were handled with "relative care. These passengers don't seem to sense anything amiss. All apprehension is immediately banished. No one can imagine his own end—such a very naked end."⁹⁶ But deportees in transports from the East, were already "half dead from the effect of being herded into the cattle cars, or from the journey itself. Most of these people are pushed into the middle hallway with the 'shower rooms' on either side."⁹⁷

The camp sorting commandos' anticipation of an arriving transport, especially those from the Western and Southern Europe, was reflected in the value attached to various items in deportees' suitcases. These items, most of which were personal for the deportee, were removed at arrival and sent for sorting in barracks, and this process required specialist knowledge. For example, transports with doctors on board delivered pharmaceutical items into Treblinka,

and these were sorted by medical students who were also camp inmates.⁹⁸ Luggage items provided a constant source of anticipation, delight, and wonder for sorting commandos, who often took these items to trade with camp guards. Glazar noted: "It is all but impossible to imagine what can be found among the last things packed by thousands and thousands: a case outfitted like a small laboratory, a collapsible leather bag full of tools, and other items."⁹⁹ He also helped himself to food: "Never in these past two years of war has my mouth been so full of butter, chocolate, sugar. From another pile I take a shirt, every day a clean one, every day a shirt from another dead man."¹⁰⁰ The plundered goods that were stored in the sorting commando barracks in the Operation Reinhard camps represented a final expropriation of the deportee, a system of plunder and profit that was repeated in other camps.

Apart from working in arrival and sorting commandos, some incoming deportees, usually men, were selected for work in the Sonderkommando.¹⁰¹ At Auschwitz, there were five groups of Sonderkommando labor that carried out tasks specific to the extermination process: receiving newcomers in the undressing room, removing the victims' clothing after they left the hall, carrying the bodies after gassing to the place of cremation, collecting valuables, shaving hair and extracting gold teeth, operating the furnaces for the cremation of the bodies of those murdered, crushing the remnants of bones and body parts that had not been consumed in the flames, and disposing of the ashes.¹⁰² This clinical description of a profoundly gruesome process belies a rather problematic moral complex in relation to disclosure and survival. Members in Sonderkommando units did not reveal to victims the fate that awaited them, believing it was preferable not to arouse the victims' terror, and in doing so, secure their own survival for a few weeks longer. In his interviews with former Sonderkommando workers, Gideon Greif interprets their dilemma as "apart from having to participate in the industrial-scale murder, the Sonderkommando men were thrust into a tragic paradox. It was in their unconscious interest that as many Jewish transports as possible arrive, since any slowdown in the pace of arrivals, let alone termination of labor at the 'death factory,' posed an existential threat to them. Their right to live hinged on the continued inflow of transports."¹⁰³

If language struggled to meet the demands of deportees' visions and experiences of the camps, what role does photography of the camps' functions and effects play in providing visual corroboration to testimonies about the separations and plunder of arrival? Photography operates as an alternative visual imprint; its reading depends on knowing the identity of the photographer and the purpose of the image. These conditions are not always available when interpreting images in the photographic archive of the Holocaust. What assumptions can be made about perpetrators' intentions to document, for example, arrival from an administrative perspective, particularly the

acquisition of deportees' suitcases and the items carried with them? The stolen belongings of deportees depicted in photography can be seen as less ambiguous in their memorial and symbolic value. Their discovery during the liberation of Majdanek in July 1944 and Auschwitz in January 1945 by Red Army soldiers represented another form of delivery or arrival; of personal belongings without ownership, and also in the evidentiary utility of photography in capturing the enormous scale of plundering and recycling that thrived in the camps.

The luggage items that were discovered during the liberation of these camps support previous testimonies of arrival: the expropriation of deportees' belongings at the ramp, their sorting by inmate commandos for reuse and redistribution in the Reich and surrounding areas, and in their status as abandoned and unclaimed. Indeed, the biography of the Holocaust deportee was revealed in the artifacts that symbolize indeterminate migrations and promised futures: shoes, suitcases, and personal photos.

As noted in the introduction to this book, photography was crucial in the depiction of crowd and boarding scenes from ghettos and transit camps to the death camps, yet its role in depicting arrival scenes is far more sanitized. As the primary evidence of deportation, the deportees themselves are mainly seen on the ramps—for example, in *The Auschwitz Album*—prior to selections. They disappear from the photographs as though they had never arrived, their imprints barely visible. Though complicated and ideologically freighted, photographs and film of the liberation of the camps continued to represent expropriation, revealing, however, a shifting ethical status in documenting the enormity of mass murder—the incomprehension of what was found in huge camp warehouses of expropriated goods. The image of shoes at Majdanek is similar to others, which depict the unknown biographies of genocide as shoes without owners or claimants, and a symbol of deportees' terminated foot journeys (see Figure 6.2). The photo's arc-like composition suggests a deliberate intervention to illustrate the scale of genocide with the personalization of shoes placed in the foreground, the snow acting as a cushion. The effect is immediate. Shoes are separated from the mound and placed at the forefront of the image, an invitation to the viewer to contemplate the fate of the shoes' owners.

The grainy photo taken by Soviet liberators at Majdanek recovers the portraits deportees from Western Europe took with them on their journeys (see Figure 6.3). The photo is a multilayered reference to death in the camps and the liberators' rescue of the victims' photos through reframing and witnessing. The photographer's framing of the portraits is a symbol of temporal fusion: prewar life and personal memories of women, particularly in the unknown and unconfirmed fate of those depicted. This collage works as a memorial witness to destroyed lives, faces without names that are reinforced with the missing owners of shoes in the previous image.



Figure 6.2 Victims' shoes, Majdanek, 1944 (WS 77716). (University of Minnesota Libraries), Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives, United Press International.



Figure 6.3 Photographs belonging to deported Jews, Majdanek, 1944 (WS 79199). (Sovfoto/Eastfoto), Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives, SovFoto.

As these photos suggest, the status of the deportee as a now-unavailable witness is highlighted in the use of the camera as a clinical documenter of an inventory of unclaimed personal belongings. Once part of a person's life story, these items are depersonalized and made anonymous through their accumulation. In complying with luggage requirements at departure from ghettos, deportees implemented a self-selection process, a process of divestment that continued in the camp regime at arrival and in warehouses for sorting expropriated goods. Goods that arrived in Auschwitz are depicted as overflowing next to the rail lines and the trains (see Figure 6.4).

This image from *The Auschwitz Album* depicts three kinds of traffic: the entry of the train into the camp and its emptying of passengers and their luggage, the use of the prisoners in the Aufräumungskommando (order commandos) to sort through the personal belongings confiscated from the transport of Jews from Carpathian Ruthenia, and in the foreground, the railway lines, which imply the vast rail network that enabled trains to arrive with deportees and depart with their expropriated freight. One of the outcomes of this freight was depicted in the photo of women sorting shoes at the "Canada" warehouse (see Figure 6.5). These shoes, like those at Majdanek, signify life, loss, and traces, but also possible reuse by the women who rummage through them.



Figure 6.4 Confiscated luggage from the arriving transport of Jews from Carpathian Ruthenia to Auschwitz, 1944 (WS 77381). Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.



Figure 6.5 Auschwitz women inmates sort through shoes from the transport of Hungarian Jews, 1944 (WS 77394). Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.

If an itinerant life characterized transit for deportees, their biographies were encased in both material and symbolic terms in the form of suitcases. As outlined in deportees' accounts, items in suitcases had to comply with specific items of "voyage luggage," although deportees often brought other items reflecting a combination of memorialization and anticipated uses: photos, brushes, clothes, blankets, medical supplies and pills, prosthetic limbs, glasses, pillows, shoes, tools for construction, and materials for writing. These items were also testaments to hope; a material biography of mobility that reflected the occupation, age, gender, and expectations of the deportee.

The post-liberation photo in Auschwitz of the mountain of suitcases (see Figure 6.6) does not only testify to plunder, accumulation, and recycling, but also to an absence of their owners—the deportees as the ultimate missing freight of the Holocaust's deportation trains. Indeed, this absence is evoked in the image of the valises or small cases, which are placed at the door of the freight car in the permanent exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM; see Figure 6.7). In their status as artifacts of Holocaust transit, with the personal inscriptions of deportees written on the outside of them, the valises recall what deportees were forced to carry with them on to the trains and abandoned as they got off. The transport of valises



Figure 6.6 Suitcases of inmates found after liberation, Auschwitz, 1945 (WS 12022). (Panstwowe Muzeum w Oswiecim-Brzezinka), Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.



Figure 6.7 Valises near the freight car, Permanent Exhibition, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (WS N02436). Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.

from museums in Poland to the USHMM exhibit symbolizes what I referred to earlier as the mobility of the symbolic geography of the Holocaust from site of historical origin to postwar refuge. Removed from their camp locations and transformed into artifacts by the memorial context of exhibition, the valises that remain are traces of their former owners.¹⁰⁴ The fusion of past and present is complete when the museum visitor carries with them the revealed freight of deportation as the knowledge of its outcomes that were mostly unknown to deportees—arrival at the camps was a failed resettlement.

The revelation of resettlement as death and the erasure of the victims' biography was the final scene of arrival for deportees who were transported to concentration camps. The perceptual destabilizations that occurred during the train journey, particularly the minimized opportunities for reliable visual truths, were partially restored on arrival. But arrival did not necessarily mean that what was visually seen could be comprehended or made tellable. The sensory assaults of deportation train journeys were not reversed upon release from the trains at the camps. Rather they were relocated and reconstituted according to specific locations and places of chaos, separation, and death: the platform, the sorting area, and the gas chamber.

Notes

1. Laska, "Auschwitz: A Factual Deposition," 175.
2. USHMM RG-02.004*01; Acc. 1986.019, Gundel, "Reborn," p. 94.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
4. Klüger, *Still Alive*, 94.
5. Heilman, *Never Far Away*, 65.
6. Recent critical overviews of Auschwitz and the Operation Reinhard camps include Peter Hayes, "Auschwitz, Capital of the Holocaust," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 17, no. 2 (2003): 330–50.
7. Mierzejewski, *Most Valuable Asset of the Reich*, 127.
8. See map 3 in Martin Gilbert, *The Routledge Atlas of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002).
9. Donald Bloxham, "The Missing Camps of Aktion Reinhard: The Judicial Displacement of a Mass Murder," in *The Memory of Catastrophe*, ed. Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 118–31.
10. The figures are quoted from Raul Hilberg, whose statistics are conservative in relation to the widely accepted figure of six million Jews. He notes 1942 as the most destructive year when 2.6 million Jews were killed. See *The Destruction of the European Jews*, table B-3 in appendix B, 1320–21. Other statistics include the destruction of Jews as national groups in Laurence Rees, *Auschwitz: The Nazis & the "Final Solution"* (London: BBC Books, 2005), 374. Rees writes that 1.3 million people were sent to Auschwitz, of whom one million who died there were Jews. See also Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt,

- Holocaust: A History* (London: John Murray, 2003), 291. They include statistics for Treblinka (750,000) and Belzec (550,000).
11. Reder, "Belzec," 268–69.
 12. Details about the camp's appearance are from Yitzhak Arad, "Operation Reinhard: Extermination Camps of Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka," in *The Nazi Holocaust: Historical Articles on the Destruction of the European Jews*, ed. Michael Marrus (Westport: Meckler, 1989), vol. 3, no. 2, 1021–56.
 13. Reder's testimony from Belzec is further validated as exceptional through the inclusion of camp deaths: "Between 20 July 1942, the date when the camp was reopened after modernisation, and 11 December 1942, no fewer than 520,000 Jews were murdered in Belzec, of which ca. 38,000 died between 20 and 31 July, ca. 172,000 in August, ca. 132,000 in September, ca. 110,000 in October, ca. 61,000 in November and ca. 10,000 in December." See Reder, "Belzec," fn. 12, 276.
 14. Reder, "Belzec," 272.
 15. Lenartowicz, "Architecture of Terror," 65–66.
 16. *Ibid.*, 66.
 17. USHMM, RG 50.030*0113, Kolski, tape 1 of 2.
 18. Kuperhand and Kuperhand, *Shadows of Treblinka*, 108.
 19. USHMM, RG-02.137; Acc. 1994.A.138, Rajchman, "Testimony," p. 3.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
 21. *Ibid.*
 22. Richard Glazar, *Trap with a Green Fence: Survival in Treblinka*, trans. Roslyn Theobald (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995). Glazar, who participated in the uprising of August 1943, wrote his account in Czech immediately after 1945, yet could not find a publisher until 1990, when it was translated into German.
 23. *Ibid.*, 5.
 24. *Ibid.*, 11.
 25. Boder interview with Kestenberga, available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=keste&ext=_t.html.
 26. Boder interview with Kestenberga, available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=keste&ext=_t.html.
 27. USHMM, RG-50.030*258, Heilman.
 28. Gradowski, "Letter to a Friend," 92.
 29. *Ibid.*
 30. *Ibid.*, 93.
 31. USHMM, RG-02.111; Acc. 1994.A.202, Gross, "Prisoner 409," p. 194.
 32. USHMM, RG-04.048, "Concentration and Other Camps," Koppich, p. 58.
 33. USHMM, RG-02.157; Acc. 1994.A.0235, Berman, "Three Lives," p. 118.
 34. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
 36. USHMM, RG-02*144. Beer, "To Auschwitz and Back," p. 20.
 37. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
 38. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Interview with David Bergman, RG-50.030*0020.
 39. Benjamin Jacobs, *The Dentist of Auschwitz: A Memoir* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 118.
 40. Lengyel, *Five Chimneys*, 12.
 41. *Ibid.*
 42. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 7.
 43. *Ibid.*, 7–8.

44. *Ibid.*, 9.
45. Gideon Greif's explanation of "selection" was that it was first used by Nazi doctors during the "Euthanasia" program. In Auschwitz-Birkenau, "selection" was associated with separation and isolation, and altogether it had seven goals themed around utility: selection of newcomers from the transports on the platform; selection in the camp; selection in hospitals of those who had not recovered quickly enough from their condition; selection for labor details; selection in the proximity of murder facilities where the Germans tried to remove deportees from transports who appeared disruptive and agitated and who posed a threat to the efficiency of the killing process; selection as a precaution; and selection in family camps. Greif contends that there were no fixed criteria for selections that were conducted arbitrarily and superficially by SS doctors, SS supervisors, and SS men from the Political Department. See Greif, *We Wept without Tears* (chap. 2, "Josef Sackar," fn. 9, 347–48). Anna Pawełczyńska supports the contention of randomness in the selection of incoming deportees from diverse backgrounds and beliefs, suggesting that "a general levelling occurred," although survival of inmates who entered the camp was also determined by a prisoner's previous life experiences and social position in the camp. See her *Values and Violence in Auschwitz: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 51–67.
46. Reder, "Belzec," 273. In normal circumstances, *Zugführer* referred to train master, but in the camp's usage the term referred to a group of Jews, led by an Oberzugführer, to greet each transport as it arrived (Reder, "Belzec," fn. 6).
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.* Esther Raab's impressions of Sobibor support Reder's testimony about the indiscriminate treatment of sick prisoners in the Operation Reinhard camps. Raab reported that at unloading sick travelers from smaller convoys were more noticeable and were shot on the spot, as the gassing was not worthy to be undertaken. This randomness appeared unusual for Auschwitz deportees. For them, the standard method of entry into the camp was unloading and selection on the train platform. See Esther Raab, quoted in Miriam Novitch, ed., *Sobibor: Martyrdom and Revolt: Documents and Testimonies* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980), 137.
49. Reder, "Belzec," 276. The "askers" ("Askares" or "Askaris") identified former Soviet POWs who joined SS-Wachmannschaften and were trained in SS-Ausbildungslager Trawniki. They were also called "Trawnikimen" or "Blacks" because of their uniforms. They were the guards in the death camps during the liquidation of the ghettos and during deportations. Most of them were Ukrainians or Russian Volksdeutsche but among them were also Lithuanians, Latvians, and ethnic Russians. I thank Robert Kuwalek of the Belzec Memorial Museum in Poland for this information.
50. Rachel Auerbach, "In the Fields of Treblinka," in *The Death Camp Treblinka: A Documentary*, ed. Alexander Donat (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 24.
51. Gutman, *Resistance: Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, xii.
52. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 50, Oral History, Interview with Isadore Helfing, RG-50.042*0014; Acc. 1994.A.447.
53. Testimony of Kalman Teigman, *Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, vol. III, 1209.
54. Testimony of Moshe Bahir, *Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, vol. III, 1179.
55. *Ibid.*, 1180.
56. Moshe Bahir, in *Sobibor: Martyrdom and Revolt*, ed. Novitch, 143.
57. Testimony of Moshe Bahir, *Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, vol. III, 1181.
58. Testimony of Dov Freiberg, *Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, vol. III, 1167.
59. *Ibid.*, 1171.
60. *Ibid.*, 1173.

61. Ibid., 1176.
62. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 02, "Survivor Testimonies," Sophie Machtinger, "Recollections from My Life's Experiences," trans. Douglas Kouril, RG-02.012*01, p. 46.
63. USHMM, RG-02.012*01, Machtinger, "Recollections," p. 46.
64. Louis de Wijze, *Only My Life: A Survivor's Story* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 10.
65. Ibid.
66. Jacobs, *Dentist of Auschwitz*, 119.
67. Helen Lewis, *A Time to Speak* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1992), 62.
68. Garbarz and Garbarz, *Survivor*, 53.
69. USHMM, RG-50.030*146, Malnik.
70. USHMM, RG-02.002*04; Acc. 1991.A.0089, Spiegel, p. 2.
71. USHMM, RG-50.030* 0240, Vogel.
72. Weiss, *My Two Lives*, 26.
73. Profetas, "Y Afrieronos: Greek Jews and the Holocaust," 56.
74. USHMM, RG-02.002*11, Ferera, p. 2.
75. Lengyel, *Five Chimneys*, 23.
76. Levi, *If This Is a Man/The Truce*, 25.
77. Ibid., 26.
78. Ibid., 26–27.
79. Lengyel, *Five Chimneys*, 23.
80. Quittner, *Pebbles of Remembrance*, 233.
81. Michel, *Promises to Keep*, 37.
82. Ibid., 38.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., 39.
85. Elias, *Triumph of Hope*, 107.
86. Lewis, *Time to Speak*, 64.
87. Wiesel, *Night*, 40.
88. Boder interview with Henja Frydman, 7 August 1946, available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=frydm&text=_t.html. Frydman reports that when her train left Drancy, its occupants were singing "The French Marseillaise, a [French] revolutionary song. We were screaming, we were yelling that they shouldn't let them deport us. And the police threw themselves on us and even wanted to fight with us." She tries to remember the words to sing it for Boder during the interview. The attempt is mainly unsuccessful.
89. Boder interview with Frydman, available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=frydm&text=_t.html.
90. Boder interview with Frydman, available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=frydm&text=_t.html.
91. Boder interview with Tichauer, available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=tisch&text=_t.html.
92. Cohen, *From Greece to Birkenau*, 17.
93. Gutman, *Resistance: Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, 142.
94. Samuel Willenberg, quoted in Yitzchak Kerem, "New Finds on Greek Jews in the Sobibor and Treblinka Death Camps in the Holocaust," in *The Jewish Communities of Southeastern Europe: From the Fifteenth Century to the End of World War II*, ed. I.K. Hassiotis (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1997), 250. See also Yitzchak Kerem, "Sephardic and Oriental Oral Testimonies: Their Importance for Holocaust Commemoration and Memory," in *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*,

- ed. John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell, vol. 3 (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), 142–49; and Gail Holst-Warhaft, “The Tragedy of the Greek Jews: Three Survivors’ Accounts,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 13, no. 1 (2000): 99–108.
95. Willenberg, “New Finds on Greek Jews,” 249.
96. Glazar, *Trap with a Green Fence*, 12.
97. *Ibid.*
98. *Ibid.*, 24.
99. *Ibid.*, 16.
100. *Ibid.*
101. In Auschwitz, the term “Sonderkommando” referred to inmates only and was officially introduced in September 1942, when the cremation operations began. In addition to Greif’s *We Wept without Tears*, see his “Between Sanity and Insanity: Spheres of Everyday Life in the Auschwitz-Birkenau Sonderkommando,” in *Gray Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, ed. Jonathan Petropoulos and John K. Roth (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 37–60. Also see the personal accounts of Filip Müller, *Eyewitness Auschwitz: Three Years in the Gas Chambers*, trans. S. Flatauer (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999) and Miklos Nyiszli, *Auschwitz: A Doctor’s Eyewitness Account*, trans. Tibere Kremer and Richard Seaver (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Crest, 1960).
102. Greif, *We Wept without Tears*, 10–11.
103. *Ibid.*, 86.
104. Julia Epstein and Lori Hope Lefkowitz, “Introduction,” in *Shaping Losses*, 3.

CONCLUSION

Memory Routes and Destinations

Conclusions are difficult to write. They promise findings and outcomes, claims and counterclaims. Where does the story of deportation begin and end? Is it more than a journey caught between rhetoric and pain? Why are the trains seemingly on standby to return us to the past, as though we had never left it? Although the Holocaust took place in the 1930s and 1940s in Europe, its memory routes remain open and continue to guide passengers to the dark places of compulsive return and witness. Recall the scene at Oswiecim, Poland on 27 January 2005, the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp. At that location, survivors, diplomats, and representatives of foreign governments gathered to participate in a post-Holocaust community of remembrance. There was no screeching halt of the train and no smoke from the burning of bodies. Rather, the opening ceremony of this arrival was guided by the recorded rumble of an approaching train, and held where new arrivals were transported to the camp and put through selection. This arrival scene included survivors of the camp, along with journalists, photographers, and a multi-faith community, an audience for the performance of Auschwitz “remembering,” witnesses to the landscape of what made Auschwitz without logic, a world populated by, in Vera Laska’s words, “strange smells and stranger people.”

The commemorations were a provocative simulation of Holocaust transit. The production of a contemporary Auschwitz arrival came with all the features of the historical entries: train tracks, sounds, and flames. The terminal meaning of an Auschwitz arrival was reinforced in the comments of the then Israeli president Moshe Katsav, who commented: “It seems as if we can still hear the dead crying out,” and “when I walk the ground of the concentration camps, I fear that I am walking on the ashes of the victims.”¹ The commemoration scene reinforced the locations of the symbolic geography of the camps with Auschwitz as its center, yet the arrival narrative, as I have argued, is crucially dependent on the role of transport and the victims who survived deportation journeys and the camps. Recent exhibitions devoted to the role of railway networks in the Holocaust are confirming this

Notes for this chapter begin on page 214.

centrality. The unique journey of the traveling exhibition, “Train of Commemoration” returns to origins and itineraries. In early November 2007, trains commemorating the deportation of 12,000 German-Jewish children left Frankfurt, Germany, for a six-month “train relay” throughout the country. The train’s final destination was the Auschwitz memorial and museum site in Oswiecim.

The train comprises a 1921 locomotive and four train cars with historical commentary, visual illustrations, and artifacts highlighting the role of the DRB in transporting children from across Europe to the camps in Poland. The train’s memory work is not only self-referential. It is also a generational witness that uses deportation as an intervention and moral instruction for the present. The recruitment of deportation for this purpose is not unusual. The organizers commented that the exhibition “is a warning against the return of racist hatred, right-wing extremism and national megalomania.”² This was not the first memorial project devoted to the fatal use of railways.

In 1996, the Deutsche Bahn DB, an amalgamation of the Bundesbahn of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Reichsbahn of the German Democratic Republic, sponsored a design competition for a memorial to commemorate the deportation of Jews from the Berlin suburb of Grunewald. This effort at memorialization was an example of what Tony Judt described as the “Western solution to the problem of Europe’s troublesome memories.”³ The deportation memorial, “Platform 17,” at the Grunewald S-Bahn station, an outer suburb of Berlin, is a stunning evocation of departures and imprints. Visitors can reach the platform by following the path of deportees who have been etched as silhouettes into concrete walls. The memorial is one example that acknowledges the complicity of the DRB in deportations, an involvement that its successor, the DB, is keen to isolate.⁴

Another example of memory work is “Serving Democracy and Dictatorship: The Reichsbahn 1919–1945” at the Deutsche Bahn Museum in Nuremberg, an exhibition generated from historical research into the complicity of the DRB in deportations, and in awareness of its “special responsibility to society.” This multimillion-dollar gift to the “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” foundation, a donation that is advertised on the DB website as just and moral, as the DB was not the “legal successor” of the DRB.⁵

In January 2008, an exhibition initiated by Beate and Serge Klarsfeld, titled “Chartered Trains to Death: Deportation with the German Reichsbahn,” opened at the Potsdamer Platz station in Berlin. The traveling exhibition was not initially supported, with the head of the DB, Hartmut Mehdorn, citing ethical conflicts of representation in the spatial normalization

of historical immobility: “The subject is far too serious for people to engage with it while chewing on a sandwich and rushing to catch a train.”⁶ Susanne Kill, a historian with the DB, commented that “the industrial murder of millions of people would not have been possible without the Reichsbahn.”⁷ It has been my objective to probe the tellability of the victims’ history of that critical transport link, which is now being memorialized in contested ways in Germany and around the world.

There are innumerable memorials and museums in Europe dedicated to the deportation of Jewish communities. Some of the memorials, for example, in the location of the former transit camp Drancy, embed the rail car into the landscape. Others, such as “Le Cyclops” in Milly-la-Forêt in the Gâtinais Français Regional Nature Park in Essonne, just south of Paris, saw sculptors Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint Phalle design a cocoon-like structure for a “goods wagon.”⁸ Away from Europe, the deportation journey is present in many references to Holocaust trains in museum exhibitions, memorials, and memory sites. The display of boxcars and railway infrastructure at Yad Vashem in Israel, in several cities in the United States, and at the Cape Town Holocaust Centre in South Africa, connect the remembrance communities of postwar perpetrator, survivor, and diaspora nations.⁹ They also build an alternative geography of post-Holocaust journeys, a route map that links persecution, transit, and refuge, and evocations of ethnic return.

The installation of network parts such as train tracks in museums outside of Europe also shifts the memory geographies of the Holocaust from the principally European sites of commission to immigrant and diaspora locations where refugees sought postwar resettlement and security, and took the transit narrative with them—to Israel, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. These locations, especially in the British Commonwealth, represented alternative destinations for survivors. The postwar passages of survivors to countries outside of Europe contest the finality of Holocaust deportation journeys. Transit after the war and refuge in new locations away from Europe provided the possibility of ethnic group reconstitution, and yet another chapter in the history of Jewish transit.

What do these contemporary cultural uses of the cattle car, and other parts of the European railway network, tell us about the meaning of Holocaust deportations today? The acquisition of freight cars and other artifacts of transit are obvious material examples of trying to reach the witness’s existential truth, yet once delivered and installed, they do not offer much meaning beyond cold and empty shells. Their freight has long been deported. The work of ethical witness rests with the viewer, spectator, or museum visitor. Their resonance as artifacts rests on a cultural knowledge of traumatic transit testimony, accumulating over decades from survivors, war crimes trial testimony, film, photography, visual culture, commemoration, literature, and poetry. The

quest to acquire and exhibit authentic references of deportation transit attests to the problems of evoking sensory memory, like David Boder attempted in his “Traumatic Inventory”: what are the ethics of listening to and presenting ethnically specific body traumas and memories as a moral universal?

This book has not lingered on the contemporary transit routes of memory trains of those I briefly described. Rather, it sought a return to their experiential origins in Europe. It has been concerned with the inner world of the trains as embodied and represented by the deportees-as-victims. Their world was suspended between life and death. This book has exhibited a historical consciousness in returning to the cattle cars as the first physical testimonial of transit, to the traumas generated in the space of that mobile abyss. Its method has been to provide an anthropological interpretation of witnessing in and after captivity in trains. The somatic dimensions of this witnessing have potential impacts to make in the writing of Jewish social histories that move beyond the written text as a source of everyday experience. This trend was noted by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in her analysis of the “corporeal turn” in Jewish cultural studies and its challenge to the authenticity of traditional text-based sources in the writing of Jewish history.¹⁰ The impact of the performative genre of video testimonies since the 1980s as life telling and visual history may yet contain further destabilizing impacts on the authority of the text for the future telling of Jewish everyday life histories, and also rich insight for an anthropological approach to the Holocaust victim-as-witness.

My use of testimony in telling deportation’s traumas has aspired to fill the gap between empirical histories of deportation and the victims’ experiences of it. Stories of deportation had to first make their journeys in testimonial form of the types I have used for this book, before they could be used as the content for stories and vignettes of the returning witness in postwar cultural practice such as art, film, visual culture, poetry, and commemorations. The testimony of deportation transit was not only written and spoken, but also visual and musical—in graphic arts, illustrations, painting, and song.

My main argument was that sensory destabilizations provoke a rethinking of witnessing, its frailties and truths. I suggested that the instability of the claims of vision inside the train carriages produced a recast perceptual truth that challenged sight as a normative and persistently available condition from which to tell Holocaust experiences. This destabilization of vision was not consistent throughout the transit experience. To the Nazi officials and bureaucrats who coordinated and implemented deportation, the freight car was a symbol of genocidal possibility and delivery. The concealment of deportation’s shocking truths was achieved, to some extent, in the use of language and travel artifices to construct journeys worth taking, but the ruse was repeatedly undermined through the conditions of transport, the

violent treatment of deportees by guards and police, the compression, and the escape attempts.

As explored in the chapters that focused on the victims' experiences during the different stages of transit, deportees were subjected to thorough and sustained attacks from which few of them recovered. These attacks, I argued, relocated the intense traumas of sensory assault, particularly of excrement, urine, and stench, from the camps and to the cattle cars. In their written and spoken form, I argued that the postwar writing and telling of these memories allowed some form of recovery and reconstitution of the self, yet the existential truths of train journeys remained private and at times beyond historical and social utility.

This argument was pursued in three themes that defined the tellability of the deportation experience: transit, captivity, and witness. I explored these themes as a sequence: how enclosure in freight car trains shaped captivity, and how the notion of witness was challenged by this bodily and spatial compression. I examined how the perpetrators' presentation of deportation as resettlement shaped victims' responses. In chapter 2, "Resettlement: Deportees as the Freight of the Final Solution," I explored the construction, implementation, and threats to the transit image that promised safety, security, and future mobility. For the victims, the administration of this forced relocation continued their social death through objectification and dehumanization. The stripping of the victims' personal property and cash in ghettos and transit camps was a preface to their forced captivity, and the plundering continued during transport, and after arrival in the camps.

This preparation stage of deportees for resettlement also relates to interpretations of railways for destructive purposes in the Holocaust, and the commitment to the project as reflective of Nazi bureaucratic efficiency. Historians' readings of bureaucratic efficiency in the administration of deportation have marginalized the ideological and human commitments of individuals to this project. To be sure, the term "cattle car" is not isolated to the Holocaust. Its undeniable link to the rationalization or efficacy of slaughter methods evokes a visual connection to the railway transport of animals in the mid-nineteenth century. Historian Daniel Pick contends that in the 1860s, technology, factory production, and calculated death were coming together in new ways: "Take the modern assembly-line slaughterhouse. Just as rails now transported soldiers to battle, they bore animals to their death. The coming of the railway in the first half of the nineteenth century had opened up new possibilities in the assembly process, enabling the reduction of delays and friction between each productive stage."¹¹ The use of trains for deportations in the Holocaust was the twentieth-century's railway shock, yet it also belongs to historical studies of railway administration and bureaucratic organization, as well as cultural and geographic studies of

war, transit, mobility, and displacement. To move the Holocaust deportation experience outside of World War II and into contexts of displacement under state-sponsored projects of ethnic cleansing and demographic resettlement impacts on interpretations of victims as self-constituted subjects through their dislocation in different cultural, geographic, and temporal contexts.

By far the bulk of my analysis has concentrated on the experience and tellability of train journeys; how victims interpreted their confinement and captivity, and the conditions that inhibited and produced witness truths in this space, as examined in chapters 3 through 6. In chapter 3, “Ghetto Departures: The Emplotment of Experience,” I argued that captivity was anticipated before it was experienced, though not to the degree of excruciating invasion reported from accounts of having survived it. The pre-history of captivity in testimonies placed the reader in ghetto space and its multiple crisis scenes of an experiential, ontological, and interpretive nature. The story of victims’ experiences of a diminishing life-world through deprived space in transit was also a telescope to applications of state and civil power marked on the body, of how constraints on mobility in ghettos were early conditioning forces for captivity in trains.

Testimonies of deportations to the East also produced a revealing commentary about town- and cityscapes—how ethnic space, community, and architecture were visualized and plotted in the streets, houses, hospitals, public squares, and synagogues. Testimonies of departure initiated not only a geographical exile in the Holocaust, but an additional exile from language as uttered in the constant repetition of words like “unspeakable” and “incomprehensible,” and persistent ethical and representational tensions of telling and not telling. Although language was not redundant as a tellable medium for these experiences, it was certainly not sufficient. Deportation testimonies engage a long-standing secular exile literature, and radicalize this exile into extended scenes of the self in crisis and ultimately, decline. Deportees represented themselves and others as figures of alienation and marginalization, displaced from where they once lived and worked.¹²

Testimonies of cattle car captivity marked the newness of the Holocaust, a departure from the previous scripts of Jewish persecution, and archetypes of displacement in Jewish history. David Roskies asserts that the writing of the Holocaust archetype before the conclusion of the war testified to a determined ethno-cultural self-representation under duress. Roskies recognizes the specificity of transports for death rather than the economic and inter-continental migration of Leah Garrett’s reading of transit as a theme in forging visions of Jewish modernity through literature: “from the early stage of awareness when it seemed as if everything was a replay of the Middle Ages—ghettos, yellow badges, Jewish councils and mass expulsions—to the final mapping of a landscape where everything was new—cattle cars

and transports, death camps and gas chambers. That the process was complete before the end of the war had ended testifies to the vitality of Jewish cultural responses to catastrophe.”¹³ These testimonies contributed a dark and important chapter to Jewish transit history. Particularly significant in this telling were women as narrators of war and of bodies at the frontlines of war, as evidenced in the testimonies of decline, nurturing and survival during train journeys.

My objective in chapter 4, “Immobilization in ‘Cattle Cars,’” was to invite the reader into Zalmen Gradowski’s “rushing cages” and become a passenger to what he called the “monotonous travelling life” of the deportee. Monotony was just one response among many where brutalization, olfactory terror, and psychological ruin reigned. The reportage-like reconstruction of deportees’ experiences permitted its detailed analysis in chapter 5, “Sensory Witnessing and Railway Shock: Disorders of Vision and Experience,” in which I interpret two representational legacies from transit: the tellability of its traumatic moments as transactions between the body and language, and the emergence of sensory memory as a suggestive witness truth and knowledge of captivity.

Chapter 5 extended the analysis of transit’s tellability, particularly the olfactory degradation that intrudes on survivor memories and shaped it in different outputs. Indeed, it was the feeling of being trapped, powerless, and dying in the train that provided the most disturbing of experiential parallels. This parallel was not the epic voyaging of descent into Dante’s “Inferno,” but rather the Holocaust’s unknowable epicenter, the simulation of a gas chamber death. The analogy is a revelation about the muting of deportation transit experiences in contemporary understandings of what can be claimed as an authentic witness space as fixed in the concentric circles of Auschwitz and of transit experiences as an inassimilable corporeal truth in the geography of memory.

In chapter 6, “Camp Arrivals: The Failed Resettlement,” I reconnected with the deportees and their journeys to the camp. Arrival occurred before unloading; it included intense anticipation about the destination of resettlement, and once the ruse was exposed, the genocidal separation of families and sexes through the ruthless selection process of doctors and commandants who ultimately favored men and young boys, and discriminated against women, mothers, children, the elderly, and the physically incapacitated. In describing arrival scenes, deportees revealed that the marginal restoration of vision could not cope with the outcome of resettlement: the constant threat and infliction of terror and violence, killing and abjection of the camp world. The hope of resettlement was conclusively shattered.

What interventions do these conclusions make in relation to deportation as a transit story like few others? The interventions of cattle car transit and

the embodied form of witnessing that were internalized by deportees impact on interpretations of modernity, memory, and narrative representation. I argue for the historical and ethical importance of the victims' voices of transit captivity and their disclosures about uncomfortable and repressed sensory truths. I make several claims for victims' testimonies of deportation trains as an unsettling and unsettled knowledge. The first claim is to see deportees' testimonies of confinement, explored closely in chapters four, five, and six, as a difficult but necessary practice of recovery, a methodological salvaging of disturbing and taboo topics in the everyday experience of the Holocaust.

These uncomfortable sensory truths were powerfully raised but under-realized in Terrence Des Pres's *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*. His focus on the camp world minimized the transport invasions of shit, urine, and vomit as a preparatory attack compared to its work of defilement of individuals in the camps. Indeed, experiences of olfactory trauma during deportation transit may suggest that it was in the trains rather than in the camps that excremental assault imposed its most intense defilement of the self. To the architects of deportation—Himmler, Goering, and Eichmann—train journeys were a bridge of critical facilitation in the progression to the Final Solution. From the victims' perspective, experiences of deportation transit undermine the perception that the camps were the most degrading, and authentic site of witnessing. The experience of transit captivity challenges the perception that conditions progressively worsened for victims the closer their proximity to the camps. Deportation transit ruptures the spatial and temporal boundaries of the Holocaust's symbolic geography of central and peripheral zones of impact. Victims' olfactory experiences of deportation trains, in particular, became an extended punishment and degradation of transport shame.

This method in reading captivity as chaotic and fetid is the deliberate antithesis to historians' description of deportation in freight cars. Many deportees felt they were treated, and were forced to behave, "like animals"—an indication of feeling victimized, beyond the human, and beyond care. Thus, the unsettling yet frequent employment of "cattle car" is a victims' phrase of empowerment and a semantic vindication of inhumane treatment. The cattle cars' scenes of drama, death, and repeated escape attempts provide a critical corrective to the image of Nazi order and the rhetoric of submission of all victims to that space. The analysis also subverts a prevalent image of Holocaust deportation transit as a perpetrator process of effective management, offering its difficult human administration in the "reception traumas" of Josef Jäcklein's Belzec report and Franz Stangl's Treblinka "reenactment" scene while traveling on a train in Brazil.

A second claim is to offer the disgust and defilement of transport shame as a valid and usable testimonial truth of the Holocaust's spatial history

and entrapment of bodies. My analysis attempts to reclaim an ordinary witness position for the forgotten victims, people whose emotions, voices, and words have been displaced in literary and critical analyses by the words of well-known survivors, whose widely disseminated stories of persecution and refuge have become meta-truths of the Holocaust experience.

An interpretation of deportation transit from “below,” from the ordinary witness, also offers important claims about testimonies as sources of alterity and exception in the writing of Holocaust history in general, and particularly in reconstructions of victims’ experiences of space, place, and immobilization—elements that are marked as suspect through their marginalization, if not repression. The experiences of captivity, of the repeated scenes of urine trauma, of excremental assaults, of internal journeys that negotiated shame, degradation, and moral transgressions, contributed to the undoing of deportees in space and the stripping of their humanity. Experience and representation are fused and temporally indistinct, so that the representation is the memory of the body in captivity, the residue, trace or imprint of what is a lost or repressed truth.

The Nazis’ intention to present deportation as resettlement also provides a radical and extreme redefinition of “railway shock.” If, as Schivelbusch argued, nineteenth-century train travelers felt themselves and their bodies removed from the sensual, felt, and tactile experience of the landscape, and through forced and socially uncomfortable discourse with other travelers, then transit in cattle cars reversed that disengagement. This was a sensory onslaught of unparalleled invasions. Primal, carnal, unimaginable, suffocating, disgusting, and putrid—these words resonate as the journey’s vocabulary of assault, yet they are still bereft in their anchoring to the sustained trauma of those mobile chambers. That moment, as we have seen, has been represented as a death akin to the real center of the “concentric circle”: the crushing of bodies in transit captivity as comparable to that of gas chambers. Does not this analogy complicate the authenticity of the truth claims carried from and within the space of Holocaust deportation trains?

Deportee testimonies reveal the attack on the body—particularly as recalled by female deportees—as a site of invasion, trespass, and violation. The trauma of train transit, as one of submission, is an interesting gendering of transit’s tellability. Indeed, one way of reading this space is to see it as the triumph of Nazi power as inherently masculine over feminized Jewish submission. Of course, this argument should not be overstated or repeat the tropes associated with gendered stereotypes of Jewishness in biological and cultural discourses. My argument, however, is about the application of power to the controlled intention of transit as an experience of decline, its implementation by men, and its interpretation, or lack thereof, as a valid historical experience. The largely concealed traumas of deportation train

space reveal a gendering of perpetrator-victim relations and their distillation in the conquest of freight car space: perpetrator power that generated the policy and implementation of deportation policy in the Third Reich and the Final Solution was overwhelmingly “male,” as was the surveillance of deportees in transit. The reactions of deportees of feeling powerless, trapped, and accommodating its deprivations, were overwhelmingly “female.” The associations that can be read from train space may account to some extent for its historiographical neglect in interpretations of gendered zones of experience in the Holocaust.

Deportation transit was an experience of forced submission, disorder, and capitulation, and its injuries were revealed in embodied terms as imprints, wounds, and scars on heads, chests, arms, hands, legs, and feet. Survivor testimonies of the Holocaust (and of this experience in particular) are considered by some scholars as emotional, irrational, subjective, and unreliable, suggesting that it is an experience that cannot be integrated by historians who prefer to think of sources of history in terms of empirical truth, order, objectivity, and evidentiary quality. The disorder and emotion of testimony should be embraced. Although train space was an agent of decline in both experiential and tellable terms, it also accommodated other reactions of social togetherness, such as care, community, and compassion. Striking, too, were many instances of deportees’ fierce will to resist the journey’s impacts and destination through escape and agitation. This resistance subverted the Nazis’ written record of Jews as voluntary, a record commonly associated with the “sheep to the slaughter” judgment that prevails as an explanation of the predominant response of Jewish victims under duress.

A third claim relates to how transit captivity produced in witnesses a sensory and embodied knowledge that rethinks the spatial locations of incarceration in the Holocaust. As seen in David Boder’s analysis of transit in his “Traumatic Inventory,” deportation trains were a discrete space of mobile deculturation. This process of deculturation was already well advanced before deportation, heightened during transit, and terminally concluded in the camps. Without the role of the trains in the commission of the Final Solution, the concentration camp system would most likely not have existed in the extremes of its wartime functions.

A fourth claim about deportation transit concerns its tellability in a contemporary ethics of reception through writing and reading, a commitment that I outlined earlier as a “testimonial alliance.” Dominick LaCapra alluded to this alliance, commenting on the necessity of developing an ethics of address in Holocaust writing: “the problem for a theoretically informed historiography is to elucidate precisely how ‘pieces of the [traumatic] real’ are embedded in historical experiences such as the atrocities of war and genocide. The related problem is how to recognize one’s own vulnerability

or constitutive anxiety, related to the structural dimension of trauma, without historicizing or localizing it in misleading ways and projecting its cause onto others as scapegoats.”¹⁴

In my interpretation of deportation testimony, I have attempted to confront the committed but fraught alliance between the survivor as a witness and testifier and the interpreter who seeks intellectual clarity and understanding. In terms of method, I created a “train journey,” a collected testimony based on primary and secondary sources that included perpetrator representations of deportation, historiography, and victims’ published and unpublished testimonies. The narrative order imposed in this book is shadowed by the disturbances of sense memory’s threat of spontaneous intrusions to ordinary behavior and life experiences. Memories of deportation trains often incite in former deportees explosive, embarrassing, and uncontrollable reactions in the resurrection of primal, excruciating captivity scenes through unprovoked sensory association and visual identification.

A lasting claim from exploring deportation train experiences is the notion of transit itself, and the vast amount of experiences and journeys that its inference of motion and liminal experience encapsulates. The conceptual possibilities of transit are endless, and suggest broadened approaches, namely, from cultural geography and anthropology, to writing victims’ histories of space, place, and suffering. Transit applies to states of mobility and immobility in ghettos, subterranean places and closed sites of hiding, in camps, and in the epic foot and train journeys of camp inmates during the evacuation phases of the camps in early 1945. These experiences of transit, like others in the Holocaust, remain underscrutinized in their geographical, corporeal and embodied dimensions. Rather than universalizing the corporeality of the Holocaust, I have tried to argue for its utility in reclaiming the personal experience of war and suffering in relentlessly impersonal environments.

Although I focused on recovering the testimony of deportation and using it to explore the bases of witnessing and perceptual truths, I ended the story of the deportees with their arrival at camps. I did not trace how this story moved in and beyond the camps during the war, what itinerary it took, and how it arrived in the postwar world. Thus, an uneasy feeling of detachment from the deportees and their memories lingers. The passage of imprints of dark memory from survivor to collective witness exhibited yet another chapter in the ongoing story of how the Holocaust has migrated from World War II and continues to make indelible imprints in contemporary memory cultures around the world. Although this book exhibited its own feature of temporal return to wartime transit by focusing exclusively on Jewish testimonies of captivity in trains, it limited the application of transit to deportation train journeys, and not to other, equally valid and compelling stories of mobility under the Nazi regime and in the postwar era of displacement. I have not

entered into the experiential depths of the camp world, nor continued in the footsteps of surviving deportees and their routes out of the camp and between labor camps, and into other scenes of captivity and deprivation, such as death trains used in evacuations, as immortalized in the Dachau death train, post-liberation DP camps, and into the world of future refuge, rehabilitation, and ostensible recovery.

How did the story of deportation make its way out to the world? This is the work of my future encounters with Holocaust transit, of how the stories of railway shock made their journey back to the world. This journey narrative—another form of journey talk—struggled to find a social space and listeners, not least because it profoundly unsettled perceptions of how wartime transit experiences of trauma and displacement could be spoken and written about. How were train stories told when words and voices failed? If, after the end of World War II, refugees struggled to find an idiom and audience for their experiences before their utterances received the moral authority of the word “survivor,” what happened to their stories? Albert Memmi has argued that after World War II, Jews were in a state of “persistent exclusion” from their stories, commenting, “as much as abjection itself was silencing, silence was also imposed on abjection.”¹⁵

With the words and voices of survivors as a guide, I have attempted to explore what is a tellable truth when cattle car memory remains embodied and intimate, a captivity that is known only to the witnesses who were there. Deportees journeyed with the living and the dead, were witnesses to and victims of suicide, became violated and violators in cramped conditions, and were bathed in the sensory reminder of their pestilential degradation and deprivations. It is for these reasons that deportation train journeys were, for many survivors, more painfully inscribed as an intrusive and inexplicable memory than other experiences of suffering. More than trains to death, they were trains of death, a stand in for the unknown gas chamber experience.

Notes

1. “World Marks Auschwitz Liberation,” BBC News, 28 January 2005, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4210841.stm>.
2. “Memory Train to Auschwitz,” *Spiegel Online*, 9 November 2007, available at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,516430,00.html>.
3. Tony Judt, “From the House of the Dead: On Modern European Memory,” *The New York Review of Books* 52, no. 15, October 2005, available at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/18298>.
4. Recommended reading is “The Memorial at Grunewald Station, Platform 17,” available at http://www.db.de/site/bahn/en/db_group/corporate_group/history/topics/platform17/

- platform17.html. For an overview of the cultural and memorial use of freight cars in Germany, see Alfred Gottwaldt, "Der deutsche Güterwagen: Eine Ikone für den Judenmord?" *Museums Journal* 13, no. 1 (1999): 14–17. The "Platform 17" memorial was vandalized in July 2007. See "Vandals Attack Berlin 'Platform 17' Holocaust Memorial," *Haaretz*, 12 July 2007, available at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/880958.html>.
5. "Reichsbahn in the Third Reich," available at http://www.db.de/site/bahn/en/db_group/commitment/reichsbahn__thirreich/reichsbahn__thirreich.html.
 6. See "Death Trains: Controversy over Exhibit on Railway's Role in Holocaust," *Spiegel Online*, 25 October 2006, available at www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,444580,00.html.
 7. See "Exhibition Highlights Role of German Railway in Holocaust," *Spiegel Online*, 23 January 2008, available at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,530543,00.html>.
 8. See <http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/getHomeAction.do?langage=en>, the Web site of the Shoah Memorial in Paris, France. The Drancy site is due to be upgraded in 2009. On "Le Cyclops," see the Public Art Web site at http://www.art-public.com/cyclop/cyclop_g.htm#presente.
 9. The following select titles focus on memory cultures outside of Europe in their national and comparative contexts. See Omer Bartov, "Chambers of Horror: Holocaust Museums in Israel and the United States," *Israel Studies* 2, no. 2 (1997): 66–87; Tim Cole, "Nativization and Nationalization: A Comparative Landscape Study of Holocaust Museums in Israel, the US and the UK," *Journal of Israeli History* 23, no. 1 (2004): 130–45; Jackie Feldman, "Between Yad Vashem and Mt. Herzl: Changing Inscriptions of Sacrifice on Jerusalem's 'Mountain of Memory,'" *Anthropological Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (2007): 1147–74; Gwynne Schrie, *In Sacred Memory: Recollections of the Holocaust by Survivors Living in Cape Town* (Cape Town: Cape Town Holocaust Memorial Council, 1995); Annie E. Coombes, *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2003); Judith Berman, *Holocaust Remembrance in Australian Jewish Communities, 1945–2000* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2001), and Stephen Levine, ed., *A Standard for the People: The 150th Anniversary of the Wellington Hebrew Congregation, 1843–1993* (Christchurch, NZ: Hazard Press, 1994). Writing that specifically addresses the use of railway artifacts in museums in the United States include Liliane Weissberg, "Memory Confined," in *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity*, ed. Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 45–76; Andrea Liss, "Artifactual Testimonies and the Stagings of Holocaust Memory," in *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*, ed. Roger Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 117–25; Oren Baruch Stier, *Committed to Memory: Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), and Oren Baruch Stier, "Different Trains: Holocaust Artifacts and the Ideologies of Remembrance," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 19, no. 1 (2005): 81–106.
 10. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "The Corporeal Turn," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 95, no. 3 (2005): 447–61.
 11. Daniel Pick, *War Machine: The Rationalisation of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 178.
 12. Michael Seidel quoted in Judith M. Melton, *The Face of Exile: Autobiographical Journeys* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998), xv.
 13. Roskies, *Literature of Destruction*, 515.
 14. Dominick LaCapra, "Tropisms of Intellectual History," *Rethinking History* 8, no. 4 (2004): 501.
 15. Albert Memmi, *Portrait d'un Juif* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 49.

EPILOGUE

Retelling Train Stories

On a trip to Europe in June and July 2007, the themes of transit and memory weighed heavily on me, as they had for many years. But the weight of that past was intellectual. I labored over it, daunted by the responsibility of the task, letting the experiences of the European victims defeat me and my limited abilities at telling their stories. I sorted through the testimony, the theory, what other people had said about deportation, and how people suffered because of it. Trains and trauma were known mainly through books and other people's words, and not from experiences of situating myself in the locations of witness, as if that intimacy would bring me closer to them. The pilgrimage from the Antipodes, the ostensible end of the world depending on how you look at it, to Europe, was long and punishing. History made me take this journey and forced me to think that I must visit the sites of genocide that began with the Holocaust, but did not end there. There were too many places to choose from, and, as if a child frustrated by impossible choices, I imposed an irrational selection process that did not reflect any coherent sequence. I embarked on my own return tourism. I took with me intrigue that was probably in excess of what might be considered normal for scholars of genocide. The names in my memory route have become my companions—Berlin, Sarajevo, Srebrenica, Krakow, and Auschwitz.

In Berlin, I was overloaded with possibilities of perpetrators and victims, or at least traces of them. Wittenbergplatz U-Bahn: the memorial near the station's entry announces the origins and destinations of German Jews (see Figure E.1). I did not yet have my map of memory sites in Berlin, so it must have found me. In Charlottenburg, the stumbling stones in the footpath told me of the people who once called these streets their home before their deportation.¹

Outside of Berlin, the Wannsee Villa, an administrative meeting point of the Final Solution, beckoned. To get there, I took the Potsdam line on the S-Bahn, which passed through Grunewald. I could have missed it. With my camera, I imagined myself as a chronicler of sorts, documenting today's witnesses on a very pleasant June afternoon. There were not that many; I

Notes for this section are located on page 223.



Figure E.1 Memorial, Wittenbergplatz U-Bahn, Berlin. Photo by Simone Gigliotti.

might have noticed two people there at Platform 17. They were remote, carving out their place for memory work and reading dates on each side of the platform. These dates timetabled the destinations of the Berlin Jews, an inventory of deliveries. I went to leave, and the hollow people, in the concrete walls, seemed to disappear. I am sure they would have wanted to join me (see Figure E.2).

Memory also took me to Sarajevo, and then to Srebrenica, and perhaps it left me there. It was not a big leap from Berlin to Sarajevo in today's transit terms, but fifty years separate their traumas. The theme of transit was imposed upon us as we traveled from our conference location in Sarajevo to Srebrenica for a journey of around one hundred and thirty kilometers (about eighty miles). It took four hours to transport seven buses of genocide scholars under police escort to Srebrenica, to the Potočari memorial, and to Budak, the site of a mass grave that was unearthed in late June 2007. The mass grave was advertised as voluntary viewing in our conference program. It immediately became unmissable.

We were allowed the right of witness, or so it was told to us. When I looked at this grave, and when I think about it now, the scene is still blurred. An ambulance was parked next to the grave. Was it on standby for the



Figure E.2 Memorial to deported Jews, Grunewald train station, Berlin.
Photo by Simone Gigliotti.

genocide scholars? They could suffer. There were around two hundred of us, and we could not wait to see. To see the bones of skeletons that were under forensic examination and that rested in the pit on the mountain that was our first appointment with genocide memory on that day (see Figure E.3). I thought about the mass grave, and then the invasion of us as foreign genocide witnesses to local memory, to the name calling of the dead, to the burials. Transit and movement were important in Srebrenica and in Bosnia, and to the Serbs' forced relocations and ethnic cleansing. But transit on this day seemed threatened by local expectations of us to stay, witness, and tell the world with our cameras and words about the Bosnian national trauma. We had seen it, and now we were immobilized by the politics of memory.

Krakow and Auschwitz: The train journey between them was not so long. The name Krakow suggests a foreign past, not known to me except through testimonies and nostalgia. From the photos, I remember seeing horses and carriages, street sellers, and children in need of shoes. Perhaps they were from the ghetto. I was excited to be in Krakow, and closer still to Auschwitz, yet the logistics of getting there reminded me of the frustrating delays in waiting for trains that never arrived, delays that would not have been tolerated during deportations. I could wait another hour or two for my Auschwitz memory. The Galicia Jewish Museum sold maps of the Krakow Ghetto and Kazimierz. I would begin my own transit from the Podgorze square and the deportation memorial. I noticed some repairmen replacing



Figure E.3 Mass Grave, Srebrenica. Photo by Simone Gigliotti.

the lights that illuminated the chairs in the memorial square in the evening (see Figure E.4). From there, I went in search of physical traces of the ghetto: the post office, the orphanage, the resistance headquarters, and the hospital, among other locations of former Jewish life. When I remember Krakow, I think of the emptiness of the word “former” to describe absence. It prefaces countless descriptions of Jewish history. When I think about Krakow, as origin, I think of “former” and then of “future,” to Auschwitz, a particularly Jewish destination. When I don’t see “former” to describe the Jews, I seek evidence to the contrary.

Auschwitz was familiar in virtual and visual productions, and testimonies helped me imagine it, but I could not know it. En route from Krakow on the retro-looking train I thought about interiors and exteriors, grass and graffiti, industry and villages. I thought about the deportees, too. Arriving at Auschwitz I with my travel partners, we enact our own selections. I want to separate, and not be part of a group witness experience. But how could I not? I was competing with other foot traffic in the thousands of the white shoe and t-shirt brigade for viewing space. Competition for the best viewing



Figure E.4 Podgorze ghetto memorial, Krakow. Photo by Simone Gigliotti.

position of the chimney, the hanging area, and the experimentation rooms. I went around the grounds of Auschwitz I and into the memorial rooms with stories of individuals and communities destroyed. I am delayed, for I see Charlotte Delbo. She is a shadow on the wall. I am thinking of her poem “Arrivals, Departures.”²

But there is a station where those who arrive are those who are
leaving

A station where those who arrive have never arrived, where those
who have left never came back.

It is the largest station in the world.

And I am almost there. A witness to traces. But this is Auschwitz I and now I am waiting for a shuttle bus to transport me and my travel partners to Auschwitz II-Birkenau, once resident to the largest station in the world. I wanted to walk the route of the deportees, but they objected. “It is too hot, no?” “It is too far, no?” It was not more than three kilometers. We are transported in compressed conditions in the name of memory. I cannot wait to get out. We arrive and we separate. I am not unhappy with that outcome. The trip has been creating stress. Perhaps Birkenau would give me some relief. When I was back in Berlin I wrote to my friend, Roger, a scholar of German film in Australia, about Auschwitz. His reply was to e-mail Peter Weiss’s *Meine Ortschaft* (My Place), written in 1964.³ Weiss

wrote: “But after a while silence and numbness set in here, too. A living person came, and what happened is closed off from this living person. The living person who comes here, from another world, possesses nothing but his knowledge of figures, of reports written down, of testimonies, they are a part of his life, he grapples with them, but can only comprehend what happens to him himself.”

I write this in Wellington, New Zealand, and I am thinking about what I was doing on that day in Auschwitz. I was closed off from history. I thought I could rise above it and think about Auschwitz through memory. Auschwitz is outside of history, and only for memory. History is fixed and memory is disordered. On the platform, I remembered what deportees told me and others in their testimonies of arrival. Was this where they stood? Was that the barrack they saw and to which they were taken? The platform was long, endless, an almost spectacular and important welcome for the deportees in the largest station of the world. Film crews, backpackers, and families on day trips: Auschwitz has broad appeal (see Figure E.5). At the end of the day, I reconnected with my travel partners. I was exhausted. Exhausted from thinking about what happened to the deportees after they arrived in this place and went to *that* place, and from carrying their memories inside of me. It was a long-delayed arrival.

I think about my European journey to genocide and its sites of commission as one small gesture of recovery. But what does rewitnessing actually achieve? I was a statistic in the economy of pilgrimages that includes Zionist group witness such as the March of the Living where youth and adults



Figure E.5 Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Photo by Simone Gigliotti.

from around the world make their own Holocaust journeys to Auschwitz, and then to Israel, and scholarly excursions, including that undertaken by the historian Martin Gilbert. Chronicled in *Holocaust Journey: Travelling in Search of the Past*, the diary is an account of Gilbert's two-week trip to sites of Holocaust deportations in Europe, including Berlin, Prague, Krakow, Zamosc, Lublin, Treblinka, and Chelmno. The book's explicit witness tourism was dramatized as an "unforgettable voyage of discovery,"⁴ a voyage that promises discovery as a disturbing passage that reroutes the historical displacement of Holocaust arrivals.

Discovery, displacement, and exile shape transit stories and travelogues. These stories include others both near and distant to my location of writing. They are stories that evoke deportation as a departure that originated in Europe but has now moved far beyond it. They include the stories of Ruth Wajnryb, an Australian-born daughter of Holocaust survivors, who spoke of imagined pasts while standing in the freight car that rests in the permanent exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: "How can I not think of my father in such a place? Like other fragments of stories that we heard, it elicits memories of events never personally experienced but many times imagined."⁵

Claire Kahane's memoir of her trip to Poland, "Geographies of Loss," advertised itself as a "document of my effort to mourn."⁶ A first-generation American, she negotiates a disturbing inheritance, as her parents had "come from this part of Europe and had been part of its history and culture; each of us had lost some part of our own history with the disappearance of European Jewry in the Holocaust."⁷ The theme of disappearance is evoked in her entry of "May 9, 1994: The Train." In it, she recalls her journey from Warsaw to Krakow. She is not in the train, but it is with her, a companion in the fusion, and confusion, of scenes of witness:

The sound of the train from Warsaw to Krakow, the sound of the train moving through Poland, is a sound familiar to me from old nightmares. I look out the graying window at a dreary, wet landscape, and I'm in a story I know, have heard, have grown up with in films and fantasy, a story in which I assume the role as victim. I am being transported.⁸

Unlike Ruth Wajnryb and Claire Kahane, my own transit stories are not freighted with memories of generational or family connection. I write in their absence, from the words and voices of people I do not know, people who are known to me in misery, pain, and recovery, in ways they never should have been. I see them in photographs, gathering belongings, and saying farewell as they are about to leave. Occasionally, they stare back. What happened inside the trains? To this they are the only witnesses.

Notes

1. The “stumbling stones” are a reference to the *Stolpersteine Project* by German artist Gunter Demnig. Tiles are placed in the footpaths of streets across Germany. See <http://www.stolpersteine.com>.
2. I have tried to preserve the format of the extract as it appears in “None of Us Will Return” from Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 3–10.
3. Peter Weiss (1916–1982) was a German dramatist and novelist. The son of a Jewish father, his family left Germany in 1934 to escape Nazi persecution and eventually settled in Sweden. Auschwitz and the Nazi era preoccupied Weiss’s writings and plays, and *Meine Ortschaft* reflects on a destination he did not know. I thank Roger Hillman for his translation of it. Among many writings on Weiss, see Jürgen E. Schlunk, “Auschwitz and Its Function in Peter Weiss’ Search for Identity,” *German Studies Review* 10, no. 1 (1987): 11n30.
4. Martin Gilbert, *Holocaust Journey: Travelling in Search of the Past* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997).
5. Ruth Wajnryb, *The Silence: How Tragedy Shapes Talk* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2001), 2–3.
6. Claire Kahane, “Geographies of Loss,” in *Shaping Losses*, 30.
7. *Ibid.*, 31.
8. *Ibid.*, 36.

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