

# DRAMATIC NARRATIVES AND THE HOLOCAUST

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## **Dramatic Narratives and the Holocaust**

### *Abstract*

This thesis analyses dramatic and historical narratives about the Holocaust. Primarily, it focuses on Israeli, German and Austrian writers from the time of the Final Solution (1941) to the mid 1990s. In particular, I will highlight how the 'trauma' of the Holocaust has influenced collective identity in these countries and how writers have either affirmed or deconstructed narratives of history and identity which have emerged since World War Two. To understand fully the various narratives which have developed, it is important to refer to the artistic achievements both of the victims of National Socialism and the survivors whose accounts are often at variance with narratives typical of Israeli and German writers. Chapter One, therefore, is a detailed account of how those who were experiencing Nazism first hand interpreted their situation in contrast to how those in exile or in Palestine emplotted the atrocity stories from Europe.

The rest of the thesis charts how narratives of the Holocaust are subtly re-figured according to political *Zeitgeist* - what Walter Benjamin called *Jetztzeit*, the blasting of history out of its continuum to service contemporary political needs. This thesis aims to show that narratives and representations of the Holocaust both in Israel, Germany and Austria mutate according to contemporary events. Today, whilst it is generally agreed that there is no such thing as an objective, concrete past, and that historic events are called upon to help interpret current complexities, the Holocaust in Israel and the Germanies has been consciously deployed to shape interpretations of present considerations by revisionism. This has caused consternation among many in the Jewish community who assert that, as the Holocaust is a unique event, to use it for analogous discussion denigrates the memory of the victims. Others maintain that the Holocaust is but one example of human depravity and holds many lessons for the contemporary world. This thesis asks whether the Holocaust can be viewed simultaneously both as a typical and an atypical event without denigrating the victims or generating simplistic analogies.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about how the Holocaust has been represented in Israeli and German dramatic narratives, with special reference to the stage, since 1941.<sup>1</sup> In particular, through the reflections of writers and dramatists, I will focus on how the trauma of the Holocaust has been historically emplotted in these countries and how this has shaped collective identity. Theatre practitioners in Israel and Germany have traditionally regarded the stage as a forum for examining and occasionally shaping national concerns. The German director, Erwin Piscator, for example, envisaged 'the theatre as the home of the nation's conscience, the stage as the moral institution of the century'.<sup>2</sup> And of Israeli theatre, Linda Ben Zvi writes, 'In few places in the world is theatre so self-absorbed in its function as mirror of society.'<sup>3</sup>

The formulation of collective identity, in the main, is a conscious and political process. As Lucinda Rennison writes, 'There can be no doubt that... the collective experience can be manufactured and distributed by those with sufficient access to the media', in other words, politicians, journalists, historians, film makers, writers and theatre practitioners.<sup>4</sup> This 'manufacturing' of corporate identity is often influenced by the way national traumas are historically emplotted and absorbed into already existent community narratives. These narratives are embodied and perpetuated in national monuments, days of remembrance, recorded history and the arts - the carriers and icons of 'national identity'. As such they are often exclusive because they reflect national concerns. Holocaust narratives in these countries, in particular, have been designed to reflect certain 'preferential' themes to the detriment of others. As the survivor, Emil L. Fackenheim writes:

Men shun the particularity of Auschwitz. Germans link it with Dresden, American liberals with Hiroshima. Christians deplore anti-Semitism in general, while Communists erect monuments to the victims-of-anti-Fascism-in-general - depriving the dead of Auschwitz of their Jewish identity even in death.<sup>5</sup>

Historical events are interpreted through the politics of the present but, equally, the ways in which past events are absorbed influence interpretations of the present: past traumas are

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<sup>1</sup> By German I mean, the Democratic and Federal Republics and, since 1989/90, the reunited Germany and Austria. 1941 was the year the 'Final Solution' was implemented against the Jews by the Nazis - see 'Historical Appendix', pp. 306-7

<sup>2</sup> The Arts Council of Great Britain, *Erwin Piscator: Political Theatre, 1920-1966*, London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1969, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Linda Ben Zvi, ed., *Theater in Israel*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996, p.xii.

<sup>4</sup> Lucinda Rennison, 'Was von Bismark übrigblieb. Rolf Hochhuth and the German Question', in Durrani, Good, Hilliard, eds, *The New Germany. Literature and Society after Unification*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995, pp. 128-42; p. 130.

<sup>5</sup> Emil L. Fackenheim, *Quest for Past and Future - Essays in Jewish Theology*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968, p. 17.

often seen to serve as 'lessons' for the contemporary world. As Walter Benjamin observed in 1940, to articulate the past historically no longer means to recognize it the way it was but to utilize past events to service the present. Benjamin argued that historical episodes were 'blasted out' of their continuum, usually at a moment of collective crisis, and viewed through the lens of the present to create *Jetztzeit*.<sup>1</sup> The meaning of any given historical event, therefore, is enslaved to the exigencies of the present. As Karl Jaspers later noted in 1949:

The purpose of an overall philosophical view of history, such as we are seeking to arrive at, is to illuminate our own situation within the totality of history. It serves to light up the consciousness of the present epoch and show us where we stand.

What does a universal view of history mean to us? We wish to understand history as a whole, in order to understand ourselves.<sup>2</sup>

Maurice Halbwachs argues that until the middle of the nineteenth century the articulation of memory and the recording of history were roughly equivalent processes. Past events were chronicled, both in public documentation and the mind, in a subjective and often 'un-self conscious' manner. In other words, the recording of history was akin to memory which, Halbwachs argues, is organic and handed down through the generations in a series of not necessarily related stories, myths, sagas or legends. But more significant, perhaps, is its form. As I will show, memory is generally polyphonous because of its reliance on individual and conflicting voices. In the middle of the nineteenth century, memory and the recording of history became divorced through the rise of historicism, the belief that history can be understood and the future thereby predicted and, in Hegel's case, hopefully shaped through rational frameworks. Historicist systems may be philosophical, economic or political. Generally, they rely on exclusive and singular readings of history where past events are viewed from an 'ironic' position in order to create patterns and meaning.<sup>3</sup> They are, therefore, consciously constructed models which serve political and social functions:

When it comes to historical memory, the person does not remember events directly; it can only be stimulated in indirect ways through reading or listening or in commemoration and festive occasions when people gather together to remember in common the deeds and accomplishments of long departed members of the group. In this case, the past is stored and interpreted by social institutions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'Thesis on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt, ed., trans. Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken Books, 1969, pp. 257-8.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Good of History*, trans. Michael Bullock, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953, pp. 81; 231 (Originally published in German, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*, 1949).

<sup>3</sup> Marvin Carlson, 'The Theory of History', in Sue Ellen Case & Janelle Reinelt, eds, *The Performance of Power: Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991, pp. 272-3. However, Carlson argues that the recording of history has always been ideologically based but it is only in the last few years that this has been realized. The important difference between traditionally recorded history and historicism is that the latter seeks rational explanations.

<sup>4</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 24

All historicisms are interpretative, based on readings of past experience. By filtering events through artificial models Mankind hopes to understand, assess, predict and thereby eradicate the random element in civilized society. This need to impose order arises from the belief that society evolves in a 'progressive' manner, the idea of teleological human progression having been augmented and enlarged upon by Hegel at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In this century, however, the notion of 'progressive' society has been demolished. 'The fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant', noted the German philosophers Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer after World War Two.<sup>1</sup> The known world has become increasingly pluralistic and fragmented and, after the Holocaust, seemingly more arbitrary, increasingly illogical and less humane. Scientific knowledge and 'enlightened' civilization have not necessarily developed hand in hand. 'At Auschwitz,' writes Elie Wiesel, 'not only man died, but also the idea of man.'<sup>2</sup> Jean-François Lyotard writes that Auschwitz not only heralded the end of the Enlightenment dream (the idea of a teleological and progressive human history) but that it constituted a consummately unpredictable event in the development of western civilization - hence the shock when the liberation footage of the camps was screened in newsreels.<sup>3</sup> Intellectuals, such as Lyotard and Karl Raimund Popper, have incorporated this plurality and chaos into their reading of reality and attacked teleological historicism, in particular, for its myopic tunnel vision. As Popper suggests, Man's innate unpredictability ensures that Hegelian teleological historicism is inevitably doomed to failure.<sup>4</sup> Yet, over the last decade, particularly with the recurrence of genocide in eastern Europe and Rwanda, many others, particularly writers and journalists, more than ever aim to give form (political, religious or historical) to the unpredictable maelstrom of the surrounding world,

The attraction of drawing historical parallels (thereby creating historicist discourse) remains strong because it creates a sense of cause and effect with which Man feels empowered to interpret this increasingly fragmented and chaotic world. In recent years, the conflict in former Yugoslavia has been interpreted through the prism of the Holocaust by the world's media and the participants of the war themselves. The films of the Obala artists in Sarajevo, which toured as part of *The Witnesses of Existence* exhibition, utilized images and words which had resonances with Jewish persecution. Similarly, popular jokes in Sarajevo also used the same archetypal source material.<sup>5</sup> For those outside the

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<sup>1</sup> Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, New York: Continuum, 1997, p. 3. (Originally published in 1947).

<sup>2</sup> Elie Wiesel, *Legends of Our Time*, New York: Schocken Books, 1986, p. 186.

<sup>3</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, p. 58.

David Feldman, 'Was Modernity good for the Jews?' paper given at the conference *Modernity, Culture and 'The Jew'*, University of London: Birkbeck College (12-14 May 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Karl Raimund Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, London: Routledge, 1972.

<sup>5</sup> *Witness of Existence* directed by Miro Purivatra. The exhibition film is available on VHS through the

Yugoslavian war, such analogies provided a simplistic moral framework for a situation which was anything but straightforward. The media representation of Serbs as 'Nazis' and Muslims as 'Jews' ran roughshod through an extremely complicated conflict, creating false order amid the chaos.<sup>1</sup>

Such interpretation can have a reductive effect. The public can become removed from the immediate horror through contrived parallels which rely on universal truths. Historians, politicians, the media and artists do not necessarily present the public with the 'reality' or meaning of a contemporary episode but, rather, through analogy, provide contrived insights that prevent a more genuine appraisal of the episode under discussion. Occasionally, the 'lessons' drawn from these parallels are not only disingenuous but politically motivated. Those who seek to clarify current complexities by placing them within rigid historicist discourses may only succeed in creating fatuous analogies. Yet, paradoxically, when utilized judiciously, historical analogy can be a powerful tool to aid comprehension. The 'success' of these analogies often lie in the user's intent. To employ the Holocaust to advance a totally separate political cause should be viewed with suspicion if certain 'facts' about the past are manipulated or withheld to uphold a particular and exclusive historicism. This is the danger of a single narrative structure.

To place the Holocaust within any such historicist discourse pre-supposes that the event can be given meaning. For many, including the survivors themselves, the Holocaust is historically atypical, incomparable to other historic genocides, and has no meaning. As Elie Wiesel writes:

Auschwitz signifies not only the failure of two thousand years of Christian civilization, but also the defeat of the intellect that wants to find a meaning - with a capital M - in history. What Auschwitz embodied has none. The executioner killed for nothing, the victims died for nothing... At Auschwitz the sacrifices were without point, without divine inspiration.<sup>2</sup>

Lyotard writes that the Holocaust 'broke the back' of history and the notion of 'reason'. People who want to 'understand' the Holocaust, he argues, are resisting its natural incomprehensibility.<sup>3</sup> Lawrence L. Langer describes the Holocaust as a unique rupture in history which perhaps cannot be articulated.<sup>4</sup> Any attempt to do so, he argues, should be undertaken as an act of commemoration to the dead. This has not always been the case.

Richard Demarco Archive in Edinburgh.

The following jokes were told to me by Bojan Zec, a Muslim boy from Sarajevo who became a member of the European Youth Parliament in 1994: 'What is the difference between Auschwitz and Sarajevo? In Auschwitz they had gas.' 'Why was the gas cut in Sarajevo? Because there were no Jews.' See: 'Reports from the 21st Century: A Sarajevo Interview', Erika Munk, *Theatre*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (1993), pp. 9-13.

<sup>1</sup> Guy Westwell, 'Reading Trnopolje Camp, Bosnia-Herzegovine, August 5, 1992', paper given at Glasgow University, February 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Wiesel, *Legends of Our Time*, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *Political Writings*, trans. Bill Readings and Kevin Paul, Geiman, London: University of California Press, 1993, pp. 8-10.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence L. Langer, 'Language as Refuge', in *Versions of Survival. The Holocaust and the Human Spirit*, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 1-56.

As Langer states, the magnitude of both the scale and suffering caused something in the human imagination to snap. Too nefarious to be accepted for what it was, the Holocaust was made palatable and, as the historical reality rescinded further in time, it became raw material that was exploited by artists to make various political points. In other words, the event was viewed to be typical of Mankind's capacity for barbarism and placed within various historicist narratives. Larry Kramer, for example, in his 1985 play, *The Normal Heart*, parallels American homophobia and reluctance to deal with the growing HIV epidemic in the early 80s to anti-Semitism and Jewish persecution in the 30s.<sup>1</sup> Here, parallelism, is used to link the political impotence of minority groups within a collective but, in doing so, it highlights one political cause to the detriment of the other and does not increase understanding of both issues.

The Holocaust has become the ultimate trope: a prism through which global events are filtered - the ultimate benchmark of atrocity. Such parallelism can be reductivist on three counts. First, it denies a lucid understanding of both the Holocaust and the parallel situation. Each localized event requires a specific understanding which a universal framework often cannot provide.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, seeking to emphasize the scale of a contemporary event by comparing it to the Holocaust only succeeds in reducing the magnitude of the present crisis. Therefore, the attempt to shock and encourage intervention backfires as such analogies are regarded as merely 'sensationalist'. Third, by reducing the Holocaust (or even the contemporary parallel) to examples of inhumanity in a political or religious macrocosm, a voice is denied to the victims thereby reducing them to mere symbols. When one loses sight of the victims there can be a combination of results which often lead to an exclusive interpretation of the past. This is because individuals' stories of suffering are forgotten, their deaths become banal, and they become remote martyr figures. By belittling the importance of the victims and negating their voice, individual memories are suppressed by historicist structures. Meanings are extracted from the chaos:

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<sup>1</sup> Larry Kramer, *The Normal Heart*, London: Methuen, 1985. It premièred 21 April 1985 at The Public Theatre in New York City as part of the Shakespeare Festival, produced by Joseph Papp and directed by Michael Lindsay Hogg; p. 20: Ned, a journalist, who is trying to break the story of AIDS in the *New York Times*, is awaiting his own HIV test result: 'Do you know that when Hitler's Final Solution to eliminate the Polish Jews was first mentioned in the *Times* it was on page twenty-eight? And on page six of the *Washington Post*... Yes, there are a million reasons for not getting involved. But aren't there moral obligations, moral commandments to try everything possible?'

<sup>2</sup> On the fiftieth anniversary of the Nuremberg Trials the BBC programme, 'Heart of the Matter', gathered together the Archbishop of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu, Professor David Cesarani of the Wiener Library and British War Crimes Commission, Jacques Vergès the lawyer who defended Klaus Barbie and Christian Tomuschat who works for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The subject, whilst paying lip service to the subject matter of its title 'Nuremberg', was ostensibly about war criminals in general and the prospect of reconciliation. Obviously no consensus was reached. Solutions such as South Africa's 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission', Cesarani argued, would be an inappropriate body to deal with the atrocity-mongers in former Yugoslavia. The 'debate' then moved on to the question of whether the International War Crimes Tribunal set up in The Hague in 1992 could work in a world-wide capacity. Judging by the discord between the programme's participants it would seem doubtful.

We ignore survivors' voices because they challenge our view that the world has meaning.<sup>1</sup>

Survivors, such as Elie Wiesel, argue that the Holocaust is atypical, stands outside history, historicist structures and meaning itself. The Holocaust, in its totality, can only be articulated through all its individual voices. A survey of the extant writing and art from the victims of the Holocaust, as well as the literature of survivors, often reveals conflicting narratives. I believe that our knowledge of the event is increased through a polyphonus reading rather than through a single historicist structure. Some of the most provocative works of art that tackle the Holocaust rely on a plurality of narratives to arrive at a total picture, in much the same manner as the Cubists sought an all-embracing perspective of reality to create a more 'truthful' totality and, more importantly, a sense of flux through broken lines, conflicting textures, and games of illusion and reality. The image remains in motion in the viewer's mind through its inherent open-endedness and multi-layered nature.

Historical accounts, in general, are similarly in a state of flux and the most provocative writings about the Holocaust also acknowledge the fact that recorded history is a hermetic circle of dynamic simultaneity where past and present are constantly sparking off each other. As Jaspers wrote:

Historicity is objectively and subjectively the absolute unrest caused by the instability of things in time. It is not the mere passing of things in time which we observe in processes of nature. Historicity relates the present to the past and to the future so as to penetrate mere temporality in continuous communication.<sup>2</sup>

Jaspers was speaking of Benjamin's *Jetztzeit* - the past utilized in the present. But the present is also determined by the past - what Michael Wolfssohn calls *Geschichtspolitik*.<sup>3</sup> Historical accounts are therefore ever-shifting. This is particularly true of those countries involved in, and still affected by, the Holocaust, namely Israel, Austria and Germany.<sup>4</sup> What is particularly striking about Holocaust narratives in these countries are their subtle shifts depending on the specific *Zeitgeist* and current national concerns at any given moment.

Yet, until recently, these shifts existed within specific national narratives. Eric L. Santer argues that Israel and Germany, the former victims and persecutors of the

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<sup>1</sup> Terence Des Pres, *The Survivor. An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*, New York: Washington Square Press, 1976, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 2, trans. E. B. Ashton, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970, p. 342. (Originally published in German, *Philosophie*, 1932).

<sup>3</sup> Michael Wolfssohn, *Eternal Guilt? Forty Years of German Jewish Relations*, trans. Douglas Bukovy, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> As this dissertation distinguishes between East and West Germany, the term 'Germanies' will be used to refer to them collectively before unification in 1989-90.

Holocaust,<sup>1</sup> developed different strategies to deal with a 'trauma' of such mammoth proportions. Their individual strategies are responses to a loss or to a past that refuses to disappear because of its profound and awesome impact. Each group has dealt with this conundrum differently. The necessity to confront, absorb, or mutate the narrative of this trauma determines how each group reformulates the past and, by default, its own current identity after the fact. 'The crucial difference between the two modes of repair', notes Santer, 'has to do with the willingness or capacity to include the traumatic event in one's efforts to reformulate and reconstitute identity.'<sup>2</sup> He describes these two responses thus: as a process of 'mourning' by Jewish writers and 'narrative fetishism' on the part of the Germans:

By narrative fetishism I mean the construction and deployment of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of a trauma or loss of that which called that narrative into being in the first place.<sup>3</sup>

Avoidance arises from an inability to mourn or a refusal to confront the past and the resulting historical narratives are not only incomplete but, as Santer points out, works of 'fantasy'. Santer compares this strategy with what Freud called *Trauerarbeit* (working through by mourning) which has mainly been the response of Israeli and Jewish writers:

The work of mourning is a process of elaborating and integrating the reality of loss or traumatic shock by remembering and repeating it in symbolically or dialogically mediated doses; it is a process of translating, troping and figuring loss.<sup>4</sup>

Inevitably such mourning becomes a ritualized part of national identity and continuity as the narrative becomes atrophied within a particular historicist structure. Unless the narrative is subtly re-investigated afresh each time, it becomes banal and remote.

The Israel establishment, in particular, uses public ritual and historical trauma to re-establish collective identity at moments of crisis - creating *Jetztzeit*. Public events of mourning and remembrance, as Freddie Rokem has written, have taken on an extremely 'theatrical' nature.<sup>5</sup> This is especially true of events commemorating the Holocaust and the Israeli wars which are linked through a single master narrative revolving around Jewish persecution. As Amos Oz writes, the nation of Israel can be described as a people trapped

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<sup>1</sup> For a fuller argument on both the perpetrators and the victims see 'Historical Appendix', pp. 307-11.

<sup>2</sup> Eric Santer, 'History Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some thoughts on the Representation of Trauma', in Saul Friedlander, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 152. Santer's thought on *Trauerarbeit* is indebted to the German psychoanalysts, Alexander and Margarethe Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behaviour*, New York: Grove Press, 1968.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Freddie Rokem, 'Cultural Transformations of Evil and Pain: Some Recent Changes in the Israeli Perception of the Holocaust', in Hans Peter Bayerdörfer, ed., *German-Israeli Theatre Relations*, Tübingen: Niemeyer Verlag, 1996, pp. 217-241.

in an identity promulgated by over two thousand years of oppression:

One could almost speak of a Jewish identity composed of the collection of injustices inflicted on us by our enemies over thousands of years.<sup>1</sup>

The story (or community narrative) of Israel is an endless tale of persecution. Since the Middle Ages, particularly in Eastern Europe and Russia, violence was an accepted feature of Jewish life. Consequently Jews developed strategies to deal with this. The Old Testament tells the story of how Israel acquired its land, lost it through displeasing God and then was promised its return through the Covenant. The two main actors in this cosmic drama are God and Israel. There can be no rebellion against God who punishes his people for their own spiritual good through his earthly manifestations: the Cossacks, the Tsars, the Ukrainians, to name but a few. In orthodox religious history, therefore, the Holocaust is seen as part of an ongoing saga in religious Jewish history. Thus Alexander Donat, a survivor from the Warsaw ghetto, recalls:

I felt sure that we were going to die, but I felt part of the stream of Jewish history. We were part of an ancient and unending stream of tradition that went back to Titus and his Roman legions ravaging Jerusalem, to persecution in Spain under Isabella and Ferdinand, to the Khmelnitsky massacres, and to more recent pogroms and massacres at Kishinev and under Petlyuva.<sup>2</sup>

How the Holocaust became absorbed into this narrative of persecution by postwar writers changed both the nature of the narrative and the nature of collective Jewish identity. As I will show, the narrative became secularized as part of the Zionist narrative and Jewish identity pivoted one hundred and eighty degrees from the image of Jew as victim to that of aggressor and, in recent years, to oppressor. This is because, as Freddie Rokem points out, the Holocaust has become the crux of Jewish national identity. It is the ultimate act of persecution to which all others have been compared ever since. For the Israelis, this particularly means acts of Arab aggression. The community narrative has remained the same: 'them and us'; only its *dramatis personae* have changed through the years: Cossacks, then the Nazis and now the Arabs. The Holocaust has been consciously implanted in the national psyche through the use of public ritual and is used to facilitate political objectives:

The Holocaust serves as an historical focal point which has gained such a strong direct as well as symbolic presence in the collective Israeli consciousness that, in particular during times of crisis, it is almost automatically triggered or activated as a kind of coded and well prepared reaction or even defence mechanism. By mentioning a name or a place connected to the Holocaust in a contemporary context it is possible to activate a whole set of intellectual and emotional responses which are like a chain reaction which is directing, and in many cases even manipulating not only the discourse itself but also the understanding of the present-day situation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Amos Oz, *The Slopes of Lebanon*, trans. Maurie Goldberg-Bartura, London: Vintage 1991, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>Des Pres, *The Survivor*, p.142.

<sup>3</sup>Freddie Rokem, 'Cultural transformations' p. 218.

Rituals are ceremonial acts which preserve collective memory. This collective memory is a consciously constructed historical narrative perpetuated by community leaders. Through time, this ritual is divorced from historical reality to become a lifeless and empty political construct. Here historicism has replaced memory because, as I will show, the Israeli establishment has pursued a singular narrative of history for political ends and, until comparatively recently, has ignored the voices of victims and survivors. Since the late 1930s Israeli writers and, particularly, dramatists, were on the whole concerned with establishing this singular narrative. However, from the 1960s onwards they have increasingly questioned the way in which their history has been emplotted and there has been a move towards the use of multi-narrative structures in novels and plays.

Whereas many Israeli and Jewish writers have insisted on the centrality of the Holocaust in modern Jewish identity, German writers have been more concerned with expunging it from their community narrative. The strategies in achieving this have been fourfold: denial (the Holocaust has been exaggerated), distancing (the Holocaust was the work of a handful of psychopaths), omission ('narrative fetishism') and universalization (the Holocaust is typical of mankind's capacity for depravity and, therefore, the actions of the German nation under Hitler were not exceptional and stand within history). The tendency has been to demonize the Nazis, portraying them as one example of ubiquitous evil. As Christopher Innes notes:

Indeed a striking characteristic of recent German drama is the way the issues that arise from specifically national experience are translated into global terms.<sup>1</sup>

It can be argued that this tendency derives from the universal preoccupations of German Classicists such as Goethe and Schiller who regarded the stage as a moral pulpit, but historians, such as A. J. Nicholls, point out that political analysis was never the realm of the German psyche. Traditionally, politics was regarded as a shady affair by the ordinary German compared to the respectability of the army and the civil service. Post World War One mythology held that the war had not been lost by the army but by the politicians and the Kaiser in Berlin who were in league with the Marxists and the Jews. In 1919 the Chancellor of the new Weimar Republic, Friedrich Ebert, posed the rhetorical question, 'Wherefore, by their own testimony, have our enemies fought?'; his answer was 'to destroy Kaiserism' - not the average German citizen or soldier.<sup>2</sup> Ebert voiced the opinion of the ordinary German who believed that he was neither responsible for the war nor its repercussions. A similar denial followed the liberation of the concentration camps.

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Innes, *Modern German Drama - a Study in Form*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> A. J. Nicholls, *Weimar and the Rise of Hitler*, London: Macmillan, 1986, introduction.

Questions of wartime responsibility have been evaded by German writers who have adopted a predominantly existentialist-humanist approach. German civilians and soldiers appear as passive and suffering victims of Nazism with Hitler as a demonic and charismatic creature who enthralled a nation. This tendency to view events in a universalist manner, free from political specifics, subtly revises the past by displacing the focus from specific to global crimes. Occasionally writers take the Holocaust and use it as a platform for a completely different debate. Heinar Kipphardt's play *Brother Eichmann* compares Adolf Eichmann's crimes with those of nuclear scientists and Israeli soldiers in the Lebanon.<sup>1</sup> Kipphardt's particular interpretation relies on his Marxist reading of history. Kipphardt thus places the Holocaust within a specific historicism which views the Holocaust as typical of Man's capacity, under an oppressive economic system, for butchery. The singular, historical German 'crime' therefore becomes subsumed within a more general narrative and the historical specifics are subtly revised. A similar strategy of universalization has also been used in national ritual and acts of commemoration. In 1985, for example, the then West German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the end of the war with a double ceremony at Belsen and a German mass grave in Bitburg, thereby universalizing all war dead as victims of 'tyranny'. The specific Nazi crime of the Holocaust was superseded by the narrative of the totalitarian oppression of Man.

The national identities of Israel, the Democratic and Federal Republics of Germany and Austria have all been shaped by the Holocaust. Politically, these identities have been consciously constructed by the need to expunge or integrate the original trauma. This has often meant that the use of survivor testimony is selective. Until recently, the voice of the survivor was comparatively ignored because they were at variance with national historicisms. Through the analysis of German and Israeli dramatic narratives and audience responses, this thesis traces the development of national identities and narratives of history. In particular, it seeks to illuminate Walter Benjamin's theory of *Jetztzeit*, how contemporary exigencies influence narratives of history at any given moment as well as Wolfssohn's *Geschichtspolitik* - how the Holocaust has influenced present identity and political thinking.

### **A Note on Methods**

The rationale behind my selection of material is based on accessibility to English translations, although I also refer to plays read in their original language. Because this thesis is not a linguistic examination, I am content to study these writings in translation and do not feel that this is detrimental to my interpretation of the material. The choice of works under discussion is also governed by their specific reference to the Holocaust and

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 4.

the Second World War.

Because I have chosen to examine German and Israeli narratives specifically, my selection of material is governed by two factors: the authors' nationality (for example, Rolf Hochhuth as a German writer and Joshua Sobol as an Israeli writer) and the impact of 'imported' dramatic productions within these countries, for example, the reception of the American mini-series *Holocaust* and the Hungarian writer, George Tabori's work in Austria and Germany. Sometimes, a dramatist may be both German and Jewish, such as the case of Peter Weiss, but because he is not Israeli, I have placed his work within the German spectrum. In the main, I make the distinction between Israeli and Jewish writers and quote non-Israeli writers, such as survivors Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi, only to highlight the proclivities of specific Israeli narratives compared to survivor testimony which are often not synonymous.

The division of chapters is, essentially, chronological and charts the development of narratives of the Holocaust as they change with the contemporary *Zeitgeist* in the countries under discussion. Chapter One maps the inception of these narratives from various groups who responded to the events unfolding in Europe at the time of the Final Solution. Furthermore, it outlines how narratives became bound up with issues of national identity. Chapter Two focuses on the immediate postwar aftermath and the beginning of the 'Cold War' which further reinforced these narratives. Chapter Three investigates how the major war crime trials in the 1960s and the coming of age of the postwar generation initiated a significant re-evaluation of historical narratives and dramatic structures. In Chapter Four, I discuss how this re-evaluation was received and the way in which some writers responded by continuing these new developments whilst others, after the birth of urban terrorism in Israel and Germany in the 1970s, withdrew into narrative styles and structures reminiscent of those discussed in Chapter Two. Chapter Five examines the way in which Holocaust narratives became further entangled with questions of national identity and how attempts were made to compare these now exclusive and rigid narratives to alternative ones that were more concerned with survivor testimony, and conflicting versions of history and identity.

# CHAPTER 1

## JEWISH AND GERMAN RESPONSES TO NAZI PERSECUTION 1941-45

### Introduction

The Nazi State officially began in August 1934 after the death of President Hindenberg when Hitler adroitly absorbed the chancellorship and the presidency into one supreme executive sovereignty to become Reichsführer. On 28 February 1933 the Law for the Protection of the Nation was passed, followed on 7 April by legislation compelling the 'retirement' of all civil servants of non-Aryan descent. A boycott of Jewish shops and businesses ensued. In September 1935 the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour legalized the anti-Semitic belief that the Jews were an inferior race.

The way in which writers and playwrights interpreted the political situation depended on two factors: physical constraints (imprisonment or exile) and the extent to which they were aware of Hitler's plans for extermination. For the purpose of assessing various artists' responses to the deteriorating political position, establishing when they became aware of a 'Final Solution' is more significant than defining when it began.

### *Physical Constraints*

The Law for the Protection of the Nation forbade all Marxist writings in Germany. On 13 March 1933 Hitler created the Reich's Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda and on 22 September Josef Goebbels created the Culture Chamber to bring theatre, literature, press, radio, music, fine art and film under the control of the Nazis.<sup>1</sup> Jews were the first to be ousted. For instance, on 16 July 1933 the internationally renowned director Max Reinhardt was forced to surrender ownership of his Berlin theatres.<sup>2</sup> In September the Law for the Establishment of the Reich Cultural Chamber effectively banned all Jewish authors.<sup>3</sup> By the end of 1933 all forms of artistic output were under state control. The theatrical scene was decimated. Prior to Hitler's ascent, eighty per cent of all Berlin theatre managers, for instance, had been Jewish.<sup>4</sup> A mass exodus of German writers, Jewish and non-Jewish,

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<sup>1</sup> Volker Rolf Berghahn, *Modern Germany: Society, Economics and Politics of the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> Glen W. Gadberry, ed., *Theatre in the Third Reich. The Pre-war Years (Essays on Theatre in Nazi Germany)*, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> J.M. Ritchie, *German Literature Under National Socialism*, London & Canberra: Croom Helm, 1983, pp. 65-6.

<sup>4</sup> Glen W. Gadberry, 'Nazi Germany's Jewish Theatre', in *Theatre Survey*, Vol. 21.1, (21 January 1980), pp. 15-32; p. 17.

followed. Those who remained, deprived of publishers and audience, went into 'inner exile' in the hope of riding out the storm.

With the establishment of Dachau and Sachsenhausen in 1933, quickly followed by Neuengamme in 1934, the prospect of forced labour stood to quash any criticism of the new regime. The government had done everything in its power to silence its critics and ostracize the Jews. As the German author, Christa Wolf, wrote fifty years later about her own childhood under Hitler, one simply stopped asking unwelcome questions about the Jews and the new policies if one wanted to survive and prosper.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the Jews either became 'invisible' for the general population or were actively persecuted by others. Once interned in camps, artistic activity was not only limited to a small clandestine audience but punishable. Forced labour meant that few people had the energy left either to perform or spectate. Furthermore, many artistic endeavours cannot be classified as 'genuine' responses to persecution as they were, in fact, the result of the authorities' own demand for diversion, amusement and propaganda.

### *Extent of Knowledge*

As Wittgenstein pointed out, people can only speak of what they know, whether their knowledge is experienced or empirical. Many Germans after the war argued that they had known nothing of the conditions in the labour camps or what was happening to the dwindling Jewish population of Europe. Daniel Goldhagen, on the other hand, lists evidence to illustrate that ordinary Germans not only knew what was happening to the Jews but were actively involved in their persecution after 1933.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, he illustrates that those Germans not particularly supportive of Nazi racial doctrine were, nevertheless, actively denying the reality of the Jews' situation. The average adult German knew, at the very least, about some of the more visible horrors occurring on their own street corners. As one survivor, Bruno Bettelheim, stressed, the German public certainly knew about the labour camps because it was through their well publicized existence via the Gestapo and radio that the government hoped to control the people.<sup>3</sup> The extent to which the public was aware of the brutality can be measured by the hundreds of letters written by worried citizens to the

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<sup>1</sup> Christa Wolf, *A Model Childhood*, trans. Ursule Molinaro & Hedwig Rappolt, London: Virago Press, 1982, p. 39 (*Kindheitsmuster*, first published in Germany 1976).

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, London: Viking, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart. The Human Condition in Modern Mass Society*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1960, p. 286.

Also Christabel Bielenberg, *The Past Is Myself*, London: Corgi Books, 1984, p. 28. In 1935 she noted, 'There are also detention camps and carefully broadcast hints of what might be in store for anyone who had temerity enough to enquire into his (Hitler's) methods too closely, let alone openly disapprove of them.'

Kommandant of Buchenwald, near Weimar. These extant papers indicate that ordinary Germans knew about death by starvation, overwork and execution.<sup>1</sup> As Raul Hilberg writes:

Even if one looked away, asked no questions, and refrained from talk in public, a dull awareness remained. The disappearance of the Jews, or the appearance of their property, was a signal of what was happening.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the question of the death camps and the Final Solution was a different matter. Although there were hundreds of labour camps, often near centres of population,<sup>3</sup> there were only five death camps: Chelmno (operational by December 1941); Belzec (March 1942); Sobibor (May 1942); Treblinka (June 1942); and Auschwitz-Birkenau (functional by Spring 1942).<sup>4</sup> None of these camps were on German soil. With the exception of Birkenau, they were in remote locations far away from civilian populations and operated for some eighteen months.<sup>5</sup> Birkenau continued to operate until 2 November 1944. As the Allies approached, the Nazis attempted to conceal the camps' existence and destroy the gas chambers. At the end of 1943, when Sobibor was evacuated, a farmhouse was erected over the site. Crops were planted and a Ukrainian guard was installed as a farmer.<sup>6</sup>

Secrecy was the watchword. Himmler in a speech of 4 October 1943 to the SS elaborated on 'the liquidation of the Jewish race' warning his men: 'This is a page of glory in our history which has never been written and is never to be written.'<sup>7</sup> Raul Hilberg writes:

One of the reasons for the closed ghettos, sealed boxcars, and secret death camps was the screening of the victims from the eyes of sensitive witnesses. Such precautions, however, could not be extended to the frontiers of action, where a physical confrontation of the perpetrators and victims was unavoidable.<sup>8</sup>

Evidence inevitably leaked. A. J. Nicholls noted that after the first SS *Einsatzgruppen* began their operations in Poland in the winter of 1939, rumours spread back to the Wehrmacht from the SS and thence back to the Reich.<sup>9</sup> In 1941, one SS lieutenant was tried in Munich for

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Segev, *Soldiers of Evil. The Commandants and the Nazi Concentration Camps*, trans. Haim Watzman, London: Grafton Books (Collins Publishing Group), 1990, pp. 30-2.

<sup>2</sup> Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders*, London: Lime Tree Press, 1993, p. 195.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with a survivor, Ernest Levy, November 1995: Levy describes how, while in Wüstergiersdorf camp, he was assigned to a labour kommando which often worked on construction sites in the nearby towns and villages.

<sup>4</sup> The start date of the gassing at Birkenau is still the subject of ongoing research.

<sup>5</sup> Birkenau is a 25 minute walk from the town of Oswiecim. Most of the town's inhabitants were, however, removed from the village and their houses requisitioned for German staff and guards.

<sup>6</sup> Wiener Library.

<sup>7</sup> Erwin Leiser, *A Pictorial History of Nazi Germany*, London: Pelican, 1960, p. 165.

<sup>8</sup> Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders*, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> A. J. Nicholls, *Weimar and The Rise of Hitler*, London: Macmillan, 1986, p. 167. *Einsatzgruppen* were

covertly photographing a mass shooting and showing the pictures to his wife and family.<sup>1</sup> Nicholls argues that after the public storm surrounding the euthanasia programme,<sup>2</sup> the German public could easily surmise how other 'undesirables' might be dealt with. This was especially true after 3 August 1941 when Bishop Galen spoke from his pulpit in Münster about the elimination of the mentally disabled - or as Nazi publications classified the disabled, the Jews and political opponents - 'life unworthy of life'.<sup>3</sup>

By 1941, before the Wannsee Conference of January 1942 at which the Final Solution was officially sanctioned, evidence indicates that the 'average German' could have known that there was a plot afoot for the systematic extermination of the Jews.<sup>4</sup> The Nazi newspaper, *Der Völkischer Beobachter*, on 21 March 1941, noted the plans for the 'physical liquidation of the Jews'.<sup>5</sup> On 25 February 1942, a Hannover newspaper ran the headline, 'The Jews to be Exterminated'.<sup>6</sup> In 1942 Marius Göring spoke for the BBC over the German airwaves about the hundreds of thousands of 'adults and children' that had been 'slain'.<sup>7</sup> However, that was the BBC and such stories were explained away as Allied propaganda. As such, these broadcasts probably had the opposite effect to the one the Allies intended in that ordinary Germans attributed the headlines in their own papers to anti-Semitic hyperbole and the stories of mass death as lurid fantasy. But if a general knowledge of the killings at an earlier date than traditionally accepted is assumed, then it follows that many Germans civilians were participants in the 'solution' to the 'Jewish problem' - if only complicitly. Two arguments have emerged on this subject: the German people really were ignorant of the death camps or they knew of their existence, but did not want to face this

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killing squads. Initially formed from the Deathshead SS, they were responsible for the rounding up and murdering of Jews and others by machine gun. As the war progressed, the SS members of Einsatzgruppen were augmented by Wehrmacht soldiers, policemen and mercenaries such as the Ukrainians. See Christopher L. Browning, *Ordinary Men, Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, London: Harper Collins, 1992.

<sup>1</sup> Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders*, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> After 1933 Hitler began a programme of compulsory sterilization on the physically and mentally handicapped. In September 1939, all remaining patients in hospitals throughout Germany were murdered. See Gitta Sereny, *Into That Darkness*, London: André Deutsch, 1974, the biography of Treblinka Kommandant Franz Stangl who began his career on the euthanasia programme. Nicholls, *Weimar and The Rise of Hitler*, pp. 59 & 167: The Bishop of Münster, Count Galen, had spoken from his pulpit on 3 August 1941 against the euthanasia programme. Many felt that it was as a direct result of this public act that the euthanasia programme was ended. In reality, the programme had nearly been completed in any case. Evidence shows that people were still murdered after Galen's speech, but that this operation was carried out more covertly.

<sup>3</sup> The term was first coined by Himmler and printed frequently in *Der Stürmer*, the Nazi newspaper.

<sup>4</sup> The Wannsee Conference in Berlin sanctioned the construction of the gas chambers and the use of Zyklon B in Birkenau. In Belzec, Treblinka, Sobibor and Chelmno carbon-dioxide was used.

<sup>5</sup> *The Unspeakable Atrocity*, BBC Radio 4 (9 December 1993).

<sup>6</sup> *Peoples' Century*, BBC 2, (September 1996).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

gruesome fact. The truth probably lies somewhere in between.

The extent to which people were aware of the scope of destruction was similarly important for those Jews who remained in German territory. While it is true that many families could not leave either because of the emigration tax introduced in the mid 1930s or because they could not envisage starting again in a foreign country from scratch, Jewish reaction was complicated by the weight of historical experience. Initially, the Nazi persecution was regarded in the same light as other sporadic outbursts such as the pogroms in Russia. Many believed that the violence would eventually pass. As Jews had never possessed the means to fight back, passive acceptance of life's misfortunes had become the strategy with which to counter catastrophe. Jean-François Steiner recalls :

The Jews never defended themselves, never revolted. The more pious of them saw the pogroms as a punishment from God, others as a natural phenomenon comparable to hail in vineyard country or grasshoppers in Morocco. They had learned one thing: the gentile is stronger, to resist only fans his anger. 'If a goy hits you' mothers told their children, 'bow your head and he will spare your life.'<sup>1</sup>

Two survivors, Alexander Donat<sup>2</sup> and Bruno Bettelheim, argued that it was this 2000 year old policy of acquiescence which crippled the Jews' defence mechanisms during the Nazi era. Bettelheim noted:

German Jews (and those of Poland, too) permitted themselves to remain innocent, avoided eating from the tree of knowledge, and remained ignorant of the nature of their enemy. They did this because they were afraid that knowing would mean having to take action.<sup>3</sup>

As one survivor, Dov Freiberg, incarcerated in Sobibor from May 1942 as a boy of fifteen recollected, 'Most people didn't believe there was extermination... Of course we knew there were isolated cases of murder but we didn't know about mass extermination. We didn't want to believe it.'<sup>4</sup> This reaction was further intensified by orthodox Jewish response to catastrophe which prescribes that violence and 'martyrdom' are necessary features of traditional spiritual life. A believing Jew must accept this pattern of existence, bearing the burden of a divinely inspired violence, or else face the consequences of his defiance before God. Upbringing, therefore, played a large part in the extent to which one faced the possibility of the Final Solution.

In addition, geographical location and decisions taken at local level by the occupying

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-François Steiner, *Treblinka*, trans. Helen Weaver, London: Corgi, 1969, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Alexander, *The Resonance of Dust. Essays on Holocaust Literature and Jewish Fate*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *Recollections and Reflections*, London: Penguin, 1992, p. 260.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust. The Jewish Tragedy*, London: Collins, 1986, pp. 340-1.

forces seem to have been crucial in determining the extent to which one knew what was happening. Helen Lewis, a Hungarian dancer interned in Auschwitz at the late date of May 1944, recalls:

Until that day we knew nothing of extermination camps or of gas chambers. We had been told that we were going to a labour camp.<sup>1</sup>

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, a cellist in Alma Rosé's orchestra in Auschwitz, records that she first heard about the gas chambers from another inmate whilst awaiting deportation from Breslau, Germany, in 1942.<sup>2</sup> The Hungarian Jews were left largely untouched until May 1944 - hence Helen Lewis's shock on arrival in Auschwitz.<sup>3</sup> For the Polish Jews, awareness of the situation was more advanced. Lucie Adelsberger was part of a German transport in 1943 to Auschwitz. She and her companions were ignorant of what lay ahead of them. 'On the other hand', she wrote, 'unlike us, the Polish Jews were generally aware of the evil awaiting them upon their arrival.' Although Adelsberger had heard of the mass killings as a civilian in Germany, she attributed the stories to Allied propaganda.<sup>4</sup> Even in the camps, people did not believe they were to be exterminated. This was particularly true of the Auschwitz inmates who lived in the subcamps far away from the gas chambers of Birkenau. One survivor, Olga Lengyel, who worked as an assistant alongside Doctor Mengele, recalled how some of the prisoners convinced themselves that the crematory chimneys were part of a large bakery that supplied bread to the prisoners.<sup>5</sup>

Information available to ghetto inhabitants was sparser. Ghetto dwellers were cut off from the outside world and radios were banned. Some people, however, had retained their radios on pain of death. Chaim A. Kaplan, for instance, recorded in the Warsaw ghetto on 26 June 1942, 'This morning the English radio reported on the fate of the Polish Jews. Today's broadcast drew up the balance sheet: the number of Jews so far killed was put at a figure of 700,000.'<sup>6</sup> The Nazis endeavoured to keep such information from those inside the ghetto walls. Naturally, the authorities would rather have the Jews walk complicitly to their own deaths than expend time and manpower in quelling mass hysteria and resistance. That is

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<sup>1</sup> Helen Lewis, *A Time to Speak*, Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1992, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Anita Lasker Wallfisch, *Inherit the Truth 1939-45*, London: dlm books, 1996, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Randolph L Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary, Vol. 2*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1981, pp. 596-7 & pp. 820-9. The Hungarian Regent, Miklós Horthy had tried to resist the deportation of the Jews. The Germans replaced him with the extremist leader of the Arrow Cross Party, Ferenc Szálasi, in 1944.

<sup>4</sup> Lucie Adelsberger, *A Doctor's Story*, London: Robson Books, 1996, p. 63

<sup>5</sup> Olga Lengyel, *Five Chimneys. The Story of Auschwitz*, New York: Ziff Davies, 1947, pp. 43-4.

<sup>6</sup> Chaim A. Kaplan, *The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, trans. by Abraham I. Katsch, New York: Collier Books, 1965, p. 299.

why the Nazis allowed the Jews to practice a degree of self-autonomy in the ghettos through the *Judenräte* (Jewish councils)<sup>1</sup> and Jewish police forces. These games of illusion and reality contributed to the Jews' lack of political awareness. Ghetto dwellers, therefore, to some extent remained in ignorance. It was not until November 1941 that the Chairman of the Warsaw ghetto Judenrat, Adam Czernakow, heard the first reports of mass shootings in Ponar from the underground movement.<sup>2</sup> The killings were not made public knowledge until one of the underground papers published news of the gassings in Chelmno on 1 June 1942.<sup>3</sup> In January 1942, an escaped gravedigger from Chelmno, Yakov Grojanowski, stole back into the Warsaw ghetto to warn the Judenrat and the people.<sup>4</sup> 'Until then', as an resistance fighter, Yitzhak Zuckerman, recalled, 'we could not believe that a nation in the twentieth century can pronounce a sentence of death on a whole nation.'<sup>5</sup>

For those outside Germany, evidence of a systematic extermination was more evident. For instance, Willi Münzenberg in 1933 established the 'World Relief Committee for the Victims of German Fascism', chaired by Lord Marley with offices in London and Paris. The Committee published all evidence it could obtain including Münzenberg's own *Brown Book of the Hitler Terror and the Burning of the Reichstag*, which was translated into seventeen languages.<sup>6</sup> Bernard Neuman, as early as 1940, published a book in Britain which referred to a Jewish slave-labour camp in the Lublin area of Poland, Majdanek. He reproduced a map.<sup>7</sup> Beginning in November 1941, Thomas Mann in his series of eight-minute radio talks on the BBC World Service talked of mass shootings. In June 1942 he explicitly stated that gas was being used to kill the inmates of Mathausen concentration camp. In November 1942, his speeches were published in book form in the United States.<sup>8</sup> North America was the destination of many of Mann's exiled compatriots: Bertolt Brecht, Karl Zuckmayer and Franz Werfel. In 1942 in the States and in Britain, a 600 page volume, *The German New Order in Poland*, was published which recorded mass shootings of hundreds of Jews at a time. For example, on 19 December 1939, 180 Jews were murdered in Cracow and 800 Jews in Przemysl were massacred during the same year. The book also noted the

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<sup>1</sup> The Council of Elders, or *Judenrat*, was empowered by the Nazi occupation forces to run the ghettos. In this way, the Nazis hoped to delude the Jews into thinking that they had a degree of self-autonomy and get them to police themselves.

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 314.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 233 and 355.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

<sup>6</sup> David Pike, *German Writers in Soviet Exile 1933-45*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982, p. 95.

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Neuman, *The Story of Poland*, London and Melbourne: Hutchinson and Co., 1940.

<sup>8</sup> Rolf Hochhuth, 'Historical Sidelights', in *The Representative*, trans. Robert David MacDonald, London: Methuen, 1963, pp. 292-4.

systematic rape of young Jewish girls and their imprisonment in brothels.<sup>1</sup> Photographs of beatings and public humiliations were reproduced. Those Germans exiled in America could not but be aware of what was going on, even if they dismissed such stories as rumours or propaganda. In 1942, Jan Karski, a Polish spy, disguised himself as a policeman to gain entry to Treblinka and Belzec. He met with Churchill and Roosevelt providing evidence of the slaughter of 1,800,000 Jews.<sup>2</sup> His book, *Story of a Secret State*, was first published in English in 1944.<sup>3</sup> At 6 p.m., on 9 July 1942, the BBC reported for the first time the news of the massacres in Europe by machine gun in front of mass graves. On the BBC 9 p.m. news, mobile gas chambers were mentioned. On 17 December 1942 the Houses of Parliament announced that they finally accepted that there was sufficient evidence to prove that there was a plan to annihilate the Jews in Europe. Both Houses stood in silence for a minute.<sup>4</sup> However, Churchill's government was publicly stating what it had known for over a year, in other words before Karski's evidence. GCHQ Bletchley Park had cracked the German secret code in 1941 and British intelligence heard the first reports of mass shootings from the Germans' own mouths in July of that year, the first incident being the massacre of 1,153 Russian Jews. A month later came the report of the 'liquidation of 3,274 partisans and Jewish Bolsheviks.'<sup>5</sup>

By 1942, the fact that the Jews of Europe were being exterminated could not be denied. The only unknown factor was the sheer scale of the enterprise. By July 1944 the full facts began to emerge. Allied reporters entered the first liberated death camps. The same month *The Illustrated London News* and *Sphere* carried photographs of human remains, gas chambers and crematoria.<sup>6</sup> Unknown to the world at that time, the gas chambers, pits and crematorium of Auschwitz had just reached their full capacity. The furnaces continued to burn at peak output until 2 November 1944. The way in which writers chose to accept and deal with the fact that millions of human beings were being systematically wiped out indicates something more significant than just mere 'knowledge'.

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<sup>1</sup> Anon., *The German New Order in Poland*, London: Hutchinson and Co., 1942, pp. 220-1.

<sup>2</sup> Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders*, p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Karski, *Story of a Secret State*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1944.

<sup>4</sup> *Document: The Unspeakable Atrocity*, BBC Radio 4 (9 December 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Official MOD documents released on 19 May 1997 under the British Government Fifty Year Official Secret Acts Rule. Quoted by *The Guardian* (20 January 1997), p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Hochhuth, 'Historical Sidelights', p. 280.

### 1.1 *The Artistic Response of the Jews under Hitler*

#### *Introduction*

The wealth of material left by the victims and opponents of National Socialism is immense. In the Warsaw ghetto, for instance, there were five theatres, twelve fringe groups, an orchestra, a puppet theatre and various street performers. Between September 1940 and September 1941 1,814 stage presentations were given including eight symphonic concerts.<sup>1</sup> Diaries as diverse as those of Doctor Janusz Korczak and Anne Frank were bricked into ghetto walls or hidden by friends.<sup>2</sup> Paintings and sketches were smuggled out of ghettos and even from the camps themselves. Sheaves of poetry were discovered years later in the manner of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the French concentration camp of Vittel, for instance, the Yiddish poet Itzhak Katzenelson had hurriedly stuffed his poetry into three sealed bottles and thence in a tree-stump, before he was deported to Auschwitz.<sup>3</sup> This wealth of information also offers invaluable insight into how people coped with and interpreted the ever-deteriorating situation around them. Although Hitler's adversaries were confronted with starvation, torture and death, there was an overriding necessity to create, to record for posterity or to entertain. The fervour with which this activity was undertaken has been often interpreted as a metaphysical or spiritual act of resistance against the Nazis.

However, Lawrence L. Langer and Mirko Turma, a survivor and theatre critic, have misgivings about attributing this activity to the power of the human spirit in adverse circumstances alone.<sup>4</sup> Langer argues that the way in which artistic output has been traditionally viewed by Holocaust historians has been through 'rosy-tinted glasses': there has been a failure to confront the enormity and meaninglessness of the slaughter at a moment in history when, as the survivor Tadeusz Borowski wrote, human life and death were as insignificant as the life-cycle of ants.<sup>5</sup> Commentators have failed to address this 'black hole', as it were, and instead have utilized a euphemistic vocabulary focusing on the notion of 'heroism'. This is because, as Langer proposes, the Holocaust stands outside the imagination, nightmare and historical experience. A new frame of reference with a new

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<sup>1</sup> Yuri Suhl, ed., *They Fought Back - The Story of Jewish Resistance in Nazi Europe*, New York: Crown, 1967, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> Aaron Zeitlin & Igor Newerly, eds, *Janusz Korczak - Ghetto Diary*, New York: Holocaust Library, 1978. Anne Frank, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans, London: Viking, 1989.

<sup>3</sup> Aaron Kramer, ed., *A Century of Yiddish Poetry*, Ontario: Cornwall Books, 1989, p. 321.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence L. Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust. Collected Essays*, Oxford University Press, 1995. See chapter, 'Cultural Resistance to Genocide' (1987), pp. 51-63; Mirko Turma 'Memories of Theresienstadt', in *Performing Arts Journal* (Fall 1976), Vol. 1, No. 2, New York, 1976, pp.12-18.

<sup>5</sup> Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, trans. Barbara Vedder, London: Penguin, 1976, pp. 29-49.

vocabulary is required to communicate the 'incommunicable' and the very notion of the lack of meaning. Because there has been an inability to tackle this basic issue, a language has developed which is designed to 'console rather than confront'. One way in which this has manifested itself is in the desire to celebrate the survival of the human spirit against insurmountable odds. The plays, music and poetry of the persecuted counter the very notion of this 'meaninglessness' death. But to adhere to this interpretation, writes Langer, presents a bigoted view because, as evidence increasingly suggests, many of the theatrical enterprises hatched in the ghettos and especially the camps were created for Nazi leisure and propaganda purposes.

Generally, the reasons why theatrical and literary activity continued under adverse conditions can be divided into five groups. The distinctions between these divisions are not easy to establish as often several motives, sometimes contradictory, stood behind a single work of art. Furthermore, as Langer and Turma point out, lack of recorded documentation invites historians to 'fill the gaps' with their own subjective viewpoints which may, ultimately, prove detrimental to a fuller understanding.

#### *1.1.a Nazi Propaganda and Leisure*

From an early date, the Nazis realized that any rumours about their handling of the Jews had to be countered by an opposing image of Jewish life under National Socialism - if only for the sake of fooling the Red Cross, the Allies and some of the more vociferous opponents in the Church. The Nazis accomplished this by capitalizing on several chance events, the most famous being the Nazis' discovery of secret musical and theatrical undertakings in Terezin (Theresienstadt) concentration camp, which became a propaganda showcase for the Red Cross and Nazi media.

The idea of manipulating Jewish artists was not new. Glen W. Gadberry documented how a group of Jewish theatre practitioners in Berlin, who wished to continue their trade after the 1933 legislation, approached the Nazi authorities with a plan.<sup>1</sup> The *Kulturbund Deutscher Juden* was established in June 1933 - for all intents and purposes initiated by Doctor Kurt Singer, a retired director of the State Opera, Kurt Baumann and Rabbi Leo Baeck, but sanctioned by, and dependant upon, the Nazi authorities. The choice of play was subject to strict censorship.<sup>2</sup> Additional state-approved Kulturbünden opened in other German cities, including Hamburg and Cologne.

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<sup>1</sup> Gadberry, 'Nazi Germany's Jewish Theatre', pp. 15-32.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Patterson with material by Louise Stafford Charles, 'Theatre in the Concentration Camps of Nazi Germany', in Glen W. Gadberry, ed., *Theatre in the Third Reich*, pp. 157-165. The Berlin Theatre was initially leased in 1935 and then a second theatre was rented on the Kommandantenstrasse. A regular publication was produced, *Die Monatsblätter der Kulturbünden Deutscher Juden*.

According to Glen W. Gadberry, the Berlin Kulturbund, in its first ten months, produced 403 artistic events.<sup>1</sup> The first stage production was Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* (*Nathan the Wise*) which premièred on 1 October 1933. Significantly, this was a play about racial tolerance by a German writer of the Enlightenment. It gave comfort to Berlin's Jews by its positive ending which showed the Jews and their oppressors reconciled. The Kulturbund's second production in December 1933 was also race-related - *Othello*. The company seized the opportunity to speak to the people through historical analogies. Admittedly, the chink was small because the productions were only licensed for Jewish audiences. Theatre classics with themes of perennial racism offered succour to the spectators: what they were experiencing now was nothing new. To coincide with the 1936 Olympic games *Antigone* was staged. The Jewish critics immediately saw Hitler in Creon and themselves in Antigone.<sup>2</sup> Like the heroine, they were denied the right to practice their religious customs by a seemingly inhuman conqueror.<sup>3</sup> Most Kulturbünden were closed after Kristallnacht,<sup>4</sup> with the Berlin branch closing on 11 September 1941.<sup>5</sup>

Kurt Baumann met with other Kulturbund survivors in 1992 at Berlin's Akademie der Künste where the seasonal argument about whether their theatre was an act of resistance or a tool of the Nazi propaganda machine re-surfaced. Baumann himself claimed that after 1936 the continued existence of the Bund 'was based ever more on the fact that the Nazis were using us as counter-propaganda against the growing pressure of foreign public opinion'.<sup>6</sup> The sense of social continuity that the theatre promoted encouraged the Jews to believe that they possessed a degree of control over their destiny. This false sense of security was exactly what the Nazis had intended.

The next phase of the propaganda programme to emerge was the musical enterprizes of Terezin, a former army garrison in Czechoslovakia. This 'model' camp, established in

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<sup>1</sup> Gadberry, 'Nazi Germany's Jewish Theatre', p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> However, Gadberry reports that *Antigone* secured the lowest audience figure. In the increasingly oppressive atmosphere, Berlin's Jews sought escapism. As the situation worsened, the mirror being held up to nature was too close. Likewise Chaim A. Kaplan on 7 January 1942 records that although there were several theatres in the Warsaw ghetto, 'their repertoire is the vulgar, common variety of Shund theatre on the lowest level imaginable. Heaven forbid that they should touch even lightly on the realities of life.' (*The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, p. 29.)

<sup>4</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, pp. 68-9: On 9-10 November 1938, thousands of Jewish homes, shops and synagogues were 'spontaneously' destroyed and 30,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps while a further 8,000 Jews were driven out of Berlin.

<sup>5</sup> Gadberry, 'Nazi Germany's Jewish Theatre', p. 27: After Kristallnacht, Goebbels had closed all the Kulturbünden with the exception of the Berlin branch. Miraculously, it continued well into the start of the war but again concentrated on escapist entertainment with happy endings such as the sentimental Spanish comedy *Señor Alan Out of Purgatory*.

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Rovit, 'Collaboration or Survival 1933-38. Reassessing the Role of the Jüdischer Kulturbund', in Gadberry, *Theatre in the Third Reich*, pp. 141-56; p. 142.

November 1941, was under the direct supervision of Adolf Eichmann. At first deportees were not allowed to take their musical instruments into the camp. Some succeeded in smuggling them in, one taking apart his cello and re-building it again once inside the fortress. Initially, entertainments were banned but as clandestine soirées were discovered, the camp authorities in tandem with Berlin, decided that Terezin could continue where the Kulturbünden left off. Terezin, therefore, became a singular camp, not only in its function as a propaganda showcase, but because materials and privileges were made available to the artists, such as better accommodation and extra rations. However, despite these 'privileges' the death rate was comparable to other camps, reaching a peak in 1942 of 15,891, just over half the total interned population for that year. To facilitate the growth of the 'model camp', a number of artists were now 'diverted' there from all over Europe, whilst the other 'un-artistic' and sick prisoners were shipped off to Auschwitz in preparation for an official visit of the International Red Cross on 22 June 1944. An elaborate film-set of a 'town' was constructed where visitors could view Jews in their ateliers, or sip coffee at a Jewish recital, go to the opera or gaze at flowers in newly constructed gardens. Terezin was billed to the world as the Jewish utopia. Kurt Gerron, a former Berlin cabaret star who had appeared as Marlene Dietrich's employer in the film, *Der Blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*), agreed or was coerced into shooting a film for the Nazis, portraying Terezin as an idyllic Jewish paradise. His *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt* (*The Führer Donates a Town to the Jews*, 1944) portrays laughing children at football matches, Jews studying in the library or growing flowers on their allotments. One of the film's highlights is a diving display in Terezin's swimming pool. Needless to say, Terezin had no allotments, flower gardens or swimming pools. Much of the footage was shot outside the camp. More importantly, there is a sequence showing Jews in a shower room after a football game. Whether this was a calculated image intended to counter rumours of 'other' showers remains debatable. The script had originated in Berlin where it was finally edited. Gerron, his family and his crew, meanwhile, had been put on a train for Auschwitz a few days after the filming had been completed. Nearly all perished. The film was never used.

Nazi illusion extended elsewhere as in the orchestras established by camp authorities. One of the more well-documented examples was the women's orchestra in Auschwitz led by Alma Rosé, niece of Gustav Mahler. Initially assembled for entertainment purposes, the orchestra had another function. Positioned by the incoming railroad track, the orchestra was intended to lull the new arrivals into a false sense of security in much the same manner as the showerheads in the gas chambers or the counterfeit country railway station façade at

Treblinka.<sup>1</sup> Olga Lengyel describes how the orchestra in Auschwitz was once instructed to play swing tunes to welcome the new arrivals. Selections were often carried out, 'to the tune of languorous tangos, jazz numbers and popular ballads'.<sup>2</sup>

In the main, though, artists were requisitioned by the staff for their own entertainment. Before being deported to Terezin, Kurt Gerron was in the Dutch transit camp of Westerbork. Alvin Goldfarb records how he was 'asked' by the authorities to perform several one-man shows, the stage floor ironically having been constructed from the mahogany doors of a local synagogue. Between July 1943 and June 1944 six revues with larger casts were staged. Surviving photographs indicate that a considerable amount of money had been lavished on the costumes and set by the cabaret's patron, SS Kommandant Konrad Gemmeker, who boasted of having 'the best cabaret in Holland'.<sup>3</sup>

In 1944 many families from Terezin were deported to Auschwitz, not to the gas chambers of Birkenau but to newly constructed barracks known as the Terezin family camp. Shielded from the hellish panorama of Birkenau, the new deportees were allowed to keep their hair and belongings. This camp was intended to fulfil two purposes. First, to assuage the fears of those remaining in Terezin, the new arrivals were instructed to write postcards back to their friends to say that all was well. Second, the Red Cross had asked for access to Auschwitz. The Terezin family camp, as 'a slice of life in Auschwitz', was being prepared for exposure to the outside world.<sup>4</sup> Arnost Lustwig, a writer from Prague, recorded that in the family camp there were 'kindergartens, nursery schools, theatrical performances and gymnastic displays'.<sup>5</sup> A children's opera *Schneewittchen* based on the Snow White story was performed to the accompaniment of a solo harmonica for the entertainment of the guards and kapos.<sup>6</sup> The Red Cross visit never materialized. The camp was of no further use. It was liquidated at the end of 1944.

Mirko Turma, imprisoned in Terezin, argues that most of what is celebrated today as testimonials to the triumph of the human spirit was, in fact, the result of a Nazi impetus that the prisoners had no control over: 'The claim to clandestineness and heroism is a well-

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<sup>1</sup> Gitta Sereny, *Into That Darkness*, p. 200: In December 1941, Franz Stangl, the Kommandant of Treblinka ordered the construction of a false railway station with a clock, ticket windows, timetables and arrows indicating connections.

<sup>2</sup> Lengyel, *Five Chimneys*, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Patterson/Louise Stafford Charles, 'Theatre in the Concentration Camps of Nazi Germany', pp. 161-2.

<sup>4</sup> 'The Terezin Family Camp in Auschwitz', in Karas, *Music in Terezin*, New York: Beaufort Books, 1985, pp. 157-61.

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence L. Langer, *Art From The Ashes - A Holocaust Anthology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 257-362.

<sup>6</sup> Karas, 'The Terezin Family Camp in Auschwitz', p. 157.

sounding myth.<sup>1</sup> The image of groups meeting secretly to create censorious satire and read ethereal poetry about spiritual transfiguration is not without its basis but it was not as substantial as early historians of Holocaust art believed. In addition, being forced to perform before the guards and portray a duplicitous existence to Red Cross officials actually increased the suffering of many. The dancer, Helen Lewis, recorded how to perform before the guards in Theresienstadt and Auschwitz was something that disturbed and troubled her conscience.<sup>2</sup>

### *1.1.b Spiritual and Cultural Resistance.*

For the majority, the only way to resist was through culture. By that I mean not only preserving the Jewish cultural inheritance that the Nazis wanted to eradicate but resisting the Nazi devastation in a metaphysical manner.

Lawrence L. Langer believes that the decision to follow a course of spiritual resistance was tantamount to evasion and, therefore, neither realistic nor morally legitimate. He illustrates this with the example of Doctor Korczak's<sup>3</sup> decision to stage a play which depicted a child's victory over death in the weeks before his orphanage was deported to Treblinka.<sup>4</sup> The play, about a dying Hindu boy whose last wish is to meet his king (an allusion to God), renews religious faith. Langer argues that the play glosses over the pain of death rather than confront the reality of the suffering that lay ahead for the children. By channelling their energies into such 'futile' pastimes, he believes that the Jews were, in effect, merely being ostrich-like in the face of reality.<sup>5</sup>

Although there were many cases of armed resistance, as Yuri Suhl has documented, from the bombing of crematoria in Treblinka and Auschwitz to partisan activity, Jewish armed resistance was not a viable option for the majority.<sup>6</sup> Even Abba Kovner, a former Brichah<sup>7</sup> member who had led a Partisan group in the forests outside Vilna, said years later that if he had known then what he knows now about the Nazis, he would not have opted for

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<sup>1</sup> Turma, 'Memories of Theresienstadt', p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Helen Lewis, *A Time to Speak*, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> Dr Janusz Korczak was a Polish paediatrician in charge of the Warsaw ghetto orphanage. His book, *How to Love a Child* (1920/1) secured him international fame. He was the director of the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw as well as a board member of the Christian one until the Nazis made him resign from the latter and move his own orphanage into the ghetto. He accompanied the children into the gas chambers, even though he had been offered a stay of execution by the Nazis if he promised to make the deportation run smoothly.

<sup>4</sup> Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust*, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-6.

<sup>6</sup> Suhl, *They Fought Back*. See also Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi Occupied Eastern Europe*, London: Elek, 1974.

<sup>7</sup> The Brichah was an Israeli underground organization charged with smuggling Jews into Palestine from Europe after the war against British mandate emigration quotas.

armed resistance. He sensed even back then that his actions were mere gestures.<sup>1</sup>

Today, research into 'spiritual resistance' is complicated by the recognition that much art was, in fact, the product of the Nazi propaganda machine. The series of operas mounted in Terezin occupy this grey area for a historian. How much they were the brainchild of the Nazis and how much they were an expression of resistance remains obscure. They were probably a combination of both. However, it is possible to identify a number of theatrical and musical events in Terezin, other camps and ghettos that could be described as an act of genuine spiritual resistance.

Mirko Turma, a Czech Jew, spent three and a half years in Terezin. He describes how, after his arrival, he and his compatriots were overwhelmed by an almost religious need to perform. It was 1942 and he recalls how they had just been lined up to witness the first hangings in Terezin:

Sitting on straw and half insane with pain and fear, helplessness and hate, we started to mumble poems we knew from memory. There was nothing else in that poorly lit stable but art, i.e., the Pascalian key to immortality.<sup>2</sup>

Art for Turma, therefore, was a kind of survival. Many artists wrote that they felt compelled to create or perform but could not articulate the reason why. Years later in Israel, Abraham Sutzkever, a poet in Vilna Ghetto, said of the art he produced :

It is a spirit that enters you and it is stronger than all the bullets... There was a madman in Vilna, he walked into a synagogue and saw a painter standing on top of a ladder and painting the ceiling. So he said to him, 'hold onto the brush because I'm taking away the ladder.' That's how I was: I held onto the brush and held myself, did not fall down. That was the remarkable thing.<sup>3</sup>

For Turma and Sutzkever, art was their lifeline and their *raison d'être*.

Cultural resistance served to preserve a sense of self when the Nazi will was to destroy identity itself. As Bruno Bettelheim wrote, the Nazis sought to reduce human beings to animals so that it was easier to lead them to the slaughter.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Ernest Levy, a cantor in Glasgow, describes how a secret 'orchestra' was established in his barracks in Wüstergiesdorf labour camp in 1944 under the direction of Georges, a French doctor, who

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<sup>1</sup> David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: Harvard University Press, 1984, pp. 4-5. Kovner speaking in New York in 1979.

<sup>2</sup> Turma, 'Memories of Theresienstadt', p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Abraham Sutzkever, *Abraham Sutzkever, Selected Poetry and Prose*, trans. Barbara & Benjamin Harshav, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, chapters 3 and 4.

had been an amateur cellist. Every Sunday evening was devoted to a cultural gathering with stories, poetry and music. While Georges pretended to play the cello, miming the instrument and bow with two sticks, Levy, who had trained as a singer since boyhood, would imitate the sound of a cello. Their favourite tune was the solo horn movement from Tchaichovsky's *Fifth Symphony*. Using a poster that Levy had ripped down while he was on a building Kommando in the neighbouring village of Charlottenbrün - a poster which ironically blamed the Jews for starting the war - he would roll it up into a paper tube and, manipulating his voice, would produce the sound of a trumpet. 'A group of wonderfully talented men from Budapest would form a kind of orchestral backing,' Levy notes. But it was Georges who was the ringleader:

He refused to let our spirits go down. He was constantly singing even at work, trying to keep our spirits up - trying to get us to hold onto our humanity. It was that which separated the man from the beast.<sup>1</sup>

Terezin had no shortage of musical enterprizes: a string orchestra, choral groups and a jazz band. It was here that propaganda met genuine creativity. It was primarily Rafael Schächter who was behind much of the musical activity. When he arrived in 1941, he started by organizing folk-singing sessions. As more artists arrived the programme became more varied. With the arrival of the pianist Gideon Klein the group moved onto choral work. Then a legless Bechstein piano was discovered and the now-famous series of operas began, the first being Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* which premièred on 28 November 1942. Apparently Schächter simultaneously conducted the choir and played the piano which had been tuned as far as possible. Extracts from *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Die Fledermaus* and *The Magic Flute* followed.<sup>2</sup> However, as the situation became more grim and rumours about the concentration camps filtered through, the choice of programme became more poignant, the most documented example being Schächter's production of Verdi's *Requiem*. Mirko Turma, who was in the audience, recalls :

There is no adequate description of a moment in music when the 'Dies Irae' and the 'Sanctus' were sung by a chorus, three-quarters of which knew they'd be shipped in cattle wagons to Auschwitz the following day. This concert of the requiem I feel - more than all the artificial games of heroism that were more fictitious than true - was the ultimate outcry and triumph of the human spirit and the final defiance of Nazism: a metaphysical defiance.<sup>3</sup>

The diarist, Oscar Rosenfeld, described a House of Culture that existed within the Lodz

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Ernest Levy, November 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Karas, *Music in Terezin*, pp. 27-36.

<sup>3</sup> Turma, 'Memories of Theresienstadt', p. 16.

ghetto with a capacity for an audience of 400. Between May and June 1942 a series of Beethoven concerts were produced including Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. Of the third movement where 'Death' raps thunderously on the door, Rosenfeld wrote:

The deliverance motif thundered majestically throughout the hall and conductor Ryder seemed to be carried away by this finale. In that instant, future salvation could almost be experienced.<sup>1</sup>

Again, the immediate environment shaped the practical possibilities and potential audience reception. People on the verge of collapse in a death camp had had their resistance worn away to the point where they considered survival meaningless. Charlotte Delbo, a French Resistance worker, incarcerated in Ravensbrück and then Auschwitz, had been a dramaturg with Louis Jouvet's Parisian company before the war. Whilst on tour in South America in 1941, she read in a Buenos Aires paper that a friend of hers had been executed in Paris for acts of resistance. Delbo decided to return immediately and do what she could, together with her husband who was also in the Resistance. In prison and then the camps, Delbo recited stories and scraps of plays to sustain people's spirits. But in Birkenau, on the edge of starvation, mental and physical exhaustion, her imagination died:

In the camp one could never pretend, never take refuge in the imagination. I remember Yvonne Picart, one morning when we were carrying bricks from the wrecker's yard. Two bricks at a time, from one pile to another. We were walking side by side [...] Those bricks were heavy, and they grew heavier as the day wore on. Our hands were blue from the cold, our lips cracked. Yvonne said to me: 'Why can't I imagine I'm on the Boulevard Saint-Michel, walking to lectures with an armful of books?' And she propped the two bricks under her arm, holding them as students do books. 'It's impossible.' One can't imagine either being somebody else or being somewhere else.

I tried to imagine I was elsewhere. I tried to see myself as someone else, as an actor being another. But no.

In Auschwitz, reality was so overwhelming, the suffering, the exhaustion, the cold so extreme, that we had no energy left for pretence.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. Lapidés and A. Adelson, eds, *The Lodz Ghetto. Inside a Community Under Siege*, New York: Viking Press, 1979, pp. 294-5.

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Delbo, *La Mémoire et les Jours*, Paris: Berg International 1985, p. 12: "Au camp, on ne pouvait jamais faire semblant, jamais se réfugier dans l'imaginaire. Je me rappelle Yvonne Picart, un matin que nous portions des briques, sur un chantier de démolition. Porter deux briques à la fois, d'un tas à l'autre. Nous marchions à côte à côte... Lourdes, les briques s'alourdissaient à mesure qu'avançait le jour. Nos mains étaient bleues de froid, nos lèvres fendues par les gerçures. Yvonne me dit: 'Pourquoi ne puis-je m'imaginer que je suis boulevard Saint-Michel, que je me rends à mon cours, mes livres sur le bras?' et elle met ses deux briques sur son avant-bras, comme les étudiants portent leurs livres. 'C'est impossible. On ne peut s'imaginer, ni être autre, ni être ailleurs.'

Moi aussi, j'ai essayé souvent de m'imaginer que j'étais ailleurs. J'ai essayé de me voir autrement, comme lorsqu'on est transporté hors de soi, au théâtre, par exemple. Non.

A Auschwitz, la réalité était si écrasante, la souffrance, la fatigue, le froid si extrêmes, que nous n'avions aucune énergie de reste pour cet effort de dédoublement."

### 1.1.c Political Theatre

There were instances of theatrical creativity - even in the death camps - that remained unknown to the authorities. The area of political theatre has been academically well-mined, notably by Alvin Goldfarb. 'Political theatre' can be subdivided into three groups: that which lampooned the Nazi authorities, that which satirized internal divisions within the Jewish community and that which incited resistance.

Theatre in Terezin had begun as impromptu performances but as more artists arrived, the theatre programme became more complex, sophisticated and varied. Like the members of the Berlin Kulturbund, many utilized the Nazis' willingness to allow art for propaganda purposes in order to subvert the situation. For example, *The Emperor of Atlantis, Or Death Abdicates*, an opera by Peter Klein and Victor Ullmann about the human spirit's ability to transfigure death was, as Joza Karas argues, a subtle allegory of Hitler's rise and Jewish metaphysical endurance. The most explicit section was a minor key variation of the German national anthem, *Deutschland über Alles*, which accompanied the character of 'Death'.<sup>1</sup>

Probably the best example of satirical allegory was Karel Schwenk's *The Last Cyclist* which ridiculed Hitler's passion for blaming all of Germany's ills on the Jews.<sup>2</sup> In the story all cyclists and those who cannot prove that their ancestors have been pedestrians for the past six generations are deported to an island run by lunatic rulers. Schwenk's aim, like that of Chaplin in *The Great Dictator*, was to satirize Hitler's racial policies and express the hope that normality might one day return. However, rumours circulated as to the censorious nature of Schwenk's play. When representatives from the Council of Elders saw the open dress rehearsal they forbade any further presentations for fear of antagonizing the Nazis.<sup>3</sup> Explicit satire was nearly impossible under the watchful eye of the guards and so many writers had to be content with making veiled references.

As artists could not openly satirize the Nazis, argues Roy Kift, many turned their hatred inwards on their fellow Jews.<sup>4</sup> Traditionally, the 'collective' is paramount in Jewish life. Collaborators were vilified. Kaplan called them 'the destroyers from our own midst' because their complicity with the enemy often led to the death of many prisoners.<sup>5</sup> The 'crime' of collaboration was established by the teachings of the biblical leader, Maimonides, who wrote:

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<sup>1</sup> Karas, *Music in Terezin*, p. 35. The opera was written at a late date in 1944 and only reached the latter stages of rehearsal as many of the performers were deported.

<sup>2</sup> Alvin Goldfarb, 'Theatrical Activities in Nazi Concentration Camps', in *Performing Arts Journal* (Fall 1976), Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Karas, *Music in Terezin*, p.145.

<sup>4</sup> Roy Kift, 'Comedy in the Holocaust. Reality and Illusion in the Theresienstadt Cabaret', paper given at the Shoah and Performance Conference, Glasgow, 1995, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, p. 63 (4 November 1939).

If pagans should tell them [the Jews], 'Give us one of yours and we shall kill him, otherwise we shall kill all of you', they all should be killed and not a single Jewish soul should be delivered.<sup>1</sup>

In Terezin, the painter Bedrick Fritta attacked those who collaborated.<sup>2</sup> An ink and wash entitled *Lodging in the Attic* (1943-4) portrays the blockwarden (a collaborator) as a fat man who gorges himself with food hidden in his suitcase while his companions starve. In *Film and Reality*, Fritta attacks Kurt Geron who collaborated by making his film *The Führer Donates a Town to the Jews*. Fritta's work shows the film set of theatrical flats painted with false shop fronts.<sup>3</sup> But behind the façades, the spectator sees the emaciated figures of reality. However, the audience for such work was minimal. As with Schwenk's *The Last Cyclist*, Fritta's work was never shown to the general public. If discovered, such paintings carried a high price, namely deportation to Auschwitz.

In theatre, too, collaborators were attacked. Jacob Gens, the leader of the Jews of Vilna, particularly was the subject of abuse in various satirical skits. After the Judenrat was dissolved by the Nazis in 1942, Gens ran the ghetto in collaboration with the Germans. Contravening the Maimonides principle, he devised a plan to ensure maximum survival of the fittest: he agreed to exterminate a number of his own people - the old and very young - in order that a healthy remnant could be saved to await liberation at the hands of the Red Army. The moral conundrum surrounding his decision has plagued historians to the present day. In Vilna, Gens was regarded as a traitor rather than a saviour. The history club of the Youth Organization in Vilna, for instance, carried out a mock trial drama of the story of Josephus Flavius, the Jew accused of being a Roman collaborator. Contemporaries had no difficulty in seeing the parallels.<sup>4</sup>

In the Lodz ghetto, the even more ambivalent collaborator, Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, was the subject of numerous satirical sketches. Like Gens, Rumkowski also negotiated with the Germans, rounding up the very young, old and sick in order to save the healthy from the camps. Mendl Grossman took a photo of Yankev Herszkowitz, a former tailor, performing with his troupe to a crowd on the street. A refrain from one of his songs enjoined the audience to chime in with, 'The devil take Rumkowski away!'<sup>5</sup>

Satire did not necessarily incite direct action but it did provide an emotional outlet.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah Trunk, *Judenräte and Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972, p. xxxi

<sup>2</sup> Ziva Amishai-Maisels, 'Complexities of Witnessing', in *After Auschwitz: Responses to the Holocaust in Contemporary Art*, Monica Bohm-Duchen, ed., London: Lund Humphries Publishers, 1995, pp. 25-48.

<sup>3</sup> Karas, *Music in Terezin*, pp. 154-6.

<sup>4</sup> Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, p. 205.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Laughter helped bring the Jews together by the sharing of common experience by a common language and vocabulary. Thus the pain was lessened and the community consolidated as a collective in the face of adversity. However, a third strand of political theatre did exist to provoke direct and open resistance. Goldfarb discovered that in Buchenwald, Dachau, Westerbork, Terezin and Auschwitz, underground cabaret groups regularly toured the barracks with sketches satirizing camp life, the Kommandant and the guards.<sup>1</sup> These skits involved song and poetry as well as dramatic dialogue. Gatherings were usually unknown to the camp personnel and advertised by surreptitious word of mouth. Goldfarb reports how in Buna-Monowitz (Auschwitz III) a group of Jewish cultural leaders organized clandestine entertainments in the barracks after dark. The company included the actor Moishe Potashinski - a former member of the Yiddish Theatre Troupe in Vilna who organized singing and poetry sessions. One often repeated poem was Mordechai Gebirtig's *Our Town is Burning*, commemorating the 1936 pogrom in the Polish town of Przytyk:<sup>2</sup>

Fire, brother, fire!  
 It all turns to you  
 If you love your town  
 Take pails, put out the fire  
 Quash it with your own blood too  
 Show what you can do  
 Do not look and stand  
 With folded hand  
 Brothers, don't stand around, put out the fire  
 Our town is in flames.<sup>3</sup>

Gebirtig called for the end to praying and a beginning to physical confrontation. Words such as his were not just wishful thinking. On 7 October 1944, the Birkenau *Sonderkommando*<sup>4</sup> blew up crematorium IV with smuggled explosives.<sup>5</sup>

But perhaps the most famous example of art spurring direct action was a poem by the Yiddish poet Hirsch Glik written in 1943 in Vilna ghetto. Inspired by news of the Warsaw ghetto uprising he wrote a poem to be set to music. The first and last verses read:

Never say that you have reached the very end,  
 Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend;  
 And the hour for which we've yearned will yet arrive,  
 And our marching step will thunder: 'We survive!'

Not lead, but blood inscribed this mighty song we sing,

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<sup>1</sup> Alvin Goldfarb, 'Theatrical Activities in Concentration Camps', p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, p. 106.

<sup>4</sup> The squad of prisoners responsible for taking the bodies from the gas chambers to the crematoria.

<sup>5</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, pp. 743-50.

It's not a carolling of birds upon the wing  
 But a people midst the crashing fires of hell  
 Sang this song with guns in hands, until it fell.<sup>1</sup>

As Martin Gilbert summarizes, this now famous song 'spread like wildfire' in the ghettos and camps and among the Jewish partisans, 'becoming the song of hope, and battle hymn of oppressed Jewry. The song was to inspire tens of thousands of Jews to fight if they could, and if they could not fight, to survive.'<sup>2</sup>

### *1.1.d The Necessity to Bear Witness*

During his last days in the Riga ghetto, the Jewish historian Solomon Dubnow is reported to have told every Jew he met: 'Write it down. Record it!'<sup>3</sup> When artists chose to create for themselves, it was mainly because of an overwhelming need to bear witness or record evidence which could then be smuggled out to alert the world. As one observer wrote in the Lodz ghetto in July 1944:

I go on dreaming, dreaming about survival and about getting fame in order to 'tell' the world, to 'tell and protest'.<sup>4</sup>

For many, including Alexander Donat, witnessing gave 'the strength to endure anything' and a reason to live.<sup>5</sup> Poetry, writings, photographs, even artists themselves were carried out of the ghettos.<sup>6</sup> The sheer number of diaries and fragments of notes written by the inhabitants of the Lodz ghetto reproduced in A. Adelson and R. Lapidés's *The Lodz Ghetto* testify to an overwhelming need to record events even if such an undertaking threatened survival. For example, Mendel Grossman and Henryk Ross took secret photos of the first deportations from Lodz with a Leica camera hidden in a briefcase.<sup>7</sup> Roman Vishniac, returning to Europe, disguised himself as a Nazi in order to photograph what was happening: 'I was living in Germany in the thirties, and I knew that Hitler had made it his mission to exterminate all Jews, especially the children and the women who could bear children in the future.'<sup>8</sup>

This documentary impulse and its artistic equivalent, naturalism, overrode any creative or interpretative system. Ziva Amishai-Maisels, studying the graphic art produced in

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 568-9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 568.

<sup>3</sup> Israel Gutman, 'Simon Dubnow', in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* pp. 408-9.

<sup>4</sup> Lapidés & Adelson, *The Lodz Ghetto*, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Des Pres, *The Survivor*, p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> Harshav, *Abraham Sutzkever*, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Lapidés & Adelson, *The Lodz Ghetto*, pp. 462-3.

<sup>8</sup> *The Guardian* (21 January 1990). For a selection of his photographs, see Roman Vishniac, *A Vanished World*, foreword by Elie Wiesel, New York: Allen Lane, 1983.

the ghettos and the camps, arrived at a similar conclusion.

Most artists, whatever their previous style had been, opted for naturalistic descriptions of camp life.<sup>1</sup>

Alfred Kantor's works depicting his time in Terezin have survived intact unlike his originals from Auschwitz where he had to sketch a scene rapidly in order to imprint it on his memory and then destroy the original before he was caught.<sup>2</sup> Ten weeks after liberation in July 1945, when he was recovering in a displaced persons' camp in Deggendorf, Bavaria, he requested materials to recreate the destroyed works from memory. There is no discernible difference in style between the originals from Terezin and his recreations of Auschwitz made in Deggendorf. The majority of graphic art produced in the ghettos and camps is naturalistic and the bulk of extant writings are documentary.

However, as James E. Young points out, witnessing was a biblical commandment. The Talmud instructs that an unjust event must by law be reported to inform others.<sup>3</sup> Because witnessing comes from a biblical imperative it occupies a grey area somewhere between documentation and religious rite. For example, on 16 January 1940, Chaim A. Kaplan wrote, 'I am fulfilling a national obligation, a historic obligation that I am not free to relinquish.'<sup>4</sup> His colleague, Emanuel Ringelblum also kept a diary in the Warsaw ghetto at the same time.<sup>5</sup> Chaim A. Kaplan was a Hebrew teacher and Emanuel Ringelblum a historian who had helped set up the historical section of the Yiddish Scientific Institute in Vilna (YIVO). Whereas Kaplan wrote from an orthodox point of view and interpreted events in a biblical manner, Ringelblum's diary reads as a documentary recording of daily events from a secular perspective.

Many wrote so that others might interpret what they themselves could not. Both Ringelblum and Kaplan suggest that their diaries are no more than casual 'jottings' for a future historian to make use of.<sup>6</sup> There is the impression that many of these writers simply could not interpret what was happening to their communities. 'It is beyond my pen to describe the destruction and the ruin', recorded Kaplan on 12 September 1939.<sup>7</sup> Six weeks

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<sup>1</sup> Amishai-Maisels, 'The Complexities of Witnessing', p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Kantor, *The Book of Alfred Kantor. An Artist's Journal of the Holocaust*, prefaced by John Wykert, London: Piatkus, 1971.

<sup>3</sup> James E. Young, *Writing and Re-writing the Holocaust. Narratives and Consequences of Interpretation*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> *The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, p. 103.

<sup>5</sup> Emanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, trans. Jacob Sloan, New York: Schocken Books, 1974.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, *The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, p. xxvii.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

later he wrote, 'There aren't enough words to describe the confusion in our minds.'<sup>1</sup> Janusz Korczak's notes become increasingly schizophrenic, moving rapidly from one subject to another. By the end, syntax and structure seem to have been totally abandoned.

Many artists' work changed after liberation. As the enormity of the Holocaust became apparent, survivors began to *interpret* what they had experienced. In the last few months of Zoran Musik's incarceration in Dachau, he made a series of naturalistic sketches of dead bodies. Immediately after liberation he reworked several of them making them more expressionistic.<sup>2</sup> There is a significant difference between survivor art and that created *in situ* which cannot be overstressed. The former is more self-conscious, aware of the full picture and hence interpretative. When undergoing trauma, the artist experiences and records but does not necessarily have the strength, time or ability to reflect. Only afterwards, when their piece of the jigsaw puzzle has been supplemented by other testimonies, can the individual reflect upon and interpret what has happened. Many survivors, in the initial postwar years remained silent about their experiences. Some took nearly fifty years to talk, reflect and interpret. In 1993, for instance, the British Library produced a talking book of survivors' testaments. For many, this was the first time they had spoken of their experiences since liberation.<sup>3</sup>

### *1.1.e To Renew Religious Faith*

In the heart of the traditional orthodox community of the Lodz Ghetto, Simcha Bunim Shayevitsh wrote an epic poem *Lekh Lekho (Go Forth)*.<sup>4</sup> Completed on 23 February 1942, on the eve of deportation, the poem is addressed to the author's child, Blimele. Shayevitsh attempts to explain why they must leave the ghetto and what lays ahead. He begins:

My child, the world is always the same,  
It's what a famous sage once said,  
And I once told you  
The story of the Cantonists...<sup>5</sup>

For Shayevitsh history is cyclical, his reference to the Cantonists - young Jewish men forced into the Russian army under Nicholas I - was intended to parallel the plight of his contemporaries. Shayevitsh sees Jewish history as a catalogue of persecution. For him, the present suffering and death, like that experienced by the martyrs of the past, will not be

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 56 (25 October 1939).

<sup>2</sup> Amishai-Maishels, *Art Confronts the Holocaust*, in *After Auschwitz: Responses to the Holocaust in Contemporary Art*, Monica Bohm-Duchen, ed., London: Lund Humphries Publishers, 1995, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> *Voices of the Holocaust*, London: The British Library, 1993.

<sup>4</sup> Lapidés & Adelson, *The Lodz Ghetto*, pp. 216-30.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

without meaning. Shayevitsh ends the poem:

And though beneath our steps lies death,  
Over our heads is the divine presence of God.  
So child, go forth with a new sacrifice of self  
And with the old 'Ekhod,' the oneness of God  
Shema Yisrael (*Hear O Israel*) The Lord is One.

Similarly, recorded in both Abraham Lewin's diary and in *Yediot* (a publication of the underground Dror Movement in the Warsaw ghetto), is the story of Shlomo Zhelokhovski, a Hasid who was among a group of Jews sentenced to death.<sup>1</sup> As they dug their own graves, Zhelokovski rallied everyone's spirits by reminding them that they were highly honoured to die as martyrs. Both Lewin and *Yediot* noted that he sung out, praising God until the moment he was shot.

Jewish orthodox history is both mythic and apocalyptic. Jewish self-identity is collective. The Jews are the 'Chosen People' who have been entrusted with a divine purpose. They chose to receive the law (the Covenant), but having lusted after idols and violated the agreement, they were exiled and in part destroyed. The history of the Jews, therefore, is the story of their redemption: God will return after a time to sit in judgement but only during a generation either entirely guilty or entirely innocent.<sup>2</sup> He will then lead his people to the Holy Land as prophesized in the book of *Ezekiel*:

I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.<sup>3</sup>

Naturally the Messiah would prefer to return to find his people faithful and virtuous. The Jews can achieve this spiritual state of virtue only if God administers punishment during episodes of transgression. The continued suffering through the centuries, therefore, resulted from the Jews' own sporadic disobedience to God. He merely inflicted pain so that 'His children' might again tread the paths of righteousness. Figures of destruction such as Nebuchadnezza, the Amalekites and Nicholas I were regarded as agents of divine will. To resist divine punishment was to resist God Himself. On the other hand, to die in God's name was martyrdom (*Kiddush Hashem*) and the purest expression of obedience to God. In the mind of the believing Jew, love and chastisement are inseparable. Proof of God's existence comes in the form of punishment, and excessive violence signals that the Messiah is at hand.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Abraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears - A Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto*, Anthony Polonsky, ed., trans. Christopher Hutton, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> 10th Chapter of the Tractate Sanhedrin.

<sup>3</sup> The Bible, Ezekiel, Chapter 11, verse 13.16.

<sup>4</sup> Shaul Esh and G. Wigoder, eds, *Young Moshe's Diary - The Spiritual Torment of a Jewish Boy in Nazi*

Moments of extreme persecution in Jewish history have created Messianic fervour and belief in false Messiahs such as Christ and the Shabbati Zevi.<sup>1</sup> Abraham Lewin interpreted the sufferings experienced in the Warsaw ghetto as the 'birth-pangs of the Messiah' and Chaim A. Kaplan noted on 17 November 1939 that Warsaw was on the brink of religious upheaval: 'The soil is ready even for religious Messianism.'<sup>2</sup> Orthodox Jews believed that their nation had sinned by losing their faith in God's promise to return. Their failure to endure had triggered divine retribution. The more orthodox believed that the Jews themselves had triggered the catastrophe as, tired of waiting for God to lead them to the Holy Land, some Jews had invented their own earthly, utopian paradises: they had either assimilated and married outside the faith or converted to Bolshevism or Zionism.

Diarists such as Abraham Lewin, immediately incorporated the latest violence into the biblical framework, referring to the Nazis as the 'Old-new Amalekites'.<sup>3</sup> And on at least three separate occasions, the underground press in the Warsaw ghetto ran articles on the ghettos of the past: Poalei Zion's *Liberation* in December 1940; *Call of Youth* in January 1941; and *Hashomer Hatsair's* 'El Al' in April 1941. All three assured their readers that the Jews had been through all this before.<sup>4</sup>

Violence had always been a feature of Jewish life and the Nazi persecution merely brought a sense of *déjà-vu*. The Jews immediately began to deconstruct what was happening to them and discovered that this brand of persecution was all too familiar. Nazi *Aktionen* (anti-Jewish actions) were simply interpreted as larger and better organized pogroms.<sup>5</sup> This response was further encouraged by the Nazis' self-conscious modelling of their *Aktionen* on all too recognizable historic modes of persecution. As N. Lande wrote, 'War and theatre send messages calculated to make impressions on their respective audiences.'<sup>6</sup> The desecration of synagogues, the public humiliation of rabbis, the establishment of labour camps as in World War One and the ghettos harking back to medieval times were all designed to play on the Jewish sense of historical recurrence.<sup>7</sup> The Germans took advantage of

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*Europe*, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1971, quoted in Edward Alexander, *The Resonance of Dust: Essays on Holocaust Literature and Jewish Fate*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979, pp. 31-72. Between 1942 and 1943, Moshe Finkler, a sixteen-year old Dutch boy, kept a diary whilst hiding in Brussels with his parents and six siblings. His testimony illustrates the level of religious fervour during Nazi persecution. As an ardent anti-Zionist, he saw his family's present suffering as the birth pangs of the Messiah. In his diary, he called for the Allies to lose the war and his own sufferings to be intensified so that the arrival of the Messiah would be brought nearer to hand.

<sup>1</sup> The false Messiah in the seventeenth century who converted to Islam.

<sup>2</sup> *The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> Lewin, *A Cup of Tears*, p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, p. 203.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> N. Lande, *World War Two as Theatre*, Trinity College, Dublin, Ph.D thesis, 1992, p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> Of course, there was also a more sadistic reason behind the choice of Jewish festival days for *Aktionen*. The

orthodox Judaism's acceptance of God's punishment. Knowing the Jews would interpret the violence as God's will, the Nazis could more easily lead their victims to their deaths. In Lodz, Rumkowski, recognizing this danger, promoted industry not prayer. He aimed to make the ghetto financially too profitable for the Nazis to destroy. In a public speech of 1941, he referred to the orthodox who would 'bring a calamity' to the ghetto and he insisted that all the Talmudic scholars be put to work in the factories.<sup>1</sup>

For some, as the violence escalated and rumours of the death camps reached the ghettos, this need to retreat into the familiarity of the past increased. People more and more looked for relief in the coming of the Messiah. Jozef Zelkowicz (Lodz, 1941) wrote of the increasing displays of religious zeal despite emerging evidence that questioned God's existence.

Poor people. They do not have the strength to blaspheme God, even when he deals them the greatest injustice, and they praise him for the smallest trifle, not realising that such praise is the biggest blasphemy.<sup>2</sup>

The religious response to catastrophe was traditionally recorded in lamentation literature.<sup>3</sup> Writing was often the only way the orthodox could deal with violence. Nazi persecution, for many, was handled in the same manner. Chaim A. Kaplan asked in his diary on 30 November 1939:

Who will immortalize our troubles? The national splendour inherent in religious poetry is not expressed in newspaper reports. It is a pity. A catastrophe that becomes part of poetry... spreads among the people and is transmitted to future generations. A poet who clothes adversity in poetic form immortalizes it in an everlasting monument. And this monument provides historic material from which future generations are nourished.

Who will write of our troubles and who will immortalize them? Where is the folk poet of Yiddish Jewry, who will gather all the tragedy in our lives and perpetuate and guard it in the reliquary of tears.

Poet of the people, where art thou?<sup>4</sup>

Kaplan was calling for a successor to the generally recognized national poet Chaim Nachman Bialik. Abraham Lewin also asked, 'Will there emerge a new Bialik able to write a new

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Nazis really did like humiliating their victims. Goebbels was especially fond of co-ordinating Nazi Aktionen with the Jewish calendar.

<sup>1</sup> Lapidés & Adelson, *The Lodz Ghetto*, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> There are very few factual accounts of Jewish history or documents about Jewish persecution. History was chronicled in poetic form. The tradition of Hebrew lamentation literature derives from the *Book of Lamentations* and *Jeremiah*. Both commemorate the history of Jewish martyrdom. The destruction of the First Temple started a chain of liturgical elegies called *Selihot* and *Kinot* as well as the more secular folk tales, *Midrashim*. All forms of lamentation literature were intended to act as depositories for the communal Jewish memory.

<sup>4</sup> *The Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, p. 79.

Book of Lamentations?'<sup>1</sup>

By the mid 1930s much lamentation literature had become secularized. In traditional 'Pogrom Poems', which commemorated specific outbreaks of violence, the poet would chronicle the damage and loss and then call upon a sleeping God to redress the moral balance in the universe. With the Enlightenment, assimilation and the Haskalah<sup>2</sup> came the secularization of the traditional pogrom poem, especially with the advent of Zionism and Bolshevism which caused the fragmentation of the Jewish collective. The Russian Jews particularly embraced Communism in the belief that it would inaugurate a new egalitarian society and end the violence. In 1903, Chaim Nachman Bialik had established the Odessa group with the aim of rousing people to armed resistance rather than reliance on metaphysical appeals to God. His most famous poem *Upon the Slaughter* was written to commemorate the forty-nine dead of the pogrom at Kishinev during the Passover of 1903. Bialik had been sent there to collect eye-witness accounts and photographs - any evidence that would stand up in a Russian court. The poem begins in the traditional framework, Bialik addressing what is assumed to be God. However, by the middle of the poem, it is revealed that the narrator is God himself. Moreover, he is an impotent God who calls for his own deposition in the face of such damning evidence. Bialik was employing the traditional format to question the orthodox response of physical acquiescence to persecution. Such secularization, however, was short-lived. From World War One onwards Jews were subject to increasing waves of heightened violence.<sup>3</sup> With the Second World War, the pogrom poem was re-biblicized.

The re-emergence of collective identity based on such traditions was compounded by a sense of growing nationhood. As Kaplan recorded, 'the residents of the ghetto are beginning to think they are in Tel Aviv'.<sup>4</sup> Jews from different countries, classes and sects were thrown together in the ghettos and camps which allowed some of the internal boundaries between assimilated and orthodox to collapse. There was a growing feeling of national identity and a desire to preserve this in the face of collective oppression. The

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<sup>1</sup> Lewin, *A Cup of Tears*, p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) began the move towards secularization and assimilation. He strove to lead Jews away from the irrational emotionalism of religion and especially the superstition of Hasidism. His own Enlightenment movement in Germany became known as the Haskalah. Theodor Lessing praised him, remarking: 'Moses Mendelssohn made more or less a clean sweep of the historic Jewish past in order to obtain for the Jews a valid ticket for entering European civilisation.' - See Charles A. Madison, *Yiddish Literature, Its Scope and Major Writers*, New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1968, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Roskies, *Against The Apocalypse*, p. 92: In the First World War the Russian government deported 600,000 Jews and the Germans deported 70,000 Lithuanian Jews to Germany for forced labour. There were frequent pogroms in Poland and Galicia. In the 1918-19 Ukrainian Civil War alone it was estimated that between 60,000 and 250,000 Jews were murdered.

<sup>4</sup> *The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, p. 234 (21 December 1940).

Yiddish poet Itzik Manger wrote:

I do not deny the beauty of foreign myths. But now, at this historic juncture, where a nation ought to and does in fact stand at the threshold of internal consolidation, the foreign must be systematically forgotten in order to find that which is ours and thereby - that which we are.<sup>1</sup>

With the rediscovery of Jewish tradition came the return to Yiddish. It was the Yiddish language that Moses Mendelssohn, the leader of the Jewish Enlightenment, had sought to eradicate. He had instead promoted pure German as the passport to assimilation. Emanuel Ringelblum recorded on 15 December 1940:

Today I was at a concert in the Judaic Library. Jewish artists appeared and sang in Yiddish for the first time. The programme was entirely in Yiddish. Perhaps this is the beginning of the return to Yiddish.<sup>2</sup>

The re-emergence of orthodox collective identity, as Rumkowski predicted, had disastrous results for the innocent. Ringelblum recorded a discussion among some of the religious elders about an offer made by Polish priests to hide a number of Jewish children. Rather than expose their own kind to the danger of conversion, the Jewish leaders decided that it was better for the children to remain with their parents in the ghetto and be martyred for God than lose their immortal soul.<sup>3</sup>

Such religious fervour did not wane after evidence of the death camps was made known. The biblical interpretation, for some, seems to have increased as the violence escalated. Abraham Lewin records that on 21 October 1942, when Yakov Grojanowski, the escaped gravedigger from Treblinka returned to Lodz, he took to the streets to warn people about impending extermination. In response to the news, the more orthodox in the community fled to the synagogues to pray. Lewin witnessed a congregation of Jews praying in his own courtyard, 'pouring out their cares to the Creator'.<sup>4</sup> This response was now compounded by the unprecedented scale of the violence which defeated all rational coping mechanisms, as it dawned on people that what was happening now had never before been experienced. Their reason and imagination defeated, Jewish artists and religious leaders had no alternative but to recall familiar archetypes in their writings and commentaries. When the first religious doubts beset writers and artists, such as Itzhak Katzenelson and Abraham Sutzkever, they continued to write within the biblical framework.<sup>5</sup> Katzenelson's most

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<sup>1</sup> Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>4</sup> Lewin, *A Cup of Tears*, p. 183.

<sup>5</sup> Osnat Paz, *Songs By Yitzhak Katzenelson*, sound recording, Tel Aviv, 1970.

enduring song, *The Calf*, describes the terrified creature in a cattle wagon who is ignorant of why it is there or where it is going. The chorus repeatedly invokes God's name. However, Katzenelson's attitude to the redemptive qualities of suffering were ambiguous. He was certainly a religious man. For example, on 26 November 1940, he organized a public reading of the Bible in the Warsaw ghetto and his choice of vocabulary and motifs in his writing reflect a biblical philosophy.<sup>1</sup> In February 1940, he wrote the play *By the Rivers of Babylon*, one of a series of biblical dramas written in the ghetto. It portrays a group of Judean exiles debating whether they should kill themselves by plunging into a river or throw themselves into a life of hedonistic pleasure. In the end they decide to sanctify the life they have been given and nurture hopes for Jewish rebirth in the land of Israel.<sup>2</sup> Whether Katzenelson was advocating martyrdom or Zionism remains unclear. His next play, *Job*, written in June 1941 portrays the unheeded cries of the title character to God. In Katzenelson's play *Job* represents the Jews, and Satan, who tries to tempt Job away from God, was paralleled to Hitler. The piece was published and 150 copies were sold in the ghetto. But whether Katzenelson saw a causal link between sin and suffering is equivocal. His writings do not appear to advocate martyrdom but encourage spiritual and religious resistance.<sup>3</sup>

Importantly, it was not only within the more traditional communities of eastern Europe that the religious fervour increased in line with the violence. Jews everywhere were re-evaluating their identity, many drawing closer to the archaic interpretation of events in an effort to comprehend. For example, in Cologne where the Jewish community was, for the most part, assimilated, an inscription on a wall of a cellar where Jews were hiding reads:

I believe  
in the sun  
even when  
it is not shining

I believe  
in love  
when feeling  
is not

I believe  
in God  
even when

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<sup>1</sup> Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 208-9: Katzenelson escaped from the ghetto with a false passport but he was arrested in France and sent to the Vittel Concentration Camp before being deported to Auschwitz where he was murdered in 1944. In the Vittel camp he organized a Chanukah presentation for sixty interned children. The festival itself celebrates a group of heavily outnumbered Jews regaining control over the Temple in Jerusalem from the Syrians.

he is silent<sup>1</sup>

Etty Hillesum, an assimilated Jew, kept a diary whilst hiding in Holland. As the violence increased so did her John Donne-like passion to be sanctified in God's name. In Spring 1942, she wrote:

And God is not accountable to us for the senseless harm we cause one another. We are accountable to Him! I have already died a thousand deaths in a thousand concentration camps... and yet I find life beautiful and meaningful.<sup>2</sup>

Within the death camp system, it is difficult to assess how far the orthodox maintained their faith. Elie Wiesel based a postwar play on three rabbis he had witnessed in Auschwitz who decided to hold a mock trial of God for abandoning his people.<sup>3</sup> Years later he recorded, 'I did not deny God's existence, but I doubted His absolute justice.'<sup>4</sup> Yet Ernest Levy recalls that on arrival in Auschwitz in 1944, when the more seasoned inmates informed his transport about the gas chambers and crematoria, his compatriots immediately began to pray.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Auschwitz Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life. The Diaries of Etty Hillesum 1941-3*, New York: Washington Square Press, 1985, p. 157.

<sup>3</sup> Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God, As It Was Held on February 25, 1649 in Shamgorod*, trans. Marion Wiesel, New York: Schocken Books, 1986.

<sup>4</sup> Elie Wiesel, *Night*, trans. Stella Rodway, New York: Avon Books, 1971, p. 57. (First published as *La Nuit*, in French in 1958).

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Ernest Levy.

### 1.1. Conclusion

The means by which Hitler's victims chose to interpret and articulate the years 1941-5 were shaped by the extent to which they knew or, more crucially, acknowledged the scale and scope of the Nazis' plans for them. As Dov Freiberg, the fifteen year-old boy from Lodz had said, 'We didn't know about mass extermination. We didn't want to believe it.'<sup>1</sup> Many chose to dismiss the stories. Interpretations reflected artistic and psychological coping mechanisms which had deep roots in the pre-Nazi era. The religiously orthodox tended to withdraw further into their religion whilst those predisposed to fighting back sent out a call for direct confrontation.

Responses also varied according to the more immediate environment. By that, I mean, whether there was an audience for theatre, music and recitations and, secondly, whether there was either the means or the will to prepare and perform. Entertainment may have been possible in the relative freedom of a ghetto governed by a sympathetic Judenrat such as that in Vilna, but in the barracks of a concentration camp discovery could mean death. In addition, a willing audience existed in the still resistant inmates of a labour camp but not among the *Musselmen*<sup>2</sup> of a death camp.

Apart from geographical background the most important factor in determining response was political education and religious upbringing. A Jew reacted to events in a very different manner to a resistance worker or Communist. And an orthodox Jew from a *shtetl* (Russian-Jewish rural community) or even a large eastern European city had a different perspective to an assimilated Jew. Chaim A. Kaplan, for example, had quite a different outlook on the meaning of events compared to his assimilated colleague, Emanuel Ringelblum. Whilst Kaplan reaches back into Jewish history searching for analogies and, therefore, meaning for the present persecution, Ringelblum remains aware that what his people are experiencing is beyond traditional Jewish response. Ringelblum remains a pragmatist whereas Kaplan desperately clings to his God in the hope of the Messiah's imminent arrival. The diary discloses Kaplan as an orthodox believer arguing in the traditional manner with God, demanding how much longer the Jewish nation will have to wait until God upholds his end of the Covenant. Aware from the beginning of his chronicle (September 1939) that Hitler means total extermination, Kaplan's faith is increasingly challenged. Beset by religious doubts - too blasphemous to express - he, therefore, creates a

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<sup>1</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, pp. 340-1.

<sup>2</sup> The word *Musselmen* or *Muslims* originated in the camps and refers to those prisoners who were, literally, the walking dead of a camp, reduced by starvation, mental anguish, thirst and exhaustion because they had lost the will to live. No definitive answer has been given as to the origin of the word.

fictitious *Doppelgänger* called Hirsch who refuses to believe that the ways of God to Man are just.

It is difficult to assess those works created within the biblical discourse. Perhaps we are too apt, with hindsight, to judge such writings within the lamentation tradition. It is also difficult to establish how writers truly interpreted these years because of political constraints such as those existing in the Soviet Union which curtailed literary and theatrical output. The Soviet Union contained a sizeable Jewish population, mainly congregated in the traditional and religiously orthodox *shtetl* communities. Despite the fact that anti-Semitism had been made illegal by the Revolutionary Government of 1917, it was on the increase by the 1930s and restrictions had once again been placed on Jewish writing especially after Stalin had signed the non-aggression pact with Hitler. With Operation Barbarossa<sup>1</sup> in 1941, the official policy was reversed and Jews were again allowed to publish. The State-sanctioned 'Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee' was established but writers were warned to keep within the Communist interpretation of events: officially, World War Two was an ideological battle between Fascism and Communism. It was not a question of race. Even so, Peretz Markish, a Yiddish poet and a dedicated Communist, wrote a series of poems placing Jewish persecution within the discourse of Jewish, not Russian, history. *The Jewish Dancer*, slipping past the censor, contains the line, 'You must dance the generations-old shame, you must dance the generations-old pain.'<sup>2</sup>

Naturally, in times of crisis, people scan the patterns of history in order to understand present events. For the Jews, their only history was the longstanding narrative of suffering and martyrdom. Moreover, the traditional literary structures and motifs available to them were of a liturgical nature. Therefore, even sceptical writers utilized the traditional biblical archetypes. The example of Katzenelson illustrates the difficulty in interpreting the depth of religious fervour implied in the utilization of such traditional motifs. David G. Roskies writes that the simple impulse to record daily events overrode any interpretative narrative:

Though from a Western perspective, Eastern European Jewish writers never strayed far from the sources of their culture, and in times of destruction they hardly abandoned the old archetypes, there was no modern return to a belief in the Covenant. Ghetto writers, with few exceptions, refused to identify destruction with guilt or with some divine scheme for ultimate redemption. However much the literature of the ghettos seems to be a throwback to medieval and ancient times, the surviving scrolls are not Scripture in any but the most attenuated sense.

Ghetto writings, in contrast to postwar literary responses, were overwhelmingly secular.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The invasion of Russia.

<sup>2</sup> Charles A. Madison, *Yiddish Literature: Its Scope and Major Writers*, New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1968, p. 407.

<sup>3</sup> Roskies, *Against The Apocalypse*, p. 208.

Yet the biblical interpretation of events for many was genuine. This is important to bear in mind as the biblical narrative of Jewish history was the antithesis to the narrative that the Zionists of Israel sought to encourage. The passive manner in which many orthodox Jews walked to their deaths was not something that the future statesmen of Israel wanted to encourage if Zionism was to succeed. Orthodox religion, subservience and the humiliations associated with the Diaspora (including the language itself -Yiddish), was shunned as the Zionists began to formulate their own separate national identity. Importantly, instead of the Holocaust being represented through various narratives, the Zionists encouraged a singular reading of events from the beginning.

## 1.2. *The Yishuv*

Israeli commentary about the situation in Europe by those who were not experiencing it first hand tended to be expressive and interpretative rather than documentary. Before the first news about the death camps filtered through in 1942, Israeli writers from an Eastern European background, interpreted the situation through the traditional biblical framework:

Hebrew literature during the war continued to present Jewish fate and destiny in terms and modes in which it had envisaged Jewish fate and destiny for a long time before the tornado sweepingly overwhelmed world Jewry.<sup>1</sup>

The Jewish community in Palestine at that time was a myriad of different nationalities and cultures, with Polish and Russian émigrés forming the bulk of the population. Naturally, their inheritance favoured a traditional response. The Polish-Israeli writer, Sh. Shalom,<sup>2</sup> for example, wrote in a style that reflected his Hasidic background. His ballad, *Rabbi Mendel, the Brother of the Rabbi of Ger*, describes how a rabbi and his comrades are compelled to dig their own graves surrounded by a German firing squad:

And when the cruel lieutenant gave the order to fire,  
Rabbi Mendel smiled to the Highest -  
For in the realm of ultimate despair there still was  
A Jew sanctifying the name of the Deity,  
A Jew loving his fellow, and triumphant,  
Even in death, over viciousness and evil.<sup>3</sup>

Yet artists like Shalom were few. There was a general turning away from biblical interpretation. This was made obvious by a heated debate in the press about the insufficiency of lamentation literature in response to Nazi persecution.<sup>4</sup> The Israeli public felt a vacuum which traditional ritualized response to catastrophe usually occupied at times of collective crisis. The public outcry mainly came from eastern European immigrants. However, they had settled in Palestine because they were also Zionists. A complicated and contradictory impulse, therefore, emerged similar to that expressed by European writers such as Katzenelson and Sutzkever. Tchernichovsky, a Russian immigrant, in 1937 penned *The Martyrs of Dortmund* which proclaimed, 'There is no God! There is Satan alone!' But the last two lines read '*Yitgadal ve-Yitkadash*' (May the Name of the Lord be exalted and sanctified).<sup>5</sup> Even when, as with Bialik and then Katzenelson, writers turned away from the traditional response, they utilized the Bible in order to subvert it.

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Halkin, *Modern Hebrew Literature. From the Enlightenment to the Birth of the State of Israel. Trends and Values*, New York: Schocken Books, 1970, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Pseudonym for Shalom Shapiro.

<sup>3</sup> Halkin, *Modern Hebrew Literature*, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

However, to place the Holocaust within a biblical framework was unacceptable for the Zionists. If, as the orthodox believed, the persecution was divine in origin, then it naturally followed that the Zionists were in part responsible for the calamity through their transgressions against God. Moreover, if the violence against the Jews was a signal of their own contravention of 'Judaism', then the rationale behind the violence and obstacles the Palestinian Jews were experiencing in the Yishuv must be the same. Orthodox thinking was something that Zionists, therefore, wanted to suppress.

Yet Jewish religious history possessed the power to unify the Jews as a collective. The Jews of Israel needed an identity to consolidate them as a people but the religious martyrdom advocated by the orthodox was politically unsuitable. The tradition of Jewish heroism, as personified in biblical leaders, was more desirable. So was the Old Testament's 'eye for an eye' philosophy. The Jewish historical narrative therefore had much to offer if it could be incorporated into the Zionist framework.

While a variety of responses emerged from Israeli writers between 1941 and 1945, the response from the theatre was singular from the beginning. The critic, Baruch Krupnik, wrote of the Pioneer play, *This Earth*, in 1942:

And how much could Zionist propaganda gain had it been able to use artistic instruments! One play is worth more than a thousand speeches, one short story better than a thousand proclamations. Bring us the romanticism of Palestine, and the Zionist movement will rise.<sup>1</sup>

Theatre was recognized as a potential tool to educate the masses and engender a sense of common belonging and national pride. It was subtly encouraged in Zionist directions by the country's future politicians such as David Ben Gurion. Yet, the young Israeli theatre had already been shaped by the Zionist dream of one community united by the common language of Hebrew before the notion surfaced among the Yishuv's leaders. This development had been initiated outwith Palestine, in Moscow, by a faction of the Moscow Arts Theatre, the Habima ('The Stage'), established in 1918 by Nahum Zernach. Like his mentor, Stanislavsky, Zernach funded the company out of his own pocket in the early years. He intended the group to live, eat and work together as a socialist unit, performing in the Hebrew language. As Mendel Kohansky writes:

It was the dream of theatre in the Hebrew language that inspired a remarkable man named Nahum Zernach, a Hebrew teacher in Bialystok, who in 1914 founded a drama company and took his players to Vienna, where the Zionist Congress was then meeting, to demonstrate cultural Zionism in action.<sup>2</sup>

The troupe toured across Europe, with the mission of spreading the word of Zionism. In 1926, the company toured to Palestine and, discovering a highly-cultured, agrarian

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<sup>1</sup> Mendel Kohansky, *Hebrew Theatre. Its First Fifty Years*, New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1969, pp. 144-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

community which was thirsty for theatre and art, decided to remain. The Habima shared the same aim as the politicians who had set their sights on an independent Jewish homeland in Palestine. The encouragement of Hebrew as the national language was a crucial factor in the construction of a new Jewish identity. It was a signal that the Yishuv was distancing itself from the humiliations and sufferings which the Diaspora represented. The majority of the population still spoke Yiddish, Russian or Polish, but in the schools children spoke fluent Hebrew. The Israeli theatre critic, Emanuel Levy, noted:

The Habima was intimately related to Zionism and played a significant role in the revival of modern Jewish nationalism and in the diffusion of the Hebrew language.<sup>1</sup>

At about the same time that the Habima arrived in Tel Aviv, Moshe Halevy, one of their former members also settled in the Yishuv. A Zionist and former pupil of Stanislavsky, he travelled around the countryside collecting ordinary people, searching for untrained actors to start the Ohel ('Tabernacle') Theatre. He demanded amateurs to live and work together, like the Habima, as a socialist unit and perform in Hebrew.

Freddie Rokem argues that the joint response of these two theatre companies to the events unfolding in Europe can be gauged by their repertoire.<sup>2</sup> For example, the same year that Hitler was elected to power, the Habima staged Leon Feuchtwanger's *Jew Süß*, the tale of a court Jew, the Chief Minister of Württemberg, Süß Oppenheimer,<sup>3</sup> and in 1936 the company mounted a highly controversial production of *The Merchant of Venice*, directed by Leopold Jessner.<sup>4</sup> Both stories centre around assimilated Jews ostracized by Christian society. Both Oppenheimer and Shylock lose all they hold dear and are publicly reviled and humiliated. Both these plays illustrated to an Israeli audience the perils and corruption associated with the Diaspora and the advantages of a Zionist homeland. Interestingly enough, Goebbels also chose the story of Jew Süß as the basis of a propaganda film in 1940 in which the director, Viet Harlan, painted a picture of a corrupt Jewish community wallowing in the filth of a European ghetto. In the film, the figure of Süß Oppenheimer is an archetypal Jewish villain who through money and black magic manipulates the drunken

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<sup>1</sup> *The Habima - Israel's National Theatre 1917 - 1977. A Study of Cultural Nationalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1979, p. xv.

<sup>2</sup> Freddie Rokem, 'Hebrew Theater from 1889 to 1948', in Ben Zvi, ed., *Theater in Israel*, pp. 51-84.

<sup>3</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Third Edition, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967, p. 20: 'The Jews did not form a class of their own and did not belong to any class.' The court Jew established himself in sixteenth, and seventeenth-century Europe. Jews, because they were perceived as neither foreign nor wholly naturalized, made ideal figures to act as negotiators between principalities and leaders. They were neither trusted nor feared, but because they had no legal status they hoped to secure the protection of the leader they worked for.

<sup>4</sup> Kohansky, *Hebrew Theatre*, p. 131: 'In fact, as soon as the news about the production was announced, almost the entire press came out against it, and there were even public meetings of protest.' The production ran for 42 nights which, according to Kohansky, was below average. Levy, *The Habima*, p. 126: on 26 June 1936, one month after the opening night, a public trial of Shakespeare, the Habima and the director was held. The leading figures of the Yishuv participated, including many writers.

and dissolute Duke. As such, he was typical of the anti-Semitic figures to be found in the pages of *Der Stürmer*, or Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

The Diaspora was portrayed in a negative light by Hebrew theatre managements. This was especially apparent with the Habima's production of the German exile writer, Friedrich Wolf's *Professor Mamlock*. Wolf's play presents an educated and seemingly intelligent assimilated Jew who refuses to face the hopeless situation in Europe in a pragmatic way. As Emanuel Levy summarizes:

All the plays of the Hitler era dealt with the rise of anti-Semitism and the downfall of emancipated German Jewry. These dramas stressed disenchantment with the Jewish illusion of assimilation into German society, and emphasized that the desirable and, in fact, only solution to the Jewish problem was for the Jews to come to Palestine. The critics did not judge these productions with ordinary artistic yardsticks. *Ha'aretz*, for instance, wrote that *Jew Süß* was an important production because it had both dramatic and historic truth. And after the opening of *Professor Mamlock*, the critics emphasized in their reviews the political meaning of the play rather than its artistic merit.<sup>1</sup>

In December 1939 the company again stressed its political colours with Max Zweig's *The Marranos*, depicting the plight of Spanish assimilated and converted Jews during the Inquisition of 1480, under the reign of Queen Isabella. The critics easily drew parallels between the Spanish monarch and Hitler.<sup>2</sup>

The above plays rely on one-dimensional characterization. German anti-Nazi writers such as Wolf tended to place Hitler's atrocities within their own subjective and political frameworks; Wolf was a Communist who viewed anti-Semitism as an offshoot of the ideological battle of Fascism versus Communism. Nazis in particular were demonized. This superficial treatment was aggravated by the Israeli proclivity towards stock characters who personified different responses to the drama unfolding in Europe. 'Types' emerged who embodied undesirable, 'un-Zionist' behaviour - notably collaborators, who were vilified, and orthodox Jews, who passively walked to their slaughter 'like sheep'.<sup>3</sup> Both types, for the pioneer generation, exemplified cowardice. Israel had no place for such people.

However, there was a subtle shift in the late 1930s as the steady influx of refugees began to relate their tales of horror. In 1941, the Habima staged one of its few indigenous scripts, *Jerusalem and Rome*, by Nathan Bystrytsky. According to Kohansky, the author intended to present the protagonist - the historical figure of Josephus Flavius (the Jewish general who 'collaborated' with the Romans) - in a favourable light, exploring the moral conundrum in which he was placed. The public, however, was outraged. Consequently the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> *New York Times (Book Review)* (26 February 1995): Abba Kovner in a speech to the Vilna Partisans had enjoined: 'Let us not be led like sheep to the slaughter.' The 'sheep' simile has been in use ever since to characterize the response of the orthodox Jews e.g. see: Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, pp. 367-9.

play ran for only forty-two performances.<sup>1</sup>

The furore caused by David Bergelson's 1944 play *I Will Live* particularly illustrates the emerging preference to sieve the Holocaust through a Zionist filter.<sup>2</sup> By 1944, there could be no doubt what was happening to those Jews remaining in Europe. Many of the persecuted had fled illegally to Palestine via the Brichah and other underground movements. The horrors had even found their way into graphic art of the time. Lea Grundig, a German-Israeli artist, painted *Treblinka* (1943-4) as part of her *In the Valley of Slaughter* series. It was inspired by her discovery of the conditions in the camps from her Communist connections in Europe.<sup>3</sup> *Treblinka* depicts a gas chamber overflowing with human bodies.

The Israeli audience and critics took issue with *I Will Live* because of the lack of the usual stereotypes. The protagonist, Avrom-Ber, is proud of being both a Soviet citizen and a Jew. Zionism and Jewish pride are not synonymous. Furthermore, in the Habima's production, the Nazis were portrayed in a non-stereotypical manner. The Israeli writer, Shalom Shofman, on the first night demanded that the play should be closed because, in his view, the play was anti-Semitic: the 'good' Jews were not Zionist (how else could one truly be a Jew if not as a Zionist?). In addition, the Jewish actors portrayed the Nazis in a 'beautiful and proud manner'. In his opinion, the only way to present a Nazi on the stage was in a grotesque and caricatured manner.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.2. Conclusion

The biblical narrative of Jewish persecution as embodied in traditional lamentation literature was gradually being superseded by the Zionist master narrative. By that I mean, the Holocaust was increasingly placed within a Zionist picture of Jewish history which painted a disparaging portrait of life in the Diaspora. The large numbers of eastern European émigrés, especially after 1933, slowed this transition down. Between 1933 and 1948, for example, the Habima staged a high proportion of *shtetl* plays, the most popular being Sholom Aleichem's *Tevye the Milkman*.<sup>5</sup> Although committed to Zionism and the Hebrew language, the Habima was not exclusive. Independence and government interest would assure a Zionist cultural victory in later years. Although the Zionists abhorred the biblical framework because of its archetypes (martyrs, victims and cosmic manifestations of evil) the Zionist narrative produced archetypes of its own which merely superseded the biblical ones. The result was that the Nazis were demonized and the victims turned into national

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<sup>1</sup> Kohansky, *Hebrew Theatre. Its First Fifty Years*, p. 141. In 1936 Bystrytsky had written about another historical figure who betrayed his people - the Shabbati Zevi, the false Messiah who converted to Islam. The production was a financial disaster. Moshe Halevy, the director recalled how a friend and patron of the theatre company, David Ben Gurion, made an approach suggesting they change the ending to produce a more pro-Zionist message (p. 142).

<sup>2</sup> Bergelson, a Russian Jew, had written *I Will Live* in 1942, whilst still in Russia.

<sup>3</sup> Maishels, 'Art Confronts the Holocaust', p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> 'Davar' (14 May 1944). Quoted in Levy, *The Habima - Israel's National Theatre 1917 - 1977*, pp. 126-7.

<sup>5</sup> Levy, *The Habima*, p. 132.

monuments of martyrdom. Religious martyrs were portrayed as misguided fools and collaborators were presented as traitors. Opposing, or at least questioning this design there have been a few lone voices in the past sixty years that have taken issue with both the Zionist narrative of the Holocaust and the classification of its *dramatis personae*. The Israeli poet, Dan Pagis was one of the first. Having survived a concentration camp, he emigrated to Palestine in 1946. In his poem, *Testimony*, he insists of the Nazis, 'No, no: they definitely were/ human beings: uniforms, boots.'<sup>1</sup> Haim Hazaz's 1942 novella, *The Sermon*, centres on the issue of Israeli identity, in particular whether European Jewish history should be taught to the children of a Kibbutz. Such a history, synonymous with persecution and degradation, argues Yikhud, the narrator, is inappropriate for the new generation. Eventually Yikhud begins to argue against himself as he comes to the realization that Zionism is not a new healthy branch of Jewish identity but is an 'uprooting and destruction' which is 'almost non-Jewish'.<sup>2</sup> The real Jews are those remaining in the Diaspora.

The black and white division of perpetrators and victims, heroes and collaborators, created a series of taboos which artists have either further fortified or attempted to displace over the last half century. The figure of the collaborator, for example, has undergone a massive reversal in cultural representation since the war. More importantly, the Holocaust has become the locus of Jewish identity, a battle cry to galvanize a nation in times of crisis, especially during Israel's seven wars. It has shaped national identity. In addition, it has superseded all other Jewish cataclysms as the ultimate trope in a traditional response to catastrophe. Nothing has essentially changed in this response except that God has been displaced from the centre of Jewish identity by the state of Israel; religious martyrdom by national sacrifice; and obedience to God (synonymous with inaction) by obedience to the state (synonymous with armed self-defence).

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<sup>1</sup> T. Carmi and Dan Pagis, *Selected Poems*, trans. Stephen Mitchell, London: Penguin, 1976, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Haim Hazaz, *The Sermon*, in *A Selection of the Best Contemporary Hebrew Writing*, Joel Blocker, ed., New York: Schocken Books, 1962, pp. 65-86; pp. 83-4.

### 1.3. German Anti-Nazi Writers in Exile

#### Introduction

Although Josef Goebbels swiftly deprived Hitler's literary opponents of their publishers, theatres, distributors and audience in an effort to stem both national dissent and international condemnation,<sup>1</sup> it is estimated that 420 German dramatists in forty-one different countries wrote 724 theatre plays, 108 radio plays and 398 film scripts and books.<sup>2</sup>

As with the writings produced in the camps and ghettos, the exiles' work was determined both by environment and practical considerations. Exile brought its own jeopardies and obstacles. From 1933 onwards exiles fled to other German speaking cities such as Prague, Vienna, Basle and Zürich hoping to find employment in places where familiar customs, especially a common language, would lessen the trauma of displacement. Many exiles believed that Hitler would not last long and it would only be a matter of months before they would be able to return to Germany. However, Nazism's tentacles had spread throughout Europe. Pro-Nazi groups existed in Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and Austria. Eric Rose, a survivor, describes going on a family holiday to Austria in 1936 and seeing Austrians along the road give their car the Nazi salute because of its German number plates.<sup>3</sup> Many countries also turned a blind eye to the activities of Nazi infiltrators, for example, the Czech authorities to the murder of Theodor Lessing, a retired Jewish professor. After the Nazis shut down his school in Hannover in 1933, Lessing left for Marienbad which was then in Czechoslovakia. However, this did not satisfy the Nazis and their newspaper, *The Völkischer Beobachter*, offered a 80,000 marks reward for his return to German soil. On 31 August 1933, two storm troopers from Munich crossed the border hoping to bring him back alive. Their plan went wrong and instead Lessing was shot.<sup>4</sup> This example, as early as 1933, stood as a warning to all other anti-Nazi writers in exile.

With the annexation of Czechoslovakia and Austria, the exiles' hope for return was shattered. The beginning of the war and the fall of Paris in 1940 meant that America became the main sanctuary. Many writers believed that they would find work in Hollywood's film industry or in East coast theatre. America, however, was not interested in racial specifics or persecution. The Government wanted to emphasize their country as a 'melting pot', where ethnic divisions were blurred.<sup>5</sup> In addition, after the Great Depression, mass unemployment meant that Americans were less than sympathetic to a new wave of educated immigrants.

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<sup>1</sup> On 28 February 1933 the Law For the Protection of the Nation forbade all Marxist writings. The first book burning was on 10 May 1933. In September 1933 the Law for the Establishment of the Reich Cultural Chamber and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour was passed. Then in 1935 the Nuremberg Laws were passed which forbade mixed marriage and fraternization.

<sup>2</sup> T.M. Kuhn, *Politics and Literary Form in German Exile Drama 1933-39*, Oxford University: Ph.D. thesis, 1986, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Eric Rose, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Egbert Krispyn, *Anti-Nazi writers in Exile*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978, p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> N. Lande, *World War Two as Theatre*, p.79, quoting the American Office for War Information to Hollywood, 'We must emphasize that this country is a melting pot.'

The fact that the majority were Jewish triggered negative responses. Like the Nazis, American authorities regarded the Jews as a Communist threat because of the overwhelming support the Russian Jews gave to the 1917 Revolution. At the extreme end of the political spectrum were Fascist groups such as the Klu Klux Klan and the anti-Semitic Silvershirt Movement which boasted a membership of 15-20,000.<sup>1</sup>

The various artistic interpretations of the events unfolding in Europe resulted from individual writers' political or religious viewpoints and their immediate conditions of exile. Anti-Jewish sentiment, Fascist organizations, and reluctant theatre managers forced the exiles' to make their work more commercial and allegorize any political references. Authors resorted to general anti-war themes such as George Kaiser in *Das Floß den Medusa (The Raft of Medusa, 1941)*.<sup>2</sup> This erosion of political particulars was an attempt to find a rapport with foreign audiences and producers. The writers' first hurdle was to secure a theatre and financial backing.

Personal politics, inevitably, revealed themselves. Like Hitler's other victims, exiled writers interpreted events through a number of familiar frameworks. If Jewish authors writing in the biblical tradition were reducing Germans to mere agents of divine will and deconstructing the persecution into its cognizant parts, so too were German anti-Nazi writers seeking to interpret the situation through codes familiar to them: Brecht and Anne Seghers through Marxism; Georg Kaiser, Carl Zuckmayer and Ernst Wiechert within a Christian framework; Franz Werfel and Nelly Sachs through an orthodox interpretation of Jewish biblical history.

Whatever the framework, the interpretation was, naturally, subjective. Some writers incorporated the war against Jews into general narratives where National Socialism was seen as a generic evil. Nazis were one-dimensional, whether they were portrayed as an embodiment of evil (Werfel), general social malaise (Brecht) or a malevolent fate (Wiechert). Whatever the subjective viewpoint of the author, the Nazis were demonized and their actions removed from the realm of human responsibility. For some, such as Anna Seghers, Nazis were 'un-German' - some opprobrious alien body infecting the true *Heimat*. Writing in exile from Mexico, Seghers's 1942 novel, *Das siebte Kreuz (The Seventh Cross)*, is infused with a longing for the real Germany, embodied in simple farming communities.<sup>3</sup> Like a virus, the Nazis overwhelm the country. To restore the 'real' Germany, Communism has to be embraced and the Nazis ejected. Other writers were more fatalistic but most regarded the Nazis as 'invaders' and 'despoilers' whereas the ordinary citizens were basically 'good'. The 'little man', or soldier, was portrayed as the impotent pawn of the generals and chiefs of

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<sup>1</sup> Egbert Krispyn, *Anti-Nazi Writers in Exile*, pp. 109-10: The Nazis directly inspired the political career of William D. Pelley who founded the Silvershirt Movement. Pelley claimed that in a death-like trance it had been revealed to him that there was an international Jewish plot afoot against the United States.

<sup>2</sup> George Kaiser, *The Raft of Medusa*, in George E. Wellwarth and Michael Benedikt, eds, *Postwar German Drama*, London: Macmillan, 1968.

<sup>3</sup> Anne Seghers, *The Seventh Cross*, trans. James A. Galston, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1943.

staff. Themes reminiscent of post World War One writers such as Hans Fallada, Enrique Maria Remarque, and the Expressionists re-emerged.<sup>1</sup>

### *1.3.a. The German-Jewish Interpretation*

To what extent Jewish artists were drawn to familiar archetypes when confronted with Jewish destruction can be gauged by two writers in exile who came from an assimilated, not orthodox, background. Yet Franz Werfel and Nelly Sachs chose to interpret events in a biblical framework, employing apocalyptic vocabulary and messianic imagery.

#### *Jacobowsky and the Colonel*

Franz Werfel's comedy *Jacobowsky und der Oberst (Jacobowsky and the Colonel)* was written in 1943 in a style which combines Christian and Jewish myth. A similar arrangement can be seen in his 1934 novel, *Die Vierzig Tagen den Musa Dagh (The Forty Days of Musa Dagh)*, which portrays an assimilated Armenian who must decide on his true identity. Written in a dense, mystical and religious rhetoric, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* is an allegory about the Jewish situation in Germany after Hitler's election. The identity crisis of the central character, Gabriel (half Christian and half Armenian), reflects Werfel's own as the product of a mixed Catholic-Jewish family.<sup>2</sup> The protagonist of *Jacobowsky and the Colonel* shares the same internal conflict.<sup>3</sup>

Werfel's mixed Jewish-Catholic inheritance is, naturally, part of the play's fabric. The conflict between racial identity and German loyalty is embodied in, and expressed by, Jacobowsky - the eternal Jewish refugee. For Jacobowsky, 'Nazism' is not synonymous with 'German'. Nazism is a visitation of preternatural evil - and consequently God's implement - in a vision of the world that is biblical. Hitler is 'merely the current name for evil in this world' as he tells the anti-Semitic Pole, Colonel Stjerbinsky:

I can never be Hitler, never, as long as this world lasts. But you could easily have been Hitler, and you could still be. At any time!<sup>4</sup>

Such a statement indicates a Jewish binary view of the world where all other races are collectivized as 'the other'. This perspective is made even more explicit in one of Jacobowsky's closing speeches:

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<sup>1</sup> Much post-World War One German writing concentrates on the inability and impossibility of the ordinary man to shape political events. Typical novels include, Hans Fallada's 1935 *Kleiner Mann - was nun? (Little Man What Now?)* and Enrique Maria Remarque's 1929 *Im Westen nichts Neues (All Quiet on The Western Front)*.

<sup>2</sup> Franz Werfel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, trans. Geoffrey Dunlop, New York: Viking Press, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> Franz Werfel, *Jacobowsky and the Colonel*, trans. by Gustave Otto Arlt, New York: Viking Press, 1944. All quotes are taken from this version.

<sup>4</sup> Werfel, *Jacobowsky and the Colonel*, p. 49.

Yes, Marianne, the Jacobowskys are to be exterminated, with the overt, or secret approval of the world! But they will not be exterminated though millions die. God is punishing us. He probably knows why. He punishes us by unworthy hands... And then, filled with loathing, He exterminates them in turn.<sup>1</sup>

Werfel divides the world into the biblical 'them and us' categories. In this instance, the 'other' is also incarnated in Colonel Stjerbinsky. 'You two are opposites' Stjerbinsky's lover Marianne concludes. To which Stjerbinsky replies 'Opposites must eliminate each other!'<sup>2</sup> The sentiment could have been taken straight from the pages of Kaplan's Warsaw diary or the Nuremberg testimony of the Auschwitz Kommandant, Rudolf Höss. Both Höss and Kaplan depicted Aryanism and Judaism locked in an exclusive, eternal and metaphysical struggle.<sup>3</sup> Werfel's ambivalent, Catholic-Judaic attitude is embodied in the intermittent image of the Wandering Jew and saint Francis on a tandem, 'two opposites that get along very well'. This is Werfel's ideal vision of Germany.

The main thrust of the play was to incite direct action, specifically from the American audience for whom it was written.<sup>4</sup> Marianne, who escapes the Germans, ultimately cannot flee Europe while her own country is suffering; she is compelled to remain and fight. Jacobowsky reprimands the global community for its inaction and apathy:

But if you had said: 'This Jacobowsky is a human being, and we can't stand by while human beings are treated like that', then you wouldn't have been done for yourselves so miserably and absurdly and disgracefully just a few years later, and the pest would have been exterminated, and Hitler would have remained what he really is, a loud mouthed fool in a stinking Munich beer cellar. And that's why I say that you yourselves, you alone and all the others, are Hitler's greatness, his brilliance, his Blitzkrieg, his victory, his world domination.<sup>5</sup>

Yet Werfel's own call to arms is contradicted by the religious framework. The play contains an irresolvable paradox. Many of its mixed messages were the result of Werfel's efforts to satisfy the conflicting demands of his audience, his producers, his mixed inheritance and his own conscience. The play was first performed in New York in 1944 in an English translation by Sam N. Behrmann - a translation with which Werfel was never happy.<sup>6</sup> He felt that Behrmann's version both simplified the character of Jacobowsky and the moral issues involved. In addition, all references to unsympathetic western refugee policies were

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> G.M. Gilbert, *The Psychology of Dictatorship*, New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1946, p. 256 quoting Rudolf Höss, Kommandant of Auschwitz privately interviewed at the Nuremberg Trial by Gilbert: 'I was absolutely convinced that the Jews were the opposite pole from the German people, and sooner or later there would have to be a showdown between National Socialism and World Jewry.'

<sup>4</sup> Werfel, on his escape from Europe, had met a Jewish banker on whom Jacobowsky is based. He recounted the tale to Max Reinhardt at a dinner party in Hollywood who suggested that Werfel should turn it into a play. Reinhardt suggested Sam N. Behrmann as a translator.

<sup>5</sup> Werfel, *Jacobowsky*, pp. 29-50.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Bauland, *The Hooded Eagle. Modern German Drama on the New York Stage*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1968, p. 150.

removed.<sup>1</sup> Behrmann's translation brought out the comedy of the piece for farcical not satiric effect.

Although Werfel's script mentions 'extermination' of the Jews, the horror is not highlighted. The *New Popular Press* (New York) had reported on 14 July 1941, and again on 14 March 1942, about the 'torture hell' of Auschwitz. A Bulletin of the Jewish Telegraph Agency in London on 13 December 1943, circulated in the US, spoke of 58,000 Jews murdered there.<sup>2</sup> That the Jews of Europe were being systematically slaughtered could not be denied. Werfel's response was shaped by his own proclivity towards a mythic interpretation of history, his awareness of the American audience and his desire to incite action rather than castigate the persecutors. To generate political awareness in an otherwise apolitical audience meant that Werfel had to cajole them into listening through comedy and, in particular, the wisecracks of the larger than life character of the suffering Jew - Jacobowsky.

### *Eli*

When the German-Jewish writer Nelly Sachs wrote her play *Eli* it is doubtful whether she had a specific audience in mind. Sachs fled from Berlin to Sweden in 1940. Coming from a cultured and assimilated family, her writing represents one of the most sustained attempts to incorporate the Holocaust into the Jewish orthodox narrative. Images from *Eli* repeat themselves in later poems, the most famous being in *O, The Chimneys* where 'Israel's body drifted as smoke/ through the air'.<sup>3</sup> *Eli* was written, according to the author, over three nights in Stockholm in 1943.<sup>4</sup> Subtitled *A Mystery Play of the Sufferings of Israel*, the play is redemptive in character: it seeks to heal pain and provide hope. It is a dense play, imbued with Hasidic mysticism which Sachs expands on in her postscript.<sup>5</sup> *Eli*, she explains, is set 'after martyrdom' when a group of Polish Jews return to their destroyed village to rebuild their lives. The village fountain is symbolically brought back to life. A prayer tent is quickly erected. A girl makes herself a baby to replace the many dead from a rag pulled out from the rubble. The central character, Michael, is one of the thirty-six chosen servants of God according to Hasidic mysticism. These thirty-six, although unaware of it themselves, are the 'Righteous Ones' and 'Carry the invisible universe'. Michael is driven to discover who murdered the child, Eli. When Eli saw his mother and father being dragged off by

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 50. Werfel made numerous drafts of this play in the hope that he could satisfy both the American audience and his own conscience. As it was, Behrmann's translation won Werfel the Drama Critics' Circle Award for best foreign play 1943-4, after a run of 417 performances.

<sup>2</sup> Rolf Hochhuth, 'Historical Sidelights', in *The Representative*, p. 294.

<sup>3</sup> *Abba Kovner and Nelly Sachs*, trans. Michael Roloff, Stephen Spender, ed., London: Penguin, 1971, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> Nelly Sachs, *Eli, A Mystery Play of the Sufferings of Israel*, trans. Christopher Holme, in Elinor Fuchs, ed., *Plays of the Holocaust. An International Anthology*, New York: Theater Communications Group, 1987. It was first performed as a radio play in Germany in 1961.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

unspecified soldiers, he raised his shepherd's pipes to his lip to call on God for help. However, one of the soldiers interpreted this to be a signal to the partisans and struck Eli down with his rifle butt.

By 1943 knowledge of the mass murder had spread. Sachs chose to interpret this knowledge by reaching back into Jewish history. The specificity of Nazi crimes is only hinted at - as in the reference to the fallen chimney in scene eleven:

We stones were the last things to touch Israel's sorrow.  
 Jeremiah's body in smoke.  
 Job's body in smoke,  
 Whimpering of little children in smoke,  
 Israel's way of freedom in smoke.<sup>1</sup>

The story line is mythic; at the end there is a return to stability. The origin of the soldiers is not determined and the word 'German' is never used. The play seeks to heal rather than dwell on the horrors. When Michael catches up with the murderer, the latter crumbles to dust before the divine light shining from Michael's face. Michael himself is taken up into the arms of God. Sachs's note on the staging reads:

Through mime and the rhythm of the words, the performer must make the Hasidic mystical fervour visible - an encounter with divine radiance... The play is designed to raise the unutterable to a transcendental level, so as to make it bearable... to give a hint of the holy darkness.<sup>2</sup>

Because *Eli* is written from deep within the heart of Hasidic orthodoxy, the political specifics of the time are blurred to such an extent that the particular identities of Nazis and their victims are diluted and made to disappear in a religious narrative where persecution is timeless and sanctioned by God.

By showing the Holocaust as a continuation of History, rather than a rupture, Lawrence Langer argues that the specifics of the horror are reduced.<sup>3</sup> The metaphysical nature of *Eli*, for example, discourages an empathy with Nazism's real victims. In addition, the movement towards healing, Langer argues, necessarily involves forgetting. Werfel and Sachs seek to heal the damage and look to the future. Werfel's two opposites, Jacobowsky and Sterjbinsky (Judaism and Christianity), eventually end their animosities and unite in their fight against evil. Both Werfel and Sachs employed the biblical point of view not for apocalyptic ends but to restore hope and, in Werfel's case, incite action.

### *1.3.b. The German Interpretation*

#### *i. The Marxist Discourse*

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust*, pp. 51-63.

The National Socialists identified the Communists as one of their chief opponents. Jews were regarded as Communists as a matter of fact: not only was Karl Marx Jewish but Russian Jews had given their wholehearted support to the Revolution. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote that the Jews and the Marxists were the twin evils of society which he had only finally understood during his student days in Vienna.<sup>1</sup> In the SS training camps, run by Theodor Eike, soldiers were given ideological instruction against the Communists and Jews.<sup>2</sup> So it is not surprising that Communist writers in exile should depict mainly Communist concentration camp internees in their works and highlight the conflict as being primarily between Fascism and Communism. For example, Friedrich Wolf's 1933 play *Professor Mamlock*, depicts a German Jew who believes that his wealth and position will save him from the Nazis. Money, in fact, does not offer protection from persecution, but, as his son shows him, Communism does.<sup>3</sup>

The most notable writer who interpreted the Nazi years through Marxist eyes was Bertolt Brecht. In his 1932 play *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* (*Roundheads and Peak Heads*) the characters' racial hatred is derived from unfair distribution of wealth.<sup>4</sup> For Brecht, intolerance and war were inevitable elements of capitalist society.<sup>5</sup> As John Willett writes:

So he came during the 1930s to lump capitalism and Nazism on one side and Communism on the other... concluding that 'Fascism can only be fought by treating it as capitalism.'<sup>6</sup>

Although Willett's argument holds for both *Roundheads and Pointed Heads* and Brecht's later play *Aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* (*The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*), the case is not so straightforward with the chronologically middle play, *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches* (*Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*, 1935-8), a collection of short playlets examining daily life under National Socialism.<sup>7</sup> The reason for the change in style can be attributed to the conditions in which *Fear and Misery* was written and the audience at which it was aimed.<sup>8</sup> Brecht's close friend, Walter Benjamin, attributed this change to Brecht's

<sup>1</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, London: Hutchison, 1969, pp. 34-6 & p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Charles W. Sydnor Jr, *Soldiers of Destruction. The SS Death's Head Division, 1933-1945*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977, Chapter 1.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Wolf, *Professor Mamlock*, trans. Anne Bromberger, New York: Universum Publishers and Distributors, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> Bertolt Brecht, *Roundheads and Peakedheads*, in *Jungle of the Cities and Other Plays*, trans. N. Goold-Verschoyle, New York: Grove Press, 1966. The play began in 1931 as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* for the Berlin Volksbühne.

<sup>5</sup> Brecht had begun to study Marx in the late 1920s but he never became a member of the Communist Party.

<sup>6</sup> John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*, London: Methuen 1959, p. 196.

<sup>7</sup> Bertolt Brecht, *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*, in *Bertolt Brecht. Collected Plays*, John Willett and Ralph Manheim, eds, London: Methuen, 1970.

<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to assess any of Brecht's three anti-Nazi plays as his method was to re-work his scripts according to audience response. In exile Brecht never had this luxury and the scripts remain problematic to interpreters with many complaining that they feel like first drafts. Moreover, in the Bertolt Brecht Archive in former East Berlin reside a number of unpublished fragments. Several pieces pertain to *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*.

realization that historical parable plays did not produce instant political action. In the current situation, 'distancing' through the use of historical analogy led to political procrastination.<sup>1</sup>

It is argued that the major success of *Fear and Misery* is its accurate portrayal of life under the National Socialists, but apart from *The Jewish Wife* Brecht does not deal directly with anti-Semitism. Even when Brecht refers to repressive measures taken against the Jews, as in *Judicial Process*, the audience is only made aware of their repercussions through the effect they have on Aryans. Brecht was more concerned with illustrating the possibility of individual resistance rather than describing the violence itself. For Brecht, the 'Nazis' were not the 'true' Germans. The real Germans were the ones who suffered: the working classes, aware of the political situation but powerless to change matters.

Four months before Germany's invasion of Russia (and therefore before the beginning of the Final Solution) Brecht began work on an allegory about Hitler: *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*.<sup>2</sup> Again the structure and story line were in part moulded by the conditions of exile. He was in Finland but had his sights set on America. Brecht felt that by presenting his anti-Hitler themes in an American setting, the doors of Hollywood or Broadway might open to him. Brecht had always enjoyed gangster movies, so he parodied the rise of Hitler in the form of a mobster film.<sup>3</sup> At the very least, such an analogy would find common ground with the audience.

*Ui* is a parable of the rise of Hitler including the Night of Long Knives, the death of Hindenberg (Dogsborough), the Reichstag Fire of 1933, supposedly begun by Marinus van der Lubbe (Fish), the Anschluss (Dullfeet and Cicero). It was never performed in Brecht's lifetime and never revised. Brecht said he had written the play as a comedy, with the aim of 'destroying the usual disastrous respect felt for great murderers'.<sup>4</sup> His intention was to show that change was possible. As such, his works were especially poignant for a German audience.<sup>5</sup>

## ii. *The Christian Discourse*

To write about the Holocaust within a Christian framework was natural for many German authors. Germany was the seat of Northern European Catholicism and the birthplace of Protestantism. The horrors of National Socialism became the backdrop against which ethical

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock, introduction by Stanley Mitchell, London: Unwin Bros Ltd, 1973, pp. 37-39.

<sup>2</sup> Bertolt Brecht, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, trans. Ralph Manheim, London: Methuen 1992.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. viii-ix.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109. 'Change' is the key word in Brecht's vocabulary and humour was essential to this. The person or situation in need of change is ridiculed, reduced and shown as weak. Change is within ordinary people's grasp and the situation is shown as reversible. Comedy was a multifarious tool for Brecht: it was a revolt against tragedy - an artform which merely re-affirms the status quo because of its ritualistic nature which accepts suffering. In addition, following the essentially Bergsonian line that comedy appeals to the intellect, Brecht argued that it affords its spectators a critical distance through the use of *Verfremdungseffekt*.

<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the German public never saw his plays until well after Hitler's death and Germany's defeat by which point the plays could only act as warnings on the nature of totalitarianism in the postwar world.

dramas were played out. Individual moral choice and the fight to preserve one's faith against overwhelming odds became the central themes. For instance, Ernst Wiechert's novel, *Der Totenwald (The Forest of the Dead)*, written during the war years, lay hidden at the bottom of the author's garden until 1945.<sup>1</sup> Published in 1946, it is a semi-autobiographical story of Wiechert's incarceration in Buchenwald.<sup>2</sup>

The name of the novel's protagonist, Johannes, alludes to the martyred John the Baptist. The book is a Christian parable with Marxist leanings. Johannes's route to Buchenwald is likened to 'Christ's Calvary' and his decisions are based on 'Christian principles'. Nazism is seen as 'the kingdom of the anti-Christ' and the Nazis themselves are depicted as thugs, 'hardly able to read'. Most of Buchenwald's internees are Christians and clerics struggling to maintain their faith. Many are martyred. Johannes is diametrically opposed to the camp Kommandant, the son of a pastor, who has rejected God. The book is both a Christian tragedy and a celebration of the German Communist resistance, dedicated to 'the people who had the courage to resist and to give everything they had to the fight of human dignity and freedom'.<sup>3</sup>

Another German writer who interpreted events in a similar manner was Carl Zuckmayer. *Der Teufels General (The Devil's General)*<sup>4</sup> was written between 1942 and 1945. Zuckmayer had been revolted by warfare ever since he had volunteered at the age of seventeen for service in World War One. In 1924 he was engaged as a play reader by Max Reinhardt at the Deutches Theater, Berlin where he worked alongside Brecht who had been employed in a similar capacity. They became firm friends. In December 1925, Zuckmayer became an overnight success with his play, *Der Fröhliche Weinberg (The Happy Vineyard)*, which attacked the rising wave of anti-Semitism.<sup>5</sup> In 1931, his second play, *Der Hauptmann von Köpelnick (The Captain of Köpelnick)*, an attack on Prussian militarism, German bureaucracy, and bigotry assured him an international reputation.<sup>6</sup> With the arrival of the Nazis, Zuckmayer's fortunes floundered and he emigrated, first to Hollywood where he worked as a screenwriter and then to New York where he taught alongside Erwin Piscator. Eventually he decided to buy a farm in Vermont and pursue his writing.<sup>7</sup>

The idea for the play came about in December 1941, when Zuckmayer read a news item about an old acquaintance, Luftwaffe Lieutenant Ernst Udet, who had died flying an experimental plane in Germany. When they had originally met, Udet had warned

<sup>1</sup> Ernst Wiechert, *The Forest of the Dead*, trans. Ursula Stechow, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Wiechert was imprisoned at the end of 1938 for publicly sympathizing with Pastor Niemöller. He was released, five months later, in 1939 with the help of his contacts in the Communist party.

<sup>3</sup> Wiechert, *The Forest of the Dead*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Carl Zuckmayer, *The Devil's General*, in Haskell M. Block & Robert G. Shedd, eds, *Masters of Modern Drama*, New York: Random House, 1969.

<sup>5</sup> Carl Zuckmayer, *Gesammelte Werke*, Frankfurt-am-Main: Fischer, 1960.

<sup>6</sup> Carl Zuckmayer, *Der Hauptmann von Köpelnick*, H. F. Garten, ed., London: Methuen, 1961.

<sup>7</sup> Carl Zuckmayer, *A Part of Myself*, trans. Richard & Clara Winston, London: Secker and Warburg, 1970. First published in Germany in 1966 as *Als wärs ein Stück von Mir*.

Zuckmayer that any decent person should leave the country. When Zuckmayer asked Udet why he would not go into exile himself, Udet apparently smiled and answered that he loved flying too much. Then more seriously he commented, 'But one of these days the devil will fetch us all.'<sup>1</sup> Living in Vermont with no pressure from American producers, Zuckmayer began to bring Udet back to life as General Harras in a play written, as he said, 'for the desk drawer'.<sup>2</sup>

The storyline charts the course of General Harras who is instructed by his superiors to infiltrate the Resistance which is sabotaging German planes. *The Devil's General*, like *Fear and Misery*, presents the audience with a cross-section of German people who supported and maintained Hitler's regime. Whereas Brecht concentrates on political economics, Zuckmayer examines the psychological motivation of a handful of individuals. Zuckmayer did not share Brecht's belief that anti-Semitism and warfare were the inevitable results of capitalist society alone.

Zuckmayer, like Brecht, divides his Nazis into ignorant opportunists such as the social climbing debutant Pootsie, and misled idealists such as General Eilers and his wife Anne, who sincerely believe that the war is a necessary step in the creation of a brave new world. Whereas Brecht, through epic technique, encourages his audience to judge the various responses to Nazism, Zuckmayer through naturalism and empathy persuades his audience to understand. Eilers and Anne are genuinely nice people who just happen to be Nazis.

Zuckmayer then adds another category - the lost ones - characterized by Lieutenant Hartmann. This segment of society, hard to define in any social sense, was vital in securing Hitler's power in the 1933 elections. Hartmann tells Harras how he lacked a purpose in life until the void was filled by the Hitler youth, then the Officers' School and the Luftwaffe. The cause of this vacuum, as with many of his generation, was the death of his father in the World War One and an emotionally absent mother. Zuckmayer felt that sometimes the simplest of truisms were forgotten in the struggle to rationalize events. In his autobiography he wrote that the largest portion of Hitler's support was derived from the apolitical masses, the wanderers and the lost ones to whom Hitler could give an identity and mission.<sup>3</sup> Zuckmayer had witnessed their conversion to the cause with his own eyes when he attended Hitler rallies in the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>4</sup> Eventually, Hartmann, on discovering the 'atrocities' in Lodz ghetto, decides to act against the regime.

Another young and lost character is Pootsie. Unlike Hartmann, she fails to maintain ethical standards and is set up as a portent for other Christians. In Act One she is presented as a rather vain, callous and selfish young girl. By Act Two, she assumes the role of the

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<sup>1</sup> Zuckmayer, *A Part of Myself*, pp. 381-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 382.

<sup>3</sup> Zuckmayer, *A Part of Myself*, p. 272.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 270-1.

Devil in the Temptation of Christ - Christ here being Harras. She offers him the possibility of unlimited power within the party:

I'll show you the world - You can only see it from the top! Look down. You're used to heights. Go ahead, look down at the others. Yes-men, sponges, jellyfish.<sup>1</sup>

But the main focus of the play is General Harras and his Christian pilgrimage. As the title - *The Devil's General* - suggests, Harras, initially, is in the service of dark forces. It is only when Lieutenant Hartmann tells him about Lodz ghetto that Harras is forced to question his relationship to God:

I never met him. But that was my fault. I didn't want to meet Him. He would have made me face decisions that I would rather avoid... I don't know Him but I have looked the devil in the eye. That's how I know that there must be a God.<sup>2</sup>

Zuckmayer is essentially a moralist concerned with the ethical decisions men must make in moments of crisis. *The Devil's General* describes Harras's path, not from ignorance to awareness, but from apathy to action. A bon viveur and pilot from World War One, Harras can see, all too plainly, the hypocrisy both of the war and the Nazis. He initially channels his anger into making wisecracks against the regime whilst doing what he can on a small scale: he rescues his chauffeur, Korrianke, from a concentration camp and plans to rescue another Jewish friend, Doctor Bergmann. Then three events change Harras's life: he is interrogated for two weeks in 'Hotel Gestapo'; Eilers dies a useless death on the eastern front; and, more importantly, Doctor Bergmann commits suicide with his Aryan wife. Harras now decides that he can no longer avoid his Christian duty:

Now let's look in the mirror and be moved by our reflection. What noble human beings we are! Everybody has his conscience Jew - or several of them so he can sleep nights. But you can't buy yourself free with that. That's self-deception. We're guilty for what's happening to thousands of people we don't know and can never help. Guilty and damned for all eternity. Permitting viciousness is worse than doing it.<sup>3</sup>

Zuckmayer is attacking Allied and German indifference to the systematic extermination of the Jews. 'Everybody knows what's going on in this country!' Harras attests. 'Those who don't know, don't want to know.'<sup>4</sup>

Zuckmayer could not condone the belief that Nazism was as an aberration in the romantic image of 'eternal' Germany. His choice of a Luftwaffe general as protagonist was crucial. The armed forces and civil servants were traditionally seen as the repositories of national honour unlike the SS and SA. Harras, however, cannot distance himself from the atrocities on the ground that he is not a member of the Nazi Party. He is still German and,

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<sup>1</sup> Zuckmayer, *The Devil's General*, p. 948.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 954.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 940.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 955.

therefore, responsible. As the German Resistance worker, Oderbruch, tells Harras:

You are Hitler's weapon with which he can win. And if he wins - if Germany wins this war - then Germany is lost... There is no subjugation that would not be liberation for our people.<sup>1</sup>

The reasons for Oderbruch's stance are purely moral. The simplicity of his argument refutes the most plausible answer any bystander could have given during and after the war for turning a blind eye:

None of my brothers died in a concentration camp. I loved no Jewish girl. No friend of mine was hunted out of the country. I didn't know anyone who fell on June 30th. But one day I was ashamed that I was German. Since then - I can't rest - till it's over.<sup>2</sup>

Harras, ashamed of his own inaction, is suddenly cornered by the Gestapo who now believe that he has engineered the sabotage all along. Harras knowingly takes to the air in one of the suspect planes. He calls upon 'Divine judgement' to decide his fate. The plane crashes and Oderbruch recites the Lord's prayer for the General's soul. Harras, a born-again Christian, becomes the martyr figure of the play.

The Jewish Doctor Bergmann never appears on stage. His story is only reported. The lack of specific reference to Jewish suffering is striking at this comparatively late date.<sup>3</sup> The reason can perhaps be found in Zuckmayer's friendship with Peter Suhrkamp. Suffering from chronic ill health after his detention in a concentration camp, Suhrkamp told Zuckmayer about his experiences and made him promise never to include any of his own torments in his writing. Such knowledge, Suhrkamp argued, merely, 'stimulated the instinct for cruelty', and 'aroused a secret pleasure in imagining, inflicting and suffering pain'. Moreover, 'it would evoke the evil spirit once more'.<sup>4</sup>

By writing a play which avoids the Jewish perspective, Zuckmayer produced a Christian tragedy which celebrates the heroism (and mourns the deaths) of German martyrs. Harras, on more than one occasion, refers to himself as 'an honorary Jew'. Zuckmayer's victims of the Nazi campaign, as in the case of Brecht, are thus identified as the Germans themselves and the heroes are those who fought and died in the German resistance.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 956. .

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The play was completed in 1945 and was first performed at the Zürich Schauspielhaus the same year.

<sup>4</sup> Zuckmayer, *A Part of Myself*, p. 393.

### 1.3. Conclusion

All playwrights under discussion agree that the carnage inflicted by the Nazis was a tragedy. The question was, whose tragedy was it? For a Communist writer, the war was an ideological battle between Fascism and Communism; for a Christian writer it was a struggle between the forces of good and evil; for the Jew it was a confrontation between the Jews and God and, by default, the Jews and the rest of the world. Whatever their personal perspectives, the exiles' worldview was binary and exclusive. Certain narratives were foregrounded above others.

Characters, therefore, tend to be one dimensional. The Nazis, in particular were demonized, removed from the continuum of German history, and from humanity itself. The only exception is Zuckmayer who presents a varied cross-section of Nazis: Eilers and his wife, Pootsie and Hartman. But even Zuckmayer includes a more one-dimensional category of Nazi, embodied in the figure of Doctor Schmidt-Lausitz, the minister of Culture in the Propaganda Ministry. Based on Josef Goebbels, Lausitz is the authentic, policy-making, card-carrying Nazi. Intelligent, shrewd and merciless, he prefigures Rolf Hochhuth's chilling 'Doctor' in *Der Stellvertreter (The Representative)*.<sup>1</sup> Schmidt-Lausitz is presented as a demon in the same way as Pootsie. The crucial difference is that whereas Pootsie is redeemable, Schmidt-Lausitz is the incarnation of pure evil. His inhuman persona completes Zuckmayer's Christian psychomachia.

A three-dimensional portrait of the Jewish victim was generally eschewed. Whether it was because writers in exile wanted to alert the world to the universal danger of National Socialism (Brecht) or whether the conditions of exile forced particular Jewish references to become veiled (Werfel) or whether it was a matter of taste (Zuckmayer) or even personal belief (Sachs), Jewish characters remain peripheral, caricatured, generic or obscure. In addition, as writers attempted to deconstruct what was happening, they responded by calling on familiar patterns in the attempt to understand. This drawing to the familiar was possibly a response to the incomprehensibility of the horrors which challenged both the imagination and language itself.

These various interpretations, especially those of Brecht and Zuckmayer, laid the ground for other authors in the 1960s such as Rolf Hochhuth, Peter Weiss and Rolf Schneider. Brecht's and Zuckmayer's themes and narrative strategies became the accepted norms of various historicist accounts of the war and the Holocaust.

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<sup>1</sup> Rolf Hochhuth, *The Representative*. The parallels between the two plays are striking and will be developed in chapter 3.

## 1. Conclusion

Israeli and German exile writers tended to interpret the conflict in broad brush strokes that reduced the Nazis to symbolic constructs. For the Zionists, the spectacle of European degradation and suffering vindicated their political agenda in Palestine. The humiliations of the Diaspora were held up as a never-to-be-repeated experience for the inhabitants of the young state. Because of this pithy interpretation of events, stock characters developed which were intended to act as models of behaviour for Israelis. Partisans and fighters were lionized; traditionalists and pacifists ostracized.

Stereotypes were also perpetuated by the biblical vision. The orthodox surmized that history was cyclical and, in light of the scale of destruction, there was a need to re-interpret Man's relationship to God. However, the Covenant still stood. Writers who have followed this latter course include Emil L. Fackenheim and Elie Wiesel. These two survivors seek to analyse and interpret events. Many other survivors were either reluctant or incapable of interpretation. 'All I know are the facts', states Françoise at the opening of Charlotte Delbo's *Qui rapportera ces paroles? (Who Will Carry The Word?)*,<sup>1</sup> and some of the most naked language, and consequently most painful reading, can be found in the bare prose style of the Polish survivor, Tadeusz Borowski. Delbo, Borowski and others, such as Helen Lewis and Olga Lengyel, chose to express and communicate what they had experienced, not *consciously* interpret. Yet many other survivors, such as Primo Levi and Jean Améry, wanted to do more than just 'relate' their stories. They tried to understand and expand on what they had experienced.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of all these responses, be they German, Jewish or Israeli, lies in the attempt to mould the Holocaust story for active purposes. In the camps and ghettos, for example, some artists strove to alert the world, incite action against the Nazis or give spiritual sustenance to the damned. The exiles wrote to provoke international intervention. In the Yishuv, the Holocaust acted as a cement to unite and define a people.

Interpretations are necessarily subjective. When the shaping of them has more to do with the act of generating political response than alerting the world to the individual suffering, not all the story gets re-told. In the postwar years this process was accelerated as sweeping international changes ensured that politically preferential narratives assumed supremacy over others. In Israel, for example, the Holocaust became incorporated into Zionist history; in Germany, the Nazis were separated from the general population and demonized as manifestations of evil or capitalist war mongers. The 'problem' of where to place the victims in various accounts was circumvented by their exclusion. Master-narratives arose in both Israel and Germany. To stray from these historicisms often caused

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<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Delbo, *Who Will Carry The Word?*, in Robert Skloot, ed., *Theater of The Holocaust*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982, p. 273.

heated debate over the next fifty years. The singularity with which postwar master-narratives were adhered to can perhaps be highlighted by comparing them to works created by the persecuted and the survivors. Whereas, for example, writers in the Germanies and Israel created stories and discourses on roughly the same repeated themes (Germany: universalization of evil; Israel: Zionist supremacy) narratives created in the camps and ghettos were not the result of a single historicist narrative. The victims produced a wide and conflicting panoply of responses as have the survivors ever since.

## CHAPTER 2

### 1945-1960

#### Introduction

Fictional and testimonial writing on the Holocaust was scant in the immediate postwar years. Survivors were consumed in the practical difficulties of emigration and the search for employment, accommodation and lost relatives. Only a handful of testimonies were published, usually in a limited edition for a specialist audience. Elie Wiesel's first novel published in Yiddish under the title, *And the World Was Silent*, only became widely read when it was re-printed in an abridged version in French under the title *La Nuit (Night)* in 1958.<sup>1</sup> However, this absence of survivor and Holocaust literature was also the result of far-reaching political transformations in Europe and Palestine.

After 1945 both occupied Germany and the Yishuv faced similar problems and underwent matching changes. The formation of the State of Israel in 1948 followed by the German Democratic and Federal Republics in 1949 naturally generated questions about national identity and cultural heritage. Although both the Germans and the Jews had longstanding cultural traditions, the general clamour was for a new beginning and a fresh identity which theatre and the arts were called upon to help shape and articulate. In East Germany continuity was sought between anti-Fascist writers under Hitler and postwar writers. In West German literary circles the slate was wiped clean with the *Nullpunkt* or 'Zero Hour' - an attempt to extirpate the corrupting influence of Nazism.<sup>2</sup>

Such a forceful mobilization towards the future demanded that the recent past be quickly laid to rest. A new world order dominated by the Americans, Soviets and the oil producing countries of the Middle East seemed imminent. There was little time for reflecting on the immediate past, if one wanted to take advantage of the swift economic and political changes.

Furthermore, the recent past remained unarticulated because of physical constraints. Theatre in both countries faced a myriad of problems, namely the lack of theatre buildings and new scripts by indigenous writers. In Germany ninety-eight theatres had been gutted or destroyed by bombing. Financial constraints, inadequate printing facilities and disruption to communications systems added to the problems.<sup>3</sup> In Israel there were only three professional

<sup>1</sup> Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders*, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> Siegfried Mandel, *Group 47. The Reflected Intellect*, with a preface by Harry T. Moore, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973. Also known as the *Stunde Null*, the term *Nullpunkt* was first coined by the German writer Hans Werner Richter.

<sup>3</sup> L. Licht-Knight, *Reconstruction in the West German Theatre from the Nullstunde to the Currency Reform*, Warwick University: Ph.D. thesis, 1986, p. 15.

theatre companies: the Habima, the Ohel and, since 1944, the Cameri.<sup>1</sup> Finances were tight. By 1948, for example, the Habima faced liquidation.<sup>2</sup>

Radio was the only medium capable of reaching large audiences in either country. It was also inexpensive. Radio requires no auditorium, costumes, visual design, high rehearsal costs, or road and rail links. Radio drama was acutely important in the immediate postwar years both in shaping national identity and nurturing new writing talent. The output was enormous: in Germany, for instance, of the 200 radio plays published 1927-1970, 160 (80 per cent) were performed between 1945 and 1960.<sup>3</sup>

In both countries, the question of language played a key role in the articulation of national identity. A language was needed that would be free of association from the recent past and set the agenda for the envisaged future. The Israelis wanted to distance themselves from the image of the Jew as a defenceless victim and the Germans from their National Socialist inheritance. In Germany, Thomas Mann, Ernst Wiechert and other writers warned that the German language had been perverted by the euphemistic 'Nazi-Deutsche'.<sup>4</sup> Taking their line from Ludwig Wittgenstein,<sup>5</sup> they believed that because 'thought' was determined by language then the German nation must have been corrupted by the hollow, baroque-like rhetoric of Nazism with its hyperbolic emotionalism and the euphemistic nature of its vocabulary: 'liquidation', 'resettlement', 'Final Solution', 'vermin'.<sup>6</sup> In reaction, there was an impetus to strip down language to its bare minimum in a Hemmingway-like style. In particular, *Gruppe 47* (Group 47), a floating company of writers led by Hans Werner Richter, Walter Kolbenhoff and Alfred Andersch, were at the forefront of this quest for a new language. The first style of writing they developed was *Kahlschlag* (root and branch) - a deliberately bare, anti-metaphorical style which sought a photographic realism. Its main objective was to portray reality in a detached manner, promoting a critically objective response in the audience. The 'facts' were sought above all else. Many of these writers started their careers in journalism and radio.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1945 The Habima acquired its first permanent building. The Ohel had a permanent 1,100 seat hall built in 1940. The Cameri was established by the Czech director Josef Millo in Tel Aviv in January 1944. See: Freddie Rokem, 'Hebrew Theater From 1889 to 1948', in Ben Zvi, ed., *Theater in Israel*, pp. 51-84; p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> Levy, *The Habima-Israel's National Theatre 1917-1977*, p. 242.

<sup>3</sup> Renate Usmani, 'The Invisible Theater: The Rise of Radio Drama in Germany after 1945', in *Modern Drama* Vol. 13 (1970-71), pp. 259-69; p. 259.

<sup>4</sup> Sidra Dekoven Ezrahi, *By Words Alone: the Holocaust in Literature*, London: University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 11: 'Some of the major postwar writing in Germany has been read as an attempt to purge, through subtle parodies and ironic reversals of traditional literary modes and forms of speech, the language and the literature of their implications in the crimes of Nazism.'

<sup>5</sup> Their contemporary preoccupation arose out of Wittgenstein's writings on language and thought in the 1920s. See: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D.F. Pears & B.F. Guinness with introduction by Bertrand Russell, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961. (First published in Germany in 1921).

<sup>6</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jewry*, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961, p. 216.

In the Yishuv, too, radio was instrumental in the dissemination of the 'new' language where Hebrew officially superseded Yiddish - the language of the Diaspora associated with subservience and victimhood. In theory, modern Hebrew, although its roots lie deep in the scriptures, was to be the forward-looking language of the new state. Hebrew was associated with the Palestinian roots of Judaism: the Jew as biblical hero rather than dispossessed victim.

Initially, the emerging national identities were generated out of a reaction against undesirable older images rather than new concepts being formulated. New German identity, in both east and west, developed out of a rejection of Nazism and its cultural associations. West German writers sought continuity between themselves and those of the Enlightenment whilst writers in the east were seen as the inheritors of the Communist anti-Fascist tradition. The Zionist image was articulated by presenting it as the antithesis of everything the Diaspora represented. The new identities defined themselves in relation to their 'other'.

The Germans' 'divorce' from their National Socialist past was also encouraged by the Allies' attempts at re-education. War crimes trials, especially those at Nuremberg, were designed to have a pedagogic effect.<sup>1</sup> It was felt that the Germans had to be shown the atrocities committed by their leaders, army and their own apathy in graphic detail. BBC, British Movietone and American Fox Movietone newsreels of the liberation of Belsen and other camps were shown in cinemas. For example, *Atrocities - the Evidence*, filmed at Buchenwald, was released in April 1945 and first shown in Berlin.<sup>2</sup> Those who had lived near concentration camps were made to parade in front of the corpses:

Their noses were rubbed in Nazi filth. In some places the occupying soldiers physically compelled them to visit the Nazi concentration camps and even to exhume the rotting corpses of Buchenwald and Belsen. The newspapers were filled with horror stories of Nazi atrocities.<sup>3</sup>

Eugene Kogon's *Der SS Staat: Das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager (The Theory and Practice of Hell)*, written four weeks after his liberation from Buchenwald, was published in Germany, December 1945.<sup>4</sup> In it, he systematically described the voyage of a human being through the concentration camp world. James Stern, in 1945, recorded seeing posters with the caption 'Who Is Guilty?' on shop fronts, trees and fences. Below the wording were photographs of emaciated concentration camp prisoners. Sometimes the poster would answer its own question with the sentence, 'You Are Guilty.' This was less than a

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<sup>1</sup> Bradley F. Smith, *The Road to Nuremberg, The Documentary Record 1944-1946*, Stanford, Hoover Institute Press, 1982, p. x.

<sup>2</sup> Pathé and Fox footage at the British Film Institute, London.

<sup>3</sup> Constantine Fitzgibbon, *Denazification*, London: Michael Joseph 1969, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Eugene Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, trans. Heinz Norden, New York: Octagon Books (division of Farrar, Strauss & Giroux), 1973.

week after Germany's unconditional surrender. Stern recorded the silence and genuine shock he felt among the groups of Germans who gathered around these posters.<sup>1</sup> The Allies wanted to instil the idea of 'collective guilt', but the response to this Allied education campaign was mixed. Martha Gellhorn, returning to Germany, noted that many Germans believed the authenticity of photographs were dubious; some insisted that they originated with Russian intelligence and were, in fact, pictures of German POWs.<sup>2</sup> Christa Wolf states that many Germans reacted by denying what they had known and pointed the finger of responsibility at a minority of government officials and psychopaths.<sup>3</sup> In 1947 Karl Jaspers (who had been imprisoned in Dachau) published *Die Schuldfrage (The Question of German Guilt)* which implicated ordinary Germans, to varying degrees of responsibility, in the horrors:

We were German nationals at the time when the crimes were committed by the regime which called itself German... The destruction of any decent, truthful German polity must have its roots also in modes of conduct of the majority of the German population. A people answers for its polity... We are collectively liable<sup>4</sup>

The notion of collective guilt became a raw issue. When Allied troops liberated the concentration camps, Thomas Mann remarked with shame that it had taken an outside force to defeat Germany when his countrymen should have liberated themselves. He regretted the moral fibre of his people had been collectively corrupted. Walter von Molo replied to Thomas Mann in an open letter printed in August 1945 in the *Münchener Zeitung*, rejecting his accusation of German collective responsibility as the average German in the street (or even, for that matter, in the Wehrmacht or Luftwaffe) had little in common with the psychopaths who ran the camps.<sup>5</sup> Mann repeated his argument in his 1947 novel, *Doctor Faustus*:

Let us call them the sinister possibilities of human nature in general that here has come to light. German people, in their tens of thousands, in their hundreds of thousands, it was who committed what humanity shudders at.<sup>6</sup>

The most important event which added fuel to this debate was the Nuremberg Trial begun in 1946 and followed by twelve minor trials. These were intended to act as a lecture to all

<sup>1</sup> James Stern, *The Hidden Damage*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1947, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Martha Gellhorn, 'Ohne Mich: Why I Shall Never Return to Germany', printed in *Granta*, Vol. 42 (Winter 1992), Penguin Publications, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> Wolf, *A Model Childhood*, p. 39: 'Anyone who later affirmed that he had not known about the concentration camps had completely forgotten that their establishment had been reported in the papers... they really had forgotten. Completely. Total war: total amnesia'.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Jaspers, 'The Question Of German Guilt', trans. A. B. Ashton, in Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. 3, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970, p. 389.

<sup>5</sup> Krispyn, *Anti-Nazi Writers in Exile*, p. 152.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus: The Life of The German Composer Adrian Leverskuhn as Told by a Friend*, trans. H.T. Lowe-Parker, Penguin, 1968, p. 462.

German citizens who had been involved with Nazism at all levels.<sup>1</sup> As Sheldon Glueck, Professor of Law at Harvard and a member of 'The Commission on Trial and Punishment of War Criminals of the London International Assembly, League of Nations Union', had warned, unless the Germans 'see at least the chief contrivers of bestiality punished, the very foundations of their mental and moral well-being will tend to be undermined'.<sup>2</sup>

Nuremberg, however, proved counter-productive to the Allied re-education programme. The trial began by compromising its own credibility with the initial charge that in the very act of starting a war Germany had committed a crime. Such an accusation was unprecedented. Moreover, the Soviets, who had committed atrocities themselves, were on the prosecutors' bench.<sup>3</sup> As Göring argued as he took the stand, it seemed a clear case of victors' history and victors' justice. The fact that there was no judicial precedent for such a trial, argues Jürgen Moltmann, encouraged popular discussion of the legal ramifications more than anything else and ordinary Germans became more engrossed in debates over the questionable legality of the trial rather than issues of individual responsibility.<sup>4</sup>

But the most damaging facet of the trial lay in the nature of those accused. The silent and sometimes rambling Rudolf Hess cut a particularly pathetic figure. Julius Streicher was dismissed as a maniacal half-wit. There was also widespread outcry that the Chief of Operations staff, Alfred Jodl, and the head of the German army, General Wilhelm Keitel, should be condemned on the same basis as Streicher, Göring or Bormann. They were all sentenced to death.<sup>5</sup> For others, punishment appeared lenient: some of those found guilty received less than four years imprisonment. The British had opposed the trial in the first place believing it unnecessary. They did not participate in the twelve subsequent trials.<sup>6</sup> Because the British did not give credence to the notion of war crimes the German people felt justified in following suit. Furthermore, the real criminals, according to the trial, were a handful of madmen in whose crimes the ordinary man in the street was not implicated. The ordinary Germans therefore could feel vindicated. They had done the right thing in lying low, waiting for the Nazi storm-clouds to pass.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the Dachau trials culminated in 425 executions almost all of which were carried out before 1947, it was the Nuremberg Trials which captured media attention because it was the policy makers that were on trial.

<sup>2</sup> Sheldon Glueck, *War Criminals - Their Prosecution and Punishment*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948. Quote taken from 1944 during the planning stages of the framework for a War Crimes' Trial.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the Russians murdered 15,000 Polish officers in the forest of Katyn in spring 1940.

<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Forgiveness and Politics. Forty-Nine Years After the Stuttgart Confession*, London: New World Publications, 1987, pp. 40-52.

<sup>5</sup> *The Nuremberg Trial and International Law*, eds, George Ginsburgs & V.N. Kudriavtsev, Dordrecht/Boston/London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1990, p. 275.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Taylor, 'Myths & Memories of World War Two', BBC2 (25 June 1995).

Another way in which the occupation authorities affected how the war years became emplotted was through cultural policies. In 1945 Germany, although theoretically split into four sectors under the Allied Occupation Authorities, was in reality divided in two political camps: east and west. The various authorities began to see the advantages of theatre as a means to mobilize and re-educate the masses. However, they were also aware of theatre's inherent dangers. The public nature of the theatre with its collective audience response was regarded as a potentially dangerous concoction. In the western sectors, a licence was required from the occupation powers to re-open a theatre and a second licence had to be obtained for each production and every subsequent performance.<sup>1</sup> The programming of postwar German theatres was therefore controlled by the occupation powers. Zuckmayer's *The Devil's General* was banned by the Americans until 1947 because the figure of General Harras was considered ambiguous and too 'likeable'. It was also banned in the French sector as was Wolfgang Borchert's *Draußen vor der Tür* (*The Man Outside*) - a play which was considered far too nihilistic to serve any constructive end.<sup>2</sup>

In the Yishuv too, the authorities influenced the cultural programme on offer. The degree to which the stage was considered a public utility can be seen by comparing Aharon Megged's 1958 play *Hannah Senesh* with his novel *Fortunes of a Fool* printed just one year later.<sup>3</sup> Hannah Senesh was a real-life Hungarian Jewess who had migrated to Palestine. During the war she volunteered to be dropped behind enemy lines as a spy. She was captured, tortured and executed. *Hannah Senesh* paints an idealized portrait of Israel as a moral utopia with brave and righteous soldiers. *Fortunes of a Fool*, however, is an indictment of Israeli militarism. Particularly contentious is the novel's comparison of Arabs and Jews as victims and the Israelis and Nazis as oppressors. The vocabulary Megged's Israelis use to refer to the Arabs (for instance, 'carrion' and 'heathens') was intended to evoke the Nazis' use of similar terms ('vermin'). Megged emphasizes Arabs as helpless victims and Israelis as victimizers. One Arab child is described as a sacrificial chicken weltering in her own blood.<sup>4</sup> Israeli soldiers, like the Nazis before them, take sadistic delight in humiliating the Arab population:

For him it was just a form of amusement, and during our journey he cracked jokes with the prisoners, spoke to them in Hebrew, made fun of them in Yiddish, asked stupid questions about their wives,

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<sup>1</sup> Licht-Knight, *Reconstruction in the West German Theatre*, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Innes, *Modern German Drama - A Study in Form*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Aharon Megged, 'Hannah Senesh', trans. Michael Taub, in *Modern International Drama* Vol. 27.1 (Autumn 1993), pp. 101-134.

Aharon Megged, *Fortunes of a Fool*, trans. Aubrey Hodes, London: Random House & Gollancz, 1962.

<sup>4</sup> Megged, *Fortunes of a Fool*, p. 247.

promised them all the delights of life in the next world, and enjoyed the fact that they didn't understand a single word of what he was saying.<sup>1</sup>

Such parallelism on the stage would have been impossible. As recently as 1988 Joshua Sobol's *The Jerusalem Syndrome* was forced to close at the Habima after popular outcry over identical analogies.<sup>2</sup> Megged's protagonist ends the novel both with a plea and warning to his fellow Israeli:

Evil breeds evil... and has to be stopped once and for all. Someone has to stop it at a certain moment. Because one murder will lead to another and one humiliation will lead to another and there'll never be an end of it.<sup>3</sup>

Megged's writing illustrates that certain themes were acceptable for the private sphere of the novel but not for the public domain of theatre. It was intended that theatre should deliver certain messages. Artistic considerations were subordinate. As Shosh Avigal writes, 'Until the 1960s theatre reviews referred almost exclusively to the ideological content or to the moral and national message of the plays.'<sup>4</sup>

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The years 1945-59 were a period of silence on the issue of the Holocaust, a transitional time when old political structures were reshaped and the maps of Europe and the Middle East re-drawn. There was little time to dwell on the past. In the United States and Israel, where the majority of survivors had emigrated, little attention was given to their stories. As Raul Hilberg writes:

The postwar societies of Israel and the United States were forward looking, and these countries were also confronted with new adversaries: Israel with the Arabs, and the United States with the Soviet Union. The survivor had no audience and frequently felt the isolation of someone who cannot be understood. Many memoirs were written, but not for large audiences.<sup>5</sup>

When attempts were made to articulate recent history, issues such as 'which' past and 'how' to present it dominated. How did the Holocaust fit into the histories of World War Two, Germany and the Jewish people? Was the Holocaust at the centre of the European conflict or was it a subplot? Who were the real perpetrators and who were the true victims? All involved parties had vested interests in which history should be recorded. For instance, as a

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua Sobol, *The Jerusalem Syndrome*, Tel Aviv, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Megged, *Fortunes of a Fool*, p. 271.

<sup>4</sup> Shosh Avigal, 'Patterns and Trends in Israeli Drama and Theater, 1948 to Present', in Ben Zvi, ed., *Theater in Israel*, pp. 9-50; p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders*, pp. 190-1.

Communist, Eugene Kogon gave very little space to the Jewish story in his chronicle of Buchenwald.

In general, the narratives which emerged can be described as a flight from the recent past by a retreat into the distant past. For the Germans, the preference to stage works from the Enlightenment accompanied by the brief return to Expressionism, romantic fatalism, and post-World War One 'Little-Man' themes in new writing signalled a withdrawal into the past. In the Yishuv, the adoption of Hebrew proved a rather Janus-like move. 'Hebrew is essentially a scriptural language, whose astoundingly rapid modernization has done little to obscure its biblical roots', writes Howard Needler. Hebrew is irrevocably linked 'to the chain of lamentations.'<sup>1</sup> When attempts were made to write about the Holocaust in Hebrew, the event was still cognitively registered as being placed in the traditional lamentational response.

Yet the years 1945-59 cannot be dismissed as a totally silent period on the Holocaust. Certain shifts are discernible, resulting from changes in the economic, intellectual and political arenas. In the first decade after the war, political and historiographical theories were rapidly formulated, accompanied by vast changes not only in the Yishuv and Germany, but Europe and the Middle East. Therefore, this chapter is subdivided into three time frames: 1945-1947/8; 1948-1954/5; 1955-1960.

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<sup>1</sup> Howard Needler, 'Red Fire upon Black: Hebrew in the Holocaust Novels of K. Tsetnik', in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed., Berel Lang, New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988, pp. 234-44.

## 2.1. 1945 -1947/8

### *Transition*

#### 2.1.a. *The Divided Germany*

The immediate postwar years were characterized by the need to find pragmatic solutions to the consequences of Germany's defeat rather than reflect on the recent past. Many cities had been reduced to the same state as Dresden. Seven million Germans had been killed including over three million civilians.<sup>1</sup> In the British zone alone it was estimated that twenty-two per cent of housing had been destroyed with a further thirty-five per cent severely damaged. Many slept in cellars or on the streets. New housing programmes did not get underway until the end of the decade and even by the late 1950s there was still a severe housing deficit.<sup>2</sup> This situation was exacerbated by an influx of around ten million refugees from German-speaking areas of Europe now under Allied authority.<sup>3</sup> In addition, basic industries and communications networks had been destroyed. But the major problems, as the Allied powers entering Berlin discovered, were the insufficient food and fuel reserves. In many areas of Germany, people were on the verge of starvation.<sup>4</sup> When the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe took stock of food supplies in the Western zone of occupation there was only enough food to last a maximum of sixty days.<sup>5</sup>

In such an atmosphere the German people had little time to reflect on Nazi atrocities. They had their own lives to rebuild and their own dead to mourn. As Karl Jaspers wrote:

One simply does not want to suffer any more. One wants to escape the misery and live, but does not wish to ponder. The mood is as if one expects to be compensated after the terrible long suffering or at least to be comforted; but one does not want to be burdened with guilt.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Kramer, *The West German Economy 1945-1955*, New York: Berg Publishers, 1991, pp. 71-2.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Maier & Günter Bischoff, eds, *The Marshall Plan and Germany*, New York/Oxford: Berg Publishers (St Martin's Lane Press), 1991, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert C. Mayer, *The German Recovery and The Marshall Plan*, Bonn: Edition Atlantic Forum, 1969, p. 24. Grain was transported into Germany and rationing organized but consumption levels hovered just above starvation point for the first few years of peace. It has been estimated that the average calorific intake for a German citizen was less than 1,500 per diem. In the French sector it was closer to 1000. The average manual labourer requires about 2,500 - 3,000 calories a day just to maintain his/her weight - The fight for survival became the daily routine. *Ibid.*, p. 14: 'The scarcity of food immobilized all industrial and commercial efforts. Maintaining bare existence took almost all the energy and ingenuity of men and women to stay alive. Their money was nearly worthless because no one knew where inflation would end.'

<sup>5</sup> Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, p. 180.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

With starvation, homelessness and an economy that ran on a barter system (American cigarettes being the most sought after and convenient currency) the Allied authorities naturally prioritized pressing, domestic issues having little time for the question of the arts.

However, this initial attitude did not last long. The arts were to play a big part in shaping the image of postwar Germany - an image that had already been decided at the Yalta Conference in February 1945.<sup>1</sup> Roosevelt and Churchill agreed that a strong postwar Germany was desirable for two reasons. First, it would act as a logistical buffer state against the Soviet Union (the Americans believed Stalin harboured expansionist ambitions). Second, an economically weak and impoverished Germany would be a financial strain on the victors, perhaps dragging the world economy into another depression similar to that at the end of the First World War. The Americans, particularly, had everything to gain by creating favourable conditions to promote a strong but compliant Germany integrated into the global economy. By 'global', Roosevelt meant 'American'. So did his successor, Harry Truman. By 1945 the United States could only maintain economic growth by expanding overseas markets. Germany would therefore have to be superficially purged of Nazis, its communications and industries reconstructed, and its economy integrated into the western sphere of influence as soon as possible. In popular consciousness, the ideological battle of western democracy against the Nazis was replaced with one of western democracy versus Stalinism. It was at this juncture that the aid of the arts was enlisted. For instance, Group 47's genesis owed much to the Americans. General Eisenhower had issued orders to round up and prepare an élite of German anti-Fascist writers, teachers and administrators, of which Kolbenhoff, Andersch and Richter were the first.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, 'useful' ex-Nazis were secretly employed by the American authorities. For example, Richard Gehlen (formerly in charge of Nazi spying behind the Russian lines) was recruited for American intelligence purposes against the Soviets.<sup>3</sup> The Cold War was initially a phoney conflict initiated because the western zones had to be brought under the western sphere of influence while there was the time to exploit the situation against a debilitated Russia. As T.E. Vadney writes:

Indeed, the Iron Curtain image was a propaganda device to generate support for Western initiatives against the USSR precisely at a time when there was still an opportunity to act.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vadney, *The World After 1945*, pp. 36-42.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Demetz, *After the Fires - Recent Writing in the Germanies, Austria & Switzerland*, New York: Harcourt Jovanovich, 1986, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Vadney, *The World After 1945*, p. 204: 'Indeed, the evidence suggests that hundreds of Nazi officials were secretly brought to the United States and that some were even supplied with U.S. citizenship as part of a cover up.' The Americans secretly whisked away Werner von Braun (the developer of the V2 rocket) to the United States where he worked for the American space agency. Klaus Barbie, the notorious Butcher of Lyons, was given a new identity and utilized by American intelligence.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 50.

But the American cultural programme was *ad hoc* and disorganized compared to the Soviets'. The Russians had mobilized cultural activities in their sector before the notion had even dawned upon the western occupation authorities. Stalin hoped to woo the inhabitants of the eastern zone into the USSR's sphere of influence. The immediate Soviet programme was one of 'persuasion' not 'coercion'.<sup>1</sup> For Stalin, world revolution would only be conceivable when the USSR had become a strong enough entity in itself. After 1945 the USSR could not feed and protect its own citizens, let alone the inhabitants of what would later be termed its 'satellites'. The Soviet cultural policies shaped the war narrative for East Germans.

Soviets writers and politicians perceived World War Two as an ideological battle between Russia - the cradle of Communism - and Germany - the bedrock of Fascism. In numbers of dead and wounded, Russia suffered the greatest losses - both military and civilian. Until Spring 1944, the Soviets fought the war in Europe single-handedly while the British and Americans kept deferring a European invasion.<sup>2</sup> By 1945 the numbers of casualties spoke for themselves. It has been estimated that 20,000,000 Soviet civilians and soldiers lost their lives compared to a combined total of 1,000,000 Allied dead in all the theatres of war jointly.<sup>3</sup> The American military dead totalled 400,000.<sup>4</sup> Hitler's war against the Russians was ideological. The SS, for example, were indoctrinated, through the movement's creator, Theodor Eicke,<sup>5</sup> to extirpate Communists as well as Jews.<sup>6</sup> The first recorded experimental gassings at Auschwitz in September 1941 took place on 600 Russian POWs and 300 Jews.<sup>7</sup> Many Russian prisoners died in concentration camps, through gas, overwork and starvation. Additionally, many died as the result of medical experiments.

But, despite the destruction and the Communist political imperative, Stalin did not follow a dogmatic line. Because the devastation to the industrial heartland had been so immense, Russia's primary concern was consolidation and reparation not world domination.

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<sup>1</sup> Stalin had followed the plan of 'Socialism in One Country' after he had expelled Trotsky from the party in 1920. Whereas Trotsky firmly believed that the success of Communism could only be possible in a globally integrated market, Stalin was wary of the dangers inherent in the concept of one giant, Communist monolith at a time when the Soviet economy was still struggling. Despite Trotsky's exile, he remained a danger to Stalin's security. He was assassinated in 1940.

<sup>2</sup> Vadney, *The World After 1945*, pp. 33-4. Stalin was convinced that strategically, Germany's defeat would only come after a cross-channel invasion. This did not occur until the Spring of 1944 at which time Stalin told the Allies that it was about time that they participated and helped to reduce 'the enormous sacrifices of the Soviet armies compared with which the sacrifices of the Anglo-American armies are insignificant'.

<sup>3</sup> The exact death toll remained clouded in the immediate postwar years as Stalin wanted to conceal the extent to which Russia had been debilitated by the War.

<sup>4</sup> Vadney, *The World Since 1945*, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Sydnor, *Soldiers of Destruction*, pp.3-36.

<sup>6</sup> Vadney, *The World Since 1945*, p. 34: At the peak of Operation Barbarossa 199 German divisions as well as 63 from the Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian and Finish Axis were fighting on the Eastern front.

<sup>7</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 239.

To this end Stalin encouraged the caretaker governments of various countries to work with the old regimes to induce a 'self-help' philosophy rather than foster hopes for Soviet aid. Although nationalization was introduced in the eastern sector of Germany, private business enterprise was also encouraged, as was the establishment of independent political parties long before the same was effected in the western sectors.<sup>1</sup> The Soviets sought to influence and persuade a potential new ally, not crush the population into submission. The arts, especially film, were an ideal educational medium in this programme of 'persuasion'. On 3 July 1945 *Der Kulturbund zur Demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschland* (Cultural Union for the Democratic Renewal of Germany) was established in Berlin to bring together artists and intellectuals and encourage writing and publishing.<sup>2</sup> Almost as soon as the Soviets entered Berlin all actors were ordered back to their former theatres. Special privileges, such as food parcels, were allotted to actors and theatre staff.<sup>3</sup> The controlling authorities in the western zones, by comparison, required each artist to answer a de-Nazification questionnaire in order to assess their desirability. However, it was not until after the Berlin Blockade of 1948, that the Russians began to mobilize all the resources of the theatre for political directives. Their preferred mass medium was film. The Soviets quickly established the film production company, *Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft* (DEFA) under Russian license in 1946. Anton Kaes summarizes its work in the early postwar years:

Early on it produced a large number of films dealing with the psychological and social roots of National Socialism, excoriating these characteristics - subservience, obedience, political apathy - that had allowed Fascism to develop in Germany.<sup>4</sup>

Films such as *Affaire Blum* (*The Blum Affair*, directed by Erich Engels in 1947) and Wolfgang Staudt's *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (*The Murderers are Among Us*, 1946) were concerned with the causes of National Socialism, guilt and atonement. The latter tells the story of a former army captain, Brückner, who is responsible for the slaughter of a Polish community. After the war, he tries to hide his past by starting a business and settling down to a respectable family life. Pursued by a stranger who seeks revenge, Brückner realizes that he can only atone for his past through public trial. Arthur Elton, Advisor to Information Service Control in Germany, noted that films made under the Soviets, such as *The Murderers are Among Us*, were 'preferential' to those made in the western zones, for instance, Helmut

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Demetz, *After the Fires*, p. 109. The head of the Soviet Occupation Zone, General Zhuhkov, on 10 June 1945 issued a declaration allowing the re-establishment of anti-Fascist parties long before the Western allies did the same. By 5 July 1945, four parties had registered.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 111. One of the first books published was Theodor Plievier's international bestseller, the anti-war novel *Stalingrad* in 1945.

<sup>3</sup> Licht-Knight, *Reconstruction in the West German Theatre*, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History in Film*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 11.

Käutner's *In jeden Tagen (In Those Days)*, licensed by the British. The latter, he argued, showed ordinary Germans as 'orphans of the storm' whereas Staudt's film 'avoids these dangers' and placed the responsibility for Hitler in the ordinary Germans' hands.<sup>1</sup> Writers and directors in the east were encouraged to create pieces that would have a therapeutic effect on the nation. As Ian Wallace describes it, they were to act as a team of Professor Higginses to a country of Elizas.<sup>2</sup>

Yet German film makers in the Soviet zone portrayed the various persecuted groups as equal victims in what was designated a class war.<sup>3</sup> 'The prime objective of their films seems to be to glorify the socialist worker,' write Robert and Carol Reimer.<sup>4</sup> According to the narratives of these films, the German proletariat had been oppressed by the Nazi Fascists and the responsibility for the death camps was shared by the ruling 'few'. The Fascists had been defeated by the 'true' democrats, the Communists. The German population had been victims themselves. The word 'liberated' became the cornerstone of the Communist war narrative. The Germans had not been 'defeated' but rescued by the Russians and, more importantly, by their own Communist resistance. Much was made of German anti-Nazi activity and continuity was sought between German Communist resistance and the newly emerging German figures in Soviet sector's political arena.<sup>5</sup> In the eastern sector there was, therefore, no such thing as the 'Zero Hour'. An attempt was made from the beginning to identify the emerging new state with the German resistance and Soviet Communism.

Yet, in contrast to this emerging Soviet historiography, some East German films did focus on the specific Jewish catastrophe. *The Blum Affair*, for example, was based on a notorious anti-Semitic trial which occurred in provincial Germany in the 1920s where a Jewish businessman was framed for murder. *Ehe im Schatten (Marriage in the Shadow, 1947)* told the story of the actor, Joachim Gottschalk, and his Jewish wife, Meta Wolff, who were driven to suicide by Nazi persecution. But many other film makers focused on the German working class and, where reference was made to the atrocities, Polish or non-specific characters were substituted for Jews. For East German audiences the Jewish tragedy began to disappear from the war narrative.

While film makers working through DEFA were attempting to come to terms with the recent past, the Americans were flooding their zone with American war movies with their

<sup>1</sup> Roger Marvell & Heinrich Fraekel, *The German Cinema*, London: J. M. Dent & Sons, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Wallace, 'Teacher or Preacher? The Role of the Writer in the GDR', in *New German Studies*, Vol. 10 No. 1. (Spring 1982), pp. 1-20; p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ironically, in the USSR, anti-Semitism had a long tradition and was to be used many times after 1945 as a means for political oppression or to generate mass hysteria.

<sup>4</sup> Robert C. Reimer & Carol J. Reimer, *Nazi-retro Film. How German Narrative Cinema Remembers the Past*, Oxford: Macmillan International, 1992, p. 133.

<sup>5</sup> Judith Ryan, *The Uncompleted Past. Postwar German Novels and the Third Reich*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1983, p. 16.

generalized moralistic themes and portrayals of the ordinary 'good-guy' soldier pitted against bureaucratic and inhumane generals.<sup>1</sup> Re-opened theatres in the British zone churned out productions of J.B. Priestly and T.S. Eliot while the French, on the whole, gave preference to classics such as those by Molière.<sup>2</sup>

While the western allies were thus floundering in the theatrical sea, the Germans, themselves were attempting to come to terms with their recent past through film and drama. *Morituri* (1946), directed by Arthur Brauner, for example, was set in a concentration camp and *Lang ist der Weg* (*Long is the Road*, 1947), directed by H. B. Fredersdorf and M. Goldstein, was particularly popular. It followed the fate of the Jewish community in Berlin from the ghetto in 1939 to its end in the camps:

This and similar films have made quite an impression on audiences. The feeling of remorse at what has been done by Germans, the feeling of shame and, sometimes, of guilt - emotions considered indispensable for Germany's spiritual recovery - are known to have been displayed in the cinemas more than on any other occasion.<sup>3</sup>

Similar emotions were also displayed at the theatre. Since the time of Schiller, the stage has fulfilled a fundamental service in German speaking countries as a forum for philosophical debate. After 1945, as always, public concerns found their way onto the stage. Egbert Krispyn has argued that there was 'almost total literary stagnation from 1945 until 1947'.<sup>4</sup> Yet many theatres, such as the Munich Kammerspiele, survived the air-raids and, as L. Licht-Knight has shown, these surviving theatres received financial and material aid in finding their feet again.<sup>5</sup> Carl Ebert, working for the Allies, noted people queuing for over two hours in pouring rain to procure tickets.<sup>6</sup> Peter Brook journeying through Germany in 1946 noted:

In the burnt-out shell of Hamburg Opera only the stage itself remained - but an audience assembled on it whilst against the back wall on a wafer-thin set singers clambered up and down to perform *The Barber of Seville*, because nothing would stop them doing so. In a tiny attic fifty people crammed together while in the inches of remaining space a handful of the best actors resolutely continued to practise their art. In a ruined Düsseldorf, a minor Offenbach about smugglers and bandits filled the theatre with delight. There was nothing to discuss, nothing to analyse - in Germany that winter, as in London, a few years before, the theatre was responding to a hunger.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kaes, *From Heimat to Hitler*, p. 17. Over half of the 244 films shown in West Germany between the end of the war and 1959 were American.

<sup>2</sup> Licht-Knight, *Reconstruction in the West German Theatre*, p. 61. The Comédie-Française, for example, toured immediately after the war with *Tartuffe*.

<sup>3</sup> Reimer, *Nazi-retro Film*, p. 109, quoting Egon Larson in *Sight and Sound*, 1947.

<sup>4</sup> Krispyn, *Anti-Nazi Writers in Exile*, p. 151.

<sup>5</sup> Licht-Knight, *Reconstruction in the West German Theatre*, p. 18. In 1946, for example, the English Shakespeare Society made material donations of props and costumes to the Parktheater der Stadt Bochum.

<sup>6</sup> Cecil W. Davies, *Theatre for the People: The Story of the Volksbühne*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977, p. 117.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Brook, *The Empty Stage*, London: Pelican Books, 1972, p. 49.

Yet, new writing was scarce. Older writers (such as Georg Kaiser) were dead and the returning exiles (such as Thomas Mann) were viewed with suspicion.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the financial situation was desperate. Theatre managers were reluctant to invest hard-sought-for cash on risky enterprises and unknown authors. Indeed only three new works of any note by indigenous playwrights were staged before 1948.<sup>2</sup>

As the extent of the concentration camp atrocities became known a combination of guilt, avoidance and immediate material concerns made it questionable whether one could articulate an adequate response so soon. This was abetted by the question of 'representation'. The general feeling was that such was the magnitude of the Holocaust that any attempt to depict it would reduce and trivialize the event. In 1947 the French philosopher and Resistance worker, David Rousset, wrote of *l'univers concentrationnaire* (the concentratory universe).<sup>3</sup> For him, as Rudolf Hoëss commented at Nuremberg, Auschwitz was 'another planet'. As such, it stood outside the imagination for those who had not experienced it. To imagine oneself in such a terrain was impossible.

A survey of the repertoire on offer in the re-opened theatres indicate that the initial proclivity was for German classics especially those of the Enlightenment. The works of Lessing, Schiller and Goethe held manifold attractions. The disruption to the printing and publishing services meant that new or relatively unknown plays could not be widely circulated and it was through the German classics that recent history was investigated. But the most important attraction of these texts was that they not only embodied the zenith of German culture but the ideals of the Enlightenment philosophy which were rooted in the quest for moral truth. At a time when the Germans were being forced to face the most damning evidence of their capacity for depravity there was a need to rediscover what was 'good' in the German heritage. The nation needed to vindicate itself as well as question its culpability, but from a critical distance.

Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* opened at the Deutsches Theater, Berlin, on 7 September 1945. It was directed by Fritz Wisten, an Austrian-Jewish actor and director.<sup>4</sup> The story of a Jew who lost his wife and seven sons in a Christian pogrom at the time of the Crusades in the

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<sup>1</sup> The returning exiles, keen to begin work again, were treated with suspicion. Many were regarded as traitors. Thomas Mann particularly roused the ire of his countrymen. His wartime series of monthly radio talks to the German people over the BBC had provoked anger. Mann had endeavoured to open the eyes and hearts of his people to the evils of Nazism but to those Germans who remained his attitude appeared merely vindictive, hostile and ignorant.

<sup>2</sup> *The Man Outside* by Wolfgang Borchert; *The Public Prosecutor*, 1949, by Höchwalder; *The Conspiracy* by Walter Schäfer. A fourth is *Spring of Promise* by H.J. Reyfish which premièred in 1946.

<sup>3</sup> David Rousset, *The Other Kingdom*, trans. Raymond Guthrie, New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947, pp. 101-2.

<sup>4</sup> Fritz Wisten was formerly a member of the Jüdischer Kulturbund who was then interned in a concentration camp.

Holy Land had obvious parallels with recent history. A few weeks after the Berlin première, productions of *Nathan The Wise* opened in Bonn, Munich, Mannheim, Gießen and Stuttgart. The Deutches Theater retained the play in its repertoire until the early 1950s and it was the most widely performed classic play for the first five years after the war.

How far productions such as *Nathan the Wise* provided a route to national catharsis is debatable. The temporal distance enabled a flight from a confrontation with the specifics of historical reality. Yet it is doubtful that the Germans could be confronted with political realities so soon. L. Licht-Knight writes that Wisten's production avoided specific reference to recent history. Its focus was not directed at the theme of anti-Semitism but on the fairytale qualities of the story instead.<sup>1</sup> Wisten, was a former camp inmate and it therefore seems doubtful that he would have been averse to raking up the recent past. It seems probable that oblique productions such as *Nathan* tended to find favour not only because the topic of anti-Semitism was sensitive but because stage presentations, unlike literature, rely on visual images and the collective nature of an audience response. Germans had seen the pictures of the camps in their papers, on Allied posters and in darkened cinemas. They did not need to be confronted with the same images in a public arena which sought a public response.

Observing the example of *Nathan the Wise* and also watchful of Soviet activities in the cultural sphere, the western allies realized the potential of theatre as an educational medium.<sup>2</sup> Works by anti-Nazi exile writers were licensed in the belief that the anti-Fascist messages of the plays would augment the re-education process. Crucially, most of these plays refer to or centre on the German Resistance movement. The image of ethically-minded Germans obviously appealed to the occupation forces and to German sensibility. For the authorities the plays were illustrations of how Germans should have reacted to the Fascist 'dictatorship'. For the Germans, they offered an alternative view of events to the younger generation and the outside world. The 1946/7 winter-summer season in Berlin alone testifies to the need to establish the resistance movement as a preferential image of wartime Germany. Ernst Toller's *Pastor Hall*, about a cleric interned in a concentration camp, opened in Berlin on 25 January; Lilian Hellman's 1941 play *Auf der Anderen Seite (Watch on the Rhine)*<sup>3</sup> about an American-German family engaged in anti-Nazi resistance opened at the Hebbel Theater in February; and in June, Werfels's *Jacobowsky and the Colonel* had its German première. This spate of plays continued with Wolfgang Langhoff's production of scenes

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<sup>1</sup> Licht-Knight, *Reconstruction in the West German Theatre*, chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 30-3. The American Benno D. Frank, in the Information Cultural Division, submitted a report in March 1947: 'Since centuries the German people has been trained to believe in the theater as a great educational institution comparable only with the significance of universities in the American way of life.'

<sup>3</sup> Lilian Hellman, *Watch on the Rhine*, in Lilian Hellman *6 Plays*, New York: Vintage, 1979.

from Brecht's *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* at the Deutsches Theater in 1948.<sup>1</sup> But the most widely performed of all the exile dramas was Zuckmayer's *The Devil's General*.

The preoccupation with the German Resistance Movement was understandable. Naturally most Germans tried to distance themselves from the Nazi atrocities whatever their connection. The periodical *Der Ruf* (later banned by the Allies) systematically attempted to distance the soldiers of the German Wehrmacht from the dishonour associated with the SS and the concentration camps. Alfred Andersch was especially prolific in extolling the 'astounding military deeds of the young Germans in this war'.<sup>2</sup> Young Wehrmacht soldiers were contrasted to the criminals on the stand at Nuremberg. At the beginning of 1946 the author Ricarda Huch proposed the creation of a centre for the research and documentation of the multiple heroic and unknown acts of resistance to the Nazis.<sup>3</sup> Much was made in the media of the July 1944 bomb plot against Hitler and the icon of the young Prussian officer, Klaus von Stauffenberg.<sup>4</sup>

The Luftwaffe martyr of *The Devil's General*, as the *Deutsche Volkszeitung* noted, was a replica of Stauffenberg.<sup>5</sup> This parallel explains the play's incredible success once the ban had been lifted. Its German première, directed by Friedrich Brandenburg, was on 8 November 1947 at the Deutsches Schauspiel in Hamburg. During its first season alone, the play was performed in seventeen theatres for a total of 844 performances.<sup>6</sup> In 1954 it was made into a film by Helmut Käutner having been performed on the German stage over 2000 times.<sup>7</sup> A German theatre critic, Hanns Braun explained its success:

Many Germans who had learned that no one can escape the web of a totalitarian regime felt that Zuckmayer explained and to an extent even justified them in their predicament. Here was an outsider who had perceived that everything 'inside' had been by no means as orderly, as simple, as unscrupulous or as devoid of opposition as it might have appeared to the outside world. Zuckmayer, with the insight of love, understood that the degree of guilt for the individual with freedom of choice and the advantage

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<sup>1</sup> Langhoff had taken over the Deutsches Theater when he returned to Germany in 1945. He was one of the most visible anti-Nazi activists. Before 1933 he had been an actor in Düsseldorf until he had been sent to Börgermoor concentration camp for communist activities. On release in 1934 he fled to Switzerland where he became one of the most important actors at the Zürich Schauspielhaus. It was there that he wrote his memoirs *Die Moorsoldaten: 13 Monate Konzentrationslager (The Moors Soldiers: Thirteen Months in a Concentration Camp)* which was published in Switzerland in 1935 and thereafter translated into twenty-eight languages.

<sup>2</sup> Siegfried Mandel, *Group 47*, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Anson Rabinbach & Jack D. Zipes, eds, *Germans and Jews Since the Holocaust - the Changing Situation in West Germany*, New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986, p. 187.

<sup>4</sup> 'The Bomb Plot' or 'The General's Plot' of July 1944 was an attempt, led by Count Claus Von Stauffenberg, to blow up Hitler. See Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, *Stauffenberg and the Mystical Crusade Against Hitler*, London: Penguin, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> *Deutsche Volkszeitung* (14 July 1948). The reviewer described the play as a glorification of the July Bomb Plot.

<sup>6</sup> Licht-Knight, *Reconstruction in the West German Theatre*, p. 102.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Patterson, ' "Bewältigung der Vergangenheit" or "Überwältigung der Befangenheit" Nazism and the War in Postwar German Theatre', in *Modern Drama* 33 (March 1990), pp. 120-128; p. 121.

of perspective differed from that from the individual who was but a cog in a highly developed system of evil each part of which appeared in itself innocuous.<sup>1</sup>

Braun called for young writers to utilize 'drama of the German resistance' not only to articulate the recent past but to hold up to future generations a model of behaviour.<sup>2</sup> Zuckmayer felt the play was being wrongly interpreted as a glorification of the Resistance. After the Eichmann Trial in 1961, judging that his play was too simplistic and condoned those who did not stand up to the Nazis, he withdrew all future performance rights.<sup>3</sup>

The Nuremberg Trials and the 'discovery' of the Resistance movement provided an opportunity for Germans to distinguish between 'decent' citizens and those who actively supported Hitler. The division between the Wehrmacht and the SS and Reich leaders was widened. In *Der Ruf*, Alfred Andersch expressed the view that innocent, young Wehrmacht soldiers were the victims of the political machinations from Berlin. The attitude was reminiscent of the sentiment expressed at the end of World War One where public opinion generated the myth that the German army was defeated not by the enemy but by ambitious self-serving politicians in league with vested business interests:

The warriors of Stalingrad, El Alamein and Cassino, to whom, even their opponents paid respect, are innocent of the crimes at Dachau and Buchenwald... The real enemies of the young soldiers who braved death on all European and African fronts are the political and military criminals... The nation will again have its honour when these traitors are defrocked.<sup>4</sup>

The need to distance oneself from Nazi crimes and to mourn one's dead explains the phenomenal success of the other most widely performed play of this period - *The Man Outside* by Wolfgang Borchert. This was the first new script of any note by a German author and also the most widely performed indigenous play until the early 1960s.<sup>5</sup> Although *The Man Outside* is not a glorification of anti-Nazi resistance much was made of the fact that its young author, Wolfgang Borchert, spent six months in solitary confinement in 1942 under sentence of death for 'plain speaking in private letters'.<sup>6</sup>

The reason for the play's success does not lie in any depiction of resistance to the Nazi regime but in its generalization of horror, warfare, atrocity and race. It also gave expression to the German need to lament their own war dead. The piece unites all victims - whatever side they fought on or died. This universalization can be traced back to Borchert's

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<sup>1</sup> Hanns Braun, *The Theatre in Germany*, Munich: F. Bruckmann - KG, 1952, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Innes, *Modern German Drama*, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Mandel, *Group 47*, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> In 1949 *The Man Outside* was filmed by Wolfgang Leibeneiner

<sup>6</sup> Wolfgang Borchert, *The Man Outside*, trans. David Porter with introduction by Stephen Spender, London: Jupiter Books (Calder and Boyars), 1966, p. 1.

Expressionist roots but, as Peter Demetz argues, it was also indicative of an impulse in contemporary writing at the time.<sup>1</sup>

The play was given its first production on 21 November 1947 at the Hamburger Kammerspiele. It was directed by Wolfgang Liebeneiner, nine months after its radio broadcast. The actor Hans Quest, for whom the leading role of Beckmann was written, apparently persuaded Borchert to preview the play on the radio rather than wait for a stage production. *The Man Outside* was one of the first postwar radio plays, transmitted in February 1947 by Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk (NWDR), Hamburg. It was an immediate success and was repeated on other stations and again on Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk eight times between 1947 and 1965.<sup>2</sup> Radio, before the war was considered a high-brow art form created by serious-minded artists. The tone of radio drama had been set by the transmission of the very first radio play in Germany in 1928 - Schiller's *Wallenstein*. Radio's wide application in schools and colleges before the war meant that it was regarded as pedagogic. More importantly, it had the ability to reach a substantial amount of listeners, often provoking heated intellectual debate in newspapers and magazines. As Klaus Schöning, former head of the Studio Akustische Kunst Westdeutscher, stated:

At the end of the war, radio was the only public medium for a large sector of the population that was able to convey not only up-to-date information, but also cultural events... The broadcast of a Hörspiel was a cultural event, drawing millions of listeners to the wireless sets.<sup>3</sup>

The radio network in Germany had undergone a systematic de-Nazification programme beyond that experienced by other arts and media services. Next to film, it had been Goebbels' favourite propaganda tool.<sup>4</sup> In the postwar aftermath, with communications and newspapers in disarray, the Allies needed an efficient means to communicate news and make public announcements. Radio was the only solution. The Allies decentralized the network and each station came under the jurisdiction of a regional authority. It was not long before the radio once again assumed its mantle of cultural supremacy. Most stations began with ten to thirty minute readings from formerly banned books especially those of Thomas Mann.<sup>5</sup> *The Man Outside* was Germany's first significant postwar radio play.

Borchert's play is an expressionist *Heimkehrerdrama* ('returning soldier play'). The author deliberately paralleled his anti-hero, Beckmann, with two other theatrical protagonists - Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* (1836) and Ernst Toller's *Hinkemann* (1924). The *Heimkehrer*

<sup>1</sup> Demetz, *After The Fires*, p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> M.A. Bond, *A Comparative Study of Postwar Radio Drama in Great Britain and West Germany*, University of Sussex: Ph.D. thesis, 1970/1, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Frost, Everett & Herzfeld-Sander, eds, *German Radio Plays*, New York: Continuum Books, 1971.

<sup>4</sup> Ernst Kris & Hans Speier, *German Radio Propaganda*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1944.

<sup>5</sup> Herzfeld-Sander, *German Radio Plays*, p. XII.

is the despairing ordinary man who gives voice to the Munch-like scream of terror in a chaotic and godless world where war is ubiquitous and irrational. He has little influence either over his own fate or that of other people. He is absolved of all responsibility; he is a victim; he expresses the horror but is incapable of analysing it.

Within this framework, however, Borchert has woven threads critical of such a fatalistic attitude. The character of 'The Other One' attempts to dissuade Beckmann from suicide, encouraging him to forget his past and make a fresh start in life. In order to forget Beckmann must 'give back' the responsibility that was given to him during the war. The Other One argues that this responsibility belongs to Beckmann's old colonel and that Beckmann himself was a mere pawn of the war-mongers. However, by the end of the play, Beckmann realizes that he is the guilty one and must accept his complicity in the death of twenty men - that is, twenty German soldiers and therein lies the problem.<sup>1</sup>

In the play the Jews are mentioned only once in relation to the double-suicide of Beckmann's parents. Beckmann's father lost his pension as the result of failing a de-nazification test. As an unsympathetic neighbour relates to the returning Beckmann, 'he was always too hot on the Jews'.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, Beckmann's parents gassed themselves. This image is ambiguous. Whether Borchert intended to use the Holocaust as a theatrical device to unite all horror, suffering and loss in an image of universal apocalypse or whether he was arguing that the anti-Semites got what they deserved, is questionable. The universalizing vocabulary found in his short stories published after his death in November 1947 seem to uphold the former argument. Siegfried Mandel points out that the tendency for analogous descriptions of suffering and death was rife in postwar German writing. *Der Ruff* in 1948 devoted most of its coverage to the slaughter of German youth and the treatment of German POWs.<sup>3</sup> Articles appeared emphasizing that the concentration camp system had first originated with the British during the Boer War. Mandel argues that the tone of such writing stressed crimes against the Germans in opposition to crimes committed by them 'as if one crime mitigated another'.<sup>4</sup>

Borchert's importance was that he gave a voice to Germany's grief. But in doing so he denied the existence of those whom his fellow Germans tortured and murdered - a strategy similar to what Eric L. Santer describes as 'narrative fetishism'.<sup>5</sup> The style Borchert employs avoids a confrontation with objective political and social analysis. Its attraction is similar to

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<sup>1</sup> Borchert's play is in fact remarkably similar to the film *Die Mörder sind unter uns*.

<sup>2</sup> Borchert, *The Man Outside*, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> Mandel, *Group 47*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> See introduction, p. 5.

that of the German classics - it allows an exploration of the present by a retreat into the vagaries and distance of the past.

*The Man Outside* was influential on postwar writers. Symbols or types replaced naturalistic characterization. History became indeterminate, amorphous. Texts tended to be expressive but avoided analysis. Psychological investigation was considered too facile an approach to explain twentieth-century politics. Whether one participated in atrocities was no longer a question of moral integrity. Images of victim and victimizer became interchangeable in a world where everyone was a casualty of war. 'We are murdered each day and each day we commit murder',<sup>1</sup> wrote Borchert indicating how one could both be a victim and a murderer. Zuckmayer toyed with the same idea in his *Das Gesang im Feuerofen* (*Song of the Fiery Furnace*, 1951). It was based on a true story of French collaborators who led the Gestapo to a French resistance band. In the play, the protagonist, Louis Greveaux, causes the French fighters to be burned alive by the Germans in an old château. He feels no remorse nor offers any explanation for his actions. The lack of psychological examination is deliberate as Zuckmayer intended his character to be inexplicable.<sup>2</sup> Zuckmayer demands that the gendarmes and German soldiers should be played by the same actors and the corresponding characters should be called by the same name. No clear delineation of perpetrator and victim is put forward and motivations remain unclarified. What Borchert and Zuckmayer were attempting to do was encourage a healing process through mourning. At the end of *The Fiery Furnace*, Zuckmayer writes: 'It was our duty to be enemies. Now it is our right to be brothers'.

### 2.1.b. *The Yishuv*

The increasing number of skirmishes with the Arabs and the need to create a stable economy from the barren earth were at the top of the Jewish community's agenda. This was exacerbated by the absorption of new immigrants - many of whom were Holocaust survivors. Between 1945 and 1947, 71,000 Jews emigrated to Palestine.<sup>3</sup> The evidence of the Third Reich's atrocities did not need to be visualized on stage for people familiar with the consequences of Hitler's Final Solution. It was a sensitive topic both for those who survived and for the sabra population who could not understand how their kinsmen had walked 'like sheep to the slaughter'.<sup>4</sup> Just how raw an issue it was can be gauged by the fact that many

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<sup>1</sup> Borchert, *The Man Outside*, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> Innes, *Modern German Drama*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Slater, *Rabin of Israel - a Biography*, London: Robson Books, 1977, p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, pp. 367-69.

plays were written on the Holocaust in the 1940s and 1950s but, according to Ben-Ami Feingold, they remained unstaged.<sup>1</sup>

More was made in the press of the daring attempts of the Palmach, the Hagana and the illegal groups - the Irgun and the Lehi (the Stern Gang) - in bringing the immigrants ashore. Palestine, under British mandate, was still subject to strict immigration quotas and the British army turned back illegal refugee ships. In literature, the Jew as fighter, hero and protector of the land was stressed. Many members of the Irgun and Lehi had been refugees from Nazi persecution themselves and were held up as examples of Diaspora Jews who had fought back and continued to do so.<sup>2</sup>

In order to provide the survivors with a future, Israel had to be able to support the swelling population. Making the desert into economically viable agricultural land and protecting it from the Arabs were the main issues that faced the Israelis. As a result, the 'pioneer play' was in vogue. These pieces presented sabras overcoming agrarian hardship, natural calamities, their own diverse origins and Arab hostilities.

Apart from indigenous pioneer plays, European and occasionally American classics were staged because of popular demand. Before coming to an agricultural country, many immigrants had lived highly cultured lives in Europe. In addition, as Shosh Avigal writes, the Israeli establishment did not want to be seen as culturally regressive.<sup>3</sup> For example, the 1946 repertoire of the Cameri included Goldoni's *The Servants of Two Masters* and Lorca's *Blood Wedding*.<sup>4</sup>

But, as Linda Ben-Zvi writes, the politicians and critics were already looking ahead to what image of Israel should be moulded as a model for their own diverse immigrants and the outside world:

Rarely has theater been marshalled so directly and single-mindedly to the establishment of a society, the promulgation of an ideology, and its subsequent analysis and critique; in few places in the world as Israel is theater so self-absorbed in its function as mirror of society.<sup>5</sup>

The intellectual élite had very firm ideas of what constituted Israeli identity even if it clashed with the popular culture as embodied in the Yiddish *shtetl* plays. The Habima had staged a large number of these plays but was severely criticized by the connoisseurs and intellectuals who fervently believed that the Habima, as the Yishuv's theatrical mouthpiece, should

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Ami Feingold 'Hebrew Drama as a Modern Morality Play', Ben Zvi, ed., *Theater in Israel*, pp. 269-83; p. 281.

<sup>2</sup> Slater, *Rabin of Israel*, pp. 57-8. The Stern Gang was a break-away group from the Irgun named after its first leader Avraham Stern. It was then led between 1943 and 1944 by Menachem Begin.

<sup>3</sup> Shosh Avigal, 'Patterns and Trends in Israeli Theater and Drama, 1948 to Present', p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Kohansky, *The Hebrew Theatre*, pp. 152-3.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Zvi, *Theater in Israel*, p. vii.

portray the aspirations of a new breed of Jews who were the antithesis to everything the Diaspora Jew represented.<sup>1</sup>

To this end Yiddish was frowned upon as the language of degradation and acquiescence. Lessons and theatrical performances in schools and by the three professional companies were in Hebrew.<sup>2</sup> A generation was being cultivated who would associate theatre with the Hebrew language. As Kohansky writes:

The origin of the Hebrew theatre is bound up with the realization of the Zionist ideal; the early Hebrew theatres, whether founded in Europe or on the soil of Palestine, were meant first of all to be vehicles of the Hebrew language - the chief instrument of the Jewish cultural renaissance, and their national significance went, therefore, far beyond the purely artistic.<sup>3</sup>

The question of national identity was paramount. It would not be long before the Yishuv would secure its own sovereign rights. Identity, however, needs time to mature. The Jewish community in Palestine was relatively young. With no real Palestinian history to fall back on, except biblical history, contemporary identity could only be articulated by opposing it to the Diaspora heritage, but senseless martyrdom had no place in the struggle for national security in the Middle East. Israeli identity was formulated according to a *concept*, the Zionist dream, whereas the European heritage was based on reality. The Holocaust's displacement from the European continuum, evident since the 1930s, continued apace through the promotion of this Zionist image.

This shift can be traced in the theatre. In December 1947 the Habima staged *Kiddush Hashem* (*Martyrdom*, 1920) a historic drama by the Yiddish writer Sholem Asch. It tells the story of Jewish heroism and martyrdom during the Khmelnicki Uprising in the Ukraine in 1648 during which the Cossacks murdered 1,400 men, women and children. The Jews had been offered their lives if they only bowed down before the Cross and accepted Christ. They responded by singing psalms and refusing to relinquish their faith. The parallel between persecution in the Ukraine under the Czar and in the Ukraine under Hitler and his Ukrainian lackeys was not hard to make. As with the 1944 production of David Bergelson's *I Will Live*, the production received unfavourable reviews for its orthodox message. It closed after only twenty-nine performances. *Ha'aretz* wrote that the Habima, as the embryonic national theatre of Israel, had a responsibility to its people and that 1947 was the wrong time to highlight Jewish martyrdom and passive acceptance of fate. This image, he argued, no longer applied to the reality that was Palestine.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Kohansky, *The Hebrew Theatre*, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ha'aretz* (2 January 1948), quoted in Levy, *The Habima*, p. 129.

The image preferred was that of the fighter and hero. There was a spate of plays immediately after the war about the wartime resistance fighter, Hannah Senesh. According to Dan Laor, Yitzhak Sadeh's *Hannah's Road*, staged by a group of amateurs was 'a significant expression of the need to locate Hannah Senesh, the symbol of the Jewish and Zionist struggle against the Nazis, at the forefront of the Israeli consciousness.'<sup>1</sup>

The imperative for the new state to establish a 'healthy' national image combined with the influx of survivors. The Holocaust was a sensitive yet 'convenient' issue. The Yishuv was not yet a state. Arab border infiltrations and clashes intimated the likely outcome of a declaration of independence. To ensure victory and survival, the Jews would have to fight. The Zionist leaders utilized all possible methods, including the arts, to disseminate this message.

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Laor, 'Theatrical Interpretations of the Shoah: Image and Counter-Image', paper given at The Shoah and Performance Conference, Glasgow, September 1995, p. 2-3.

## 2.2 1948-1954

### 2.2.a. Germany

#### *The Past is Laid to Rest: The Restitution Agreement between Israel and the Federal Republic of West Germany & The Winding Down of the War Crimes Trials*

The 1948-9 Berlin Blockade signalled a new phase in the escalation of the Cold War.<sup>1</sup> The Germans primary concern was their own survival. Harry Truman had ordered B29 bombers (described in the press as 'atomically capable') to supply West Berlin with food and coal for over a year.<sup>2</sup> The German people began to see their country as an experimental arena for a possible 'limited' nuclear war in Europe. The race to establish a western buffer state against the USSR intensified and the Federal Republic of Germany was declared on 6 October 1949. The Democratic Republic was established just twenty-four hours later and the Socialist Unity Party (the East German Communist Party) led by Walter Ulbricht was installed in government. Social unrest continued on both sides especially after the spectacle of Stalin's seizure of Czechoslovakia in 1948, followed by the June Uprising in East Berlin in 1953.<sup>3</sup> In such an atmosphere it is not surprising that the arts tended to generalize horror and politics into one frustrated outpouring.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Immediately after the war there was the chance that the Soviet and the Western zones of Germany might be re-united. Stalin himself had no objection to the idea so long as the re-united Germany was independent from both the West and the USSR. Stalin soon realized that the American vision involved Germany's incorporation into the American global market - the 'One World' economy dominated by the US. On 23 June 1948 the Soviets blockaded all communications links to Berlin from the West, in protest at repeated American attempts to centralize the German economy. When the blockade was lifted on 12 May 1949 both the Americans and Soviets claimed strategic success, although neither had achieved anything other than a worsening of relations.

<sup>2</sup> Vadney, *The World After 1945*, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> Stalin realized that he could never hope for democratic support in the Eastern European countries because of the absence of ground-root Communist support. Most of the countries that came under the USSR's sphere of influence had no history of popular, active Communist support before the war. Many governments such as the Hungarian had collaborated with the Nazis. The USSR's grip over the satellites appeared to be untenable and Stalin contemplated letting go of East Germany altogether. However, Walter Ulbricht refused to let Stalin abandon him. Without Soviet support Ulbricht's own position as leader of the Democratic Republic would be precarious and so he endeavoured to make the country too 'profitable' to the Soviet economy. By reducing wages and setting unrealistic production levels, he set out to increase the Democratic Republic's Gross National Product. On 17 June a spontaneous strike among construction workers building the Berlin Stalinallee triggered off demonstrations in the rest of the city and other East German centres. There were calls for free elections, some party offices were burned down and political prisoners were freed by the strikers. The June Uprising came to a swift conclusion when Russian tanks entered East Berlin. Together with the East German police, they crushed popular resistance.

<sup>4</sup> Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, p. 210: In the Summer of 1955 the results of a NATO exercise entitled *Carte Blanche* were leaked to the press. The exercise involved a limited European nuclear war over Germany. In the report it was estimated that the assumed death toll would be 1,700,000 German civilians with a further 3,500,000 'injured'. Plays dealing with the spectre of atomic annihilation feature enormously in much postwar writing, for example, the first radio play transmitted in 1945 by Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk was

In West Germany, despite the social unrest, theatre rebuilding was well underway especially after the Currency Reform of 1948.<sup>1</sup> It was the beginning of the so called 'economic miracle' and the new prosperity filtered into the arts. By 1951 168 theatres were in operation, ninety-two of which were municipal or state controlled, seven were touring provincial companies and the rest privately owned.<sup>2</sup> With the new prosperity came the general feeling that the past was firmly buried. The ability of the ordinary German to separate him/herself from the Nazi horrors was now augmented by new social-historical theories. In the late 1940s a number of hypotheses emerged which examined Hitler's place in history. The most pervasive argument put forward by German historians was the *Betriebsunfall* (accident in the works) theory. As the historian Volker Rolf Berghahn summarizes:

According to this theory, Hitler had not been brought to power by specific political forces, but had arrived on the scene virtually out of the blue. He and his band of criminals had then terrorized the country for twelve years before disappearing again like a bad dream. What this interpretation did was to cut the Third Reich out of the main stream of German history. The Nazi period was an aberration without deeper roots. The beauty of this theory was that it did not require any agonizing self-questioning, whether at a personal or institutional level.<sup>3</sup>

Ironically encouraged by books such as Thomas Mann's *Dr Faustus* (which painted a devil possessed portrait of Germany) writers demonized Nazis as the ectoplasm of pure evil. The ordinary, suffering German was portrayed as the victim of a great malevolent force over which he or she had little influence.

In addition, by 1950, Theodor Adorno published his *Noten zur Literatur* containing the famous proposition that to write poetry after Auschwitz is impossible.<sup>4</sup> This 'cautionary' warning has been variously interpreted ever since and these different readings are more important for defining where German writers stood on the Holocaust than the statement itself. Whether Adorno meant that it was morally reprehensible to depict the Holocaust (as Elie Wiesel would later argue) or aesthetically and physically impossible (as David Rousset had posed in 1947) remains debatable. It seems more probable that Adorno simply meant that mankind could no longer approach the world from a state of innocence. The Holocaust had shattered the Kantian image of man as essentially 'good'.<sup>5</sup> As George Steiner wrote, we

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Oscar Wessel's award-winning *Hiroshima*. See M.A. Bond, 'Some Reflections on the Postwar Hörspiele', in *New German Studies*, Vol 4, No. 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 91-100, p. 92.

<sup>1</sup> Draft plans for the Currency Reform had been put forward in 1946. Parity would help stabilize inflation and encourage trade and monetary flow between the regions. Stalin saw that it would also unite the western zones as an independent economic bloc against the Soviet zone. On 20 June 1948 Deutsche Marks, printed in the US, were introduced to replace Reich Marks. It is the Currency Reform which has been attributed for being the major influence in the triggering off of the 'economic miracle' in the late 50s.

<sup>2</sup> Braun, *The Theatre in Germany*, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, p. 200.

<sup>4</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Noten zur Literatur III*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965, p. 125.

<sup>5</sup> Emanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Ethics*, trans. J.W. Semple, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1836,

know too much: 'we come after'.<sup>1</sup> But for many, Adorno, a German-Jewish philosopher, had given what was, in effect, an excuse: aesthetically and ethically, the Holocaust was unrepresentable. By refraining to penetrate the horrors, the writer was morally justified in his inaction

A few writers did attempt to depict the Jewish narrative. H. J. Reyfish's *Spring of Promise* (*Quell der Verheißung*) a play about the resettlement of Jewish refugees in Palestine opened in Berlin, 1946.<sup>2</sup> Elisabeth Langgässer' *Märkische Argonauten Fahrt* (*The Quest*) published in 1950 was a mythological novel drawing on Old Testament imagery.<sup>3</sup> In 1949 Hochwälder's drama *Der öffentliche Ankläger* (*The Public Prosecutor*) looked at questions of guilt and personal responsibility, through the analogy of post-Revolution France after the death of Danton. Fouquier, the Public Prosecutor, is responsible for sentencing hundreds of people to death at the guillotine. Denying any personal responsibility for their deaths, he argues, 'I was carrying out my orders, and doing my duty. That's all there was to it.'<sup>4</sup> Eventually he is made to pay for his butchery because 'The Republic cannot build and grow on blood and hate alone. Suspicion must be swept away.'<sup>5</sup> Günter Eich's radio play, *Die Mädchen aus Viterbo* (*The Girls From Viterbo*, 1953) tells the story of an old Jew and his granddaughter hiding from the Nazis in 1943 Berlin, who pass time by inventing the story of two school-girls lost in Rome's catacombs.<sup>6</sup> The story telling comes to an end when the Gestapo burst into the Jews' hiding place.<sup>7</sup> Another radio play that dealt with the specific Jewish narrative was Walter Jens's *Ahasuer*, about a Jewish Doctor who loses his wife and family in the course of the war.<sup>8</sup>

Not all these works were successful. *Spring of Promise* was universally condemned by German critics. In *The Quest*, the specifics of recent history were cloaked in a dense allegory similar to that of Franz Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. *The Public Prosecutor*, was more easy to decipher. Although set in eighteenth century France, the corruption of the Revolution was a transparent parallel to the German situation with Fouquier resembling the ordinary German bureaucrat under the Nazi regime. However, *The Public*

pp. i-iii.

<sup>1</sup> George Steiner, *Language and Silence*, London: Penguin, 1969, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Licht-Knight, *Reconstruction in the West German Theatre*, Chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> Elisabeth Langgässer, *The Quest*, trans. Jane Bannard Greene, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953.

<sup>4</sup> Fritz Hochwalder, *The Public Prosecutor and Other Plays*, trans. Kitty Black, New York: Ungar, 1988, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Günter Eich, 'The Girls From Viterbo', trans. by Michael Hamburger, in *Prism International*, Vol. 13 (Summer 1973) pp. 23-64. Eich had been an 'internal' exile after 1933: he stayed in Germany but refused to work for the Nazis. After 1945 he joined Group 47 and began to write again. He is the acknowledged father of postwar German radio drama.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Renate Usmiani, *The Invisible Theater*, pp. 265-7.

*Prosecutor* closed almost as soon as it opened. Jens and Eich were more successful because they chose to present the material on the radio. It would seem that radio provided the only means whereby the Jewish tragedy could be articulated.<sup>1</sup> The most important facet of radio, as Renate Usmiani writes, is its intimacy. The aural nature of radio offered a way to explore the past in private:

Psychologically, it provided the only accepted means for audience and writer alike to come to terms with the traumatic experiences of the immediate past. What could not have been re-lived as a public, collective experience in a theater, could be faced by the individual alone, in the privacy of his room. Radio was thus able to fulfil the traditional exorcising function of the theater at a time when guilt and shame were too strong to allow the same exorcism to take place on the stage.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, as Shimon Levy points out, by withholding visual information, the listener must participate in completing the picture with his/her own imagination. Radio requires an active audience.<sup>2</sup>

Langgässer and Eich explored the Jewish narrative because of their Jewish connections. Langgässer was part Jewish: she had escaped the worst of the Holocaust but her daughter had been imprisoned in Auschwitz. Eich was married to Ilse Aichinger, the Austrian-Jewish poet who had been persecuted in the war. German-gentile writers viewed events from their own perspective in a similar manner to Hochwälder and concentrated on themes of guilt and responsibility. Again the few plays that were staged did not find any great success. Walter Schäfer's *Die Verschwörung (The Conspiracy)* told the story of an SS officer who, accepting his guilt in the murders, joined the condemned on the scaffold.<sup>3</sup> Claus Hubalek's *Die Festung (The Fortress)* transmitted by Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk in 1950 (and subsequently staged) about the Officer's Uprising of 1944 centred on a general torn between his oath of loyalty and his feelings of justice.<sup>4</sup> All these plays focused on individual moral choice under National Socialism.

On the other hand, writers who united and universalized wartime suffering continued to find favour. One such author was Heinrich Böll. Like Borchert, Hans Fallada and Enrique Maria Remarque before him, Böll's characters witness 'history from below'. Böll was drafted into the Wehrmacht and was wounded four times on the Russian Front. He also self-administered drugs intravenously to induce high fever and avoid active service. He was eventually taken prisoner.<sup>5</sup> His protagonists, likewise, are reluctant young soldiers who are

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262. Radio drama after 1951 expanded considerably with the Copenhagen Agreement.

<sup>2</sup> Shimon Levy, 'The Voice of the Brother's Blood Cried Unto Me', A Comparative Study of Hebrew and German Holocaust Plays', in *JTD Haifa University Studies in Jewish Theatre and Drama*, No. 1 (Autumn 1995), pp. 85-94.

<sup>3</sup> Innes, *Modern German Drama*, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Bond, *A Comparative Study of Postwar Radio Drama*, p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Seymour Smith, *Guide to Modern World Literature* (Vol. 2), London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1975, p. 347.

victims of the political situation and the playthings of fate. For example, Andreas in *Der Zug war pünktlich* (*The Train Was On Time*, 1951) has a premonition that he will die somewhere on the eastern front and it is this fatalism which drives the narrative of the book.<sup>1</sup> In his *Wo warst du, Adam?* (*Where Were You, Adam?*, 1951) Böll describes the animal-like existence of corporal Feinhals and his fellow soldiers on the Eastern Front.<sup>2</sup> Like *The Man Outside*, *Where Were You, Adam?* is about German suffering and the atrocities of the Allied forces. At the end of the novel Feinhals approaches his parents' house as the Americans advance on the town. The white flag of surrender is draped outside. As he nears the front door, a shell lands on the house killing his parents. He hears the screams of his mother and then a moment later he too is killed by a second shell. Political analysis is absent.

Peter Demetz writes that after the spectacle of the Nazis' manipulation of the arts for propaganda purposes, postwar German writers were reluctant to deliver definitive political messages. This unwillingness fused with Group 47's call for objectivity and presentation of 'facts' alone. The resulting general humanist style used vague, universal symbolism.<sup>3</sup> The main drawback of this style was that it proffered no political analysis and avoided the specifics of recent German and Jewish history. Apoliticism was endemic in the immediate postwar period as the low turn-out at local and national elections testified. This was the *ohne mich* (count me out) generation.<sup>4</sup> Siegfried Mandel, on the other hand, argues that some writers fought against this apathy by employing universal symbolism in their works 'to remind and alert listeners, viewers, and readers to the social and political realities and to keep their hearts and minds open'.<sup>5</sup> One such writer was Günter Eich. His radio play, *Traüme* (*Dreams*), was first transmitted in 1951 by Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk, Hamburg.<sup>6</sup> *Dreams* is divided into five dreams, dreamed by five different people from divergent parts of the world during the years 1948-50. Each dream is framed by a moralizing prologue and epilogue, the theme being set by the initial chorus:

I envy all those who can forget  
who go to sleep unperturbed, and have no dreams.<sup>7</sup>

Atrocities committed in China, America and Australia are linked by these five dreamers thus linking the global nature of evil. Although Eich's dreams are superficially set in far off lands, each story has a specific German or Jewish overtone: a Chinese child-eater consoles himself

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<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Böll, *The Train was on Time*, London: Penguin, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> Heinrich Böll, *And Where Were You Adam?*, London: Penguin, 1970.

<sup>3</sup> Demetz, *After The Fires*. p. 237.

<sup>4</sup> Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, p. 191.

<sup>5</sup> Mandel, *Gruppe 47*, p. 148.

<sup>6</sup> Günter Eich, 'Dreams' (1953) printed in Sanders-Herzfeld, *German Radio Plays*, pp. 68-99.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

by reading Goethe; an Australian family is ostracized and expelled from the community by their former neighbours. Yet Eich is not drawing these parallels to shift the burden of guilt away from the German people by locating the event within a general framework. Eich could also be specific in his choice of subject matter as *The Girls From Viterbo* testifies. Rather, in *Dreams*, he seeks to attack contemporary German apathy by selecting images that would touch a raw nerve in his listeners by triggering their unexpressed guilt:

Nowhere on the map will you find Korea and Bikini,  
but in your heart you will find them.  
Bear in mind that you are guilty of all the atrocious acts  
committed far away from you.<sup>1</sup>

And Eich enjoins his listeners: 'Be troublesome, be sand, not oil, in the gears of the world.'<sup>2</sup> Eich's concern was to remember the past in the present so that the horrors would never happen again. The motive behind Eich's work cannot be in doubt. Much of his writing was inspired by his Jewish wife's experiences of persecution. He was not drawing parallels to denigrate the memory of the victims. He intended that the Holocaust should be an omnipresent reminder of the recurring nature of genocide and destruction. As Primo Levi warned at the end of *The Drowned and the Saved*, 'Many new tyrants have kept in their drawer Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*: With a few changes perhaps, and the substitution of a few names, it can still come in handy.'<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, most German listeners did not receive the play as Eich intended as there was public outcry at what was perceived as historical muck-raking.<sup>4</sup> Eich had indeed activated German guilt as most listeners considered the play to be a thin allegory about the Holocaust and nothing more.<sup>5</sup>

But even though *Dreams* erodes historical specifics for pro-active purposes, the Holocaust as a unique event is diluted. The universal tenor of postwar writing in general helped distance the Germans from the Holocaust. For many, the Second World War was long over. For instance Erich Kuby's radio play *Hitlers Letzte Festung (Hitler's Last Fortress)*, written in 1952 and broadcast in 1953, set in Spandau prison, is about the political consequences of defeat rather than the war itself or Hitler.<sup>6</sup> It is a satire about the occupation

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 169.

<sup>4</sup> Mandel, *Group 47*, p. 149.

<sup>5</sup> Egbert Krispyn, *Günter Eich*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1971, p. 74: In 1954 Eich replaced the final dream in the sequence with a new one about a man in a hotel room who repeatedly pulls the bell-cord to call the maid, unaware that he is in fact operating a guillotine and beheading people. 'The stress is no longer on the helpless victims and their suffering... Instead, the inevitability with which Man's inability to recognize reality involves him in guilt is demonstrated, thereby changing the predominantly social-political orientation of the original sequence of dreams to a more philosophical concern with existential aspects of cognition and guilt.'

<sup>6</sup> Erich Kuby, *Hitlers Letzte Festung*, 1952, Hamburg Radio Archive, cat. no. 512.

powers and their bureaucratic handling of a country of which they know little.<sup>1</sup> The fortress is described as a 'mausoleum' where high ranking generals take half a day to agree on trivial matters such as whether Rudolf Hess should receive a new toothbrush. The directors of the prison cannot fathom their continued presence considering the war has long since ended. Roosevelt, Churchill and Hitler are gone yet half a battalion of 260 men is still needed to guard a handful of senile old men. The war means nothing eight years after defeat as Dupont, the French director of the prison states:

We, gentlemen, are (that is, this fortress is) what remains of Hitler, what remains of the coalition - including General Tschernoff.<sup>2</sup>

The directors' and prisoners' reasons for being there have nothing to do with World War Two but have everything to do with the present war:

Smith, this fortress is the one place in the world where Hitler is still most present.<sup>3</sup>

*Hitler's Last Fortress* indicated that the Second World War and the Holocaust had been filed away in the archives of history. In 1952 the German critic, Hanns Braun, wrote that the 'great play' dealing with the past had remained unwritten:

The hope that other poets, especially those of our younger generation, would deal with this tormenting problem and thus help us all to rid ourselves of it, did not materialize.<sup>4</sup>

But Braun's statement demands that the past should be forgotten by the act of writing. The only way for the Germans to 'overcome' their past was by forgetting rather than integration. The immediate concerns of the Cold War and the immense political changes in Europe obviously played a part in this general, self-willed amnesia but in the early 1950s two other factors assisted the process: the Restitution Agreement between Israel and West Germany and the winding down of the war crimes trials.

When Konrad Adenauer became Chancellor of the Federal Republic in 1948 he offered financial compensation both to Holocaust survivors and the government of Israel. The majority of Israelis perceived this as blood money but politicians such as Ben Gurion and Moshe Sharrett wanted normalization of relations with West Germany.<sup>5</sup> Ben Gurion, a

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the Cold War Spandau remained logistically important as the one site within West Berlin to which the Russians had legal access.

<sup>2</sup> Kuby, *Hitlers Letzte Festung*, p. 11: 'Und der letzte Rest Hitler, der letzte Rest Koalition, das ist diese Festung, das sind wir, meine Herren, einschliesslich dem Genossen Tschernoff.' [All translations from German are mine, unless otherwise specified].

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 12: 'Smith, das ist der Ort auf der Welt, diese Festung, wo Hitler noch am meisten gegenwärtig ist.'

<sup>4</sup> Braun, *The Theatre in Germany*, p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> G. J. W. Lavy, *Development of Relations Between The Federal Republic of Germany and the State of Israel 1952-1975*, L.S.E: Ph.D. thesis, 1988, p. 19. Popular outcry in the Israeli papers and angry scenes on the

pragmatist, realized that the influx of immigrants from displaced persons' camps, the urgent need for maintaining and improving Israel's defences, and the necessity of making Israeli agriculture flourish, all required financial investment.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Israel had few reliable allies and it had become apparent that West Germany was going to play an important role in maintaining the East-West power balance. West Germany could prove a very powerful ally. The West German government would also be malleable because, quite bluntly, the 'guilt' card could always be played. Therefore towards the end of 1955, the Israel/West German relationship altered. Up until that time, Adenauer sought to court the favour of the Israelis who had reacted defensively. This relationship was now reversed.<sup>2</sup> Adenauer for his part wanted a public reconciliation with Israel as a signal to the UN and NATO that West Germany had recanted its crimes. Ultimately Adenauer wanted to rid Germany of the occupation forces and gain international respectability for his country by demonstrating the degree to which his people had been re-educated and had repented their National Socialist past.<sup>3</sup> Adenauer's office inaugurated the next fifty years of *Geschichtspolitik*, that is, political decision-making influenced by the continuance of the past in the present.<sup>4</sup> Germany had to appear conciliatory and penitent; anti-Semitism had to be visibly stamped out.

On 10 September 1952 Ben Gurion and Adenauer signed the Restitution Agreement in Luxembourg.<sup>5</sup> Adenauer's plan for world acceptance and integration succeeded when, in October 1954, the Paris Agreements ended the occupation of West Germany. Re-armament was permitted and in 1955 West Germany joined NATO. The Paris Agreements were a significant landmark in the development of Adenauer's new state, returning West Germany its sovereign rights, respectability, and place in the international arena. This, together with

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streets culminated in stones being thrown by mobs outside the Jerusalem parliament building. See also Michael Wolffsohn, *Eternal Guilt? Forty Years of German-Jewish-Israeli Relations*, trans. Douglas Bukovy, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, p. 125. The opposition leader, Menachim Begin, attacked Ben Gurion's approach to the West Germans with the inflammatory statement, 'There is no German who did not murder our parents. Every German is a Nazi.'

<sup>1</sup> Judith Matras, *Social Change in Israel*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965, p. 29: Between 1939 and 1945, 46,000 Jews emigrated to Israel with a further 29,000 entering the country illegally.

<sup>2</sup> Wolffsohn, *Eternal Guilt?*, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Lavy, *Development of Relations Between Germany and Israel*, p. 23. Adenauer's approach was seen by critics as being merely philo-Semitic - that is, concerned with surface image rather than facilitating any deep-seated change in popular anti-Semitic sentiment. See also Yado Jung, 'Growing up in Germany after the war - After Hitler - Afterwards', in Rabinbach/Zipes, *Germans and Jews Since the Holocaust*, pp. 135-145: she describes how anti-Semitic incidents were frequent at school.

<sup>4</sup> Wolffsohn, *Eternal Guilt?*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> The first demand for compensation to the Jews had been made as early as 1945 when Chaim Weizmann on behalf of the Jewish Agency petitioned the four occupation powers. See: Lavy, *Development of Relations Between Germany and Israel*, p. 23. The payment to Israel would be over a fourteen year period and would be largely in goods and equipment. The interesting feature of this payment is that 3,000,000,000 Deutsch Marks went to Israel with a further 450,000,000 pledged to world Jewish organisations. The Federal Republic had no obligation in international law to give such a large amount to Israel since Germany had not 'wronged' that state.

the deepening of the Cold War, meant that unresolved matters from the past seemed inconsequential.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, the Americans realized that West Germany's public infrastructure could only be staffed by the ex-Nazis who had been maintaining them for the last ten years. A full de-Nazification programme would create a vacuum within the German establishment. Many former Nazis were allowed to be re-absorbed into the system, especially in educational institutions. Generally war crimes trials were allowed to peter out, sending forth the public signal that Germany's Nazi past had been absolved.<sup>2</sup> In 1951, for example Alfred Krupp, was released and his property returned. He immediately returned to his armaments industry to supply Cold War demand.<sup>3</sup> On 31 December 1950 General Lucius D. Clay presented a report entitled *The Present State of Denazification* in which he stated that, although many Nazis had escaped the net, the Allies' task was complete.<sup>4</sup> In addition on 1 April 1951, Article 131 of the Basic Law restored pension and employment rights to all civil servants and professional soldiers (not involved in organizations declared illegal by the Nuremberg Trial) who had been caught in the net of the Allied de-Nazification process.<sup>5</sup>

By comparison, the evidence suggests that the Russians really did make an effort to remove all Nazis from the East German infrastructure.<sup>6</sup> But there too, the war years had largely been forgotten or re-written within the Communist framework. After the war text books from the Weimar period had been issued to all schools, thereby cutting out the Third Reich. In history classes the Holocaust remained taboo. In 1951 new text books were issued for primary levels and translations of Russian text books for secondary level.<sup>7</sup> History was articulated from the Soviet perspective.

In West German schools the past was also being erased. A survey taken by the Allenbach Institute for Demoscopy in November 1954 of people born between 1936 and

<sup>1</sup> Vadney, *The World Since 1945*, p. 74. This state of affairs was aggravated by America's determination to make West Germany an important but controllable power within Europe. The degree to which the American government envisaged western Europe as a buffer to the Russians can be gauged by the American spending programme. It has been estimated that by 1952 around 80 per cent of the money injected into western Europe via the Marshall plan (money intended for post-war rebuilding programmes) was in fact spent on military equipment. West Germany was the main beneficiary after 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Ginsbergs/Kudriatvsev, *The Nuremberg Trial and International Law*, p. 7: *The Washington Post* in 1985 estimated that up to 50,000 former Nazis had never been brought to justice and that 10,000 of these fugitives were living in the United States; p. 276: By the early 1950s the first war criminals were also being released. At Nuremberg, Alfred Krupp, the chairman of Germany's major arms manufacturing company which had utilized 5000 concentration camp inmates and a further 18,000 prisoners of war in their war effort, had been sentenced to twelve years in prison. During the war Krupp also drafted in 55,000 foreign workers.

<sup>3</sup> Vadney, *The World Since 1945*, p. 204.

<sup>4</sup> Ginsbergs/Kudriatvsev, *The Nuremberg Trial and International Law*, entire report re-printed pp. 129-38; p. 138.

<sup>5</sup> Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, p. 202.

<sup>6</sup> M.D. Ross, *German, Russian and Communist Elements in East Germany*, University of Bristol: Ph.D. Thesis, 1973, p. 211.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

1940 indicated that most West German school children knew nothing about the Hitler regime.<sup>1</sup> The subject was not taught within the curriculum and the evidence showed that there was a 'conspiracy of silence' between the parents and teachers - many of whom were ex-Nazis.

### 2.2.b. *Israel*

When the Palestinian Arabs and Jews rejected the idea of partition suggested by Ernest Bevin and the General Assembly of the United Nations, matters escalated into the war for Israeli independence. The State of Israel was established on 14 May 1948 and David Ben Gurion was declared Prime Minister. Over a million Arabs either fled or were expelled, creating a refugee problem which has returned to haunt Israel ever since. The discovery of new oil fields in the surrounding Arab states exacerbated Israel's isolation and vulnerability as the super-powers began to court Arab favour. The Cold War encompassed new horizons.

1948 proved a watershed on an artistic as well as political level. An increasing proportion of 'universal' plays were on offer in Israeli theatres. This was a response to independence, an immigration wave that differed in character to that produced by European persecution and theatre economics. In the 1950s the Habima, for example, faced mounting financial pressures and staged American and European plays such as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1951) in an attempt to widen the theatre's appeal. The Cameri also followed a similar course with Brecht's *St Joan of the Stockyards*, in 1952, and by G.B. Shaw's *Pygmalion*, in 1954.

Importantly, the historic, Yiddish plays disappeared almost altogether. Between 1931 and 1948 sixteen Yiddish plays had been produced by the Habima but between 1949 and 1968 only four were staged.<sup>2</sup> The break from Yiddish roots was encouraged by the War of Independence and signalled a Zionist cultural victory.<sup>3</sup> The War of 1948 had been the first major event in which Israeli youth, especially the sabra generation, had a hand in shaping the political situation and steering Israeli destiny. As Glenda Abramson writes, 1948 marked the moment when the sabras 'consciously broke away from the heritage which East European Jewry had offered them. They associated these communities with abject acquiescence to the hardships of ghetto life and the degradation of Judaism generally. They wanted no reminder of it.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ginsbergs/Kudriatvsev, *The Nuremberg Trial and International Law*, pp. 181-2.

<sup>2</sup> Levy, *The Habima*, p. 192.

<sup>3</sup> Even so, Abraham Sutzkever in 1949 established *The Golden Chain* a periodical devoted to Yiddish writing.

<sup>4</sup> Glenda Abramson, *Modern Hebrew Drama*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979, p. 49.

In 1950 the Law of Return was passed enabling Jews from all over the world to settle permanently in Israel.<sup>1</sup> Shoshana Weitz writes that in the early 1950s when the young state had to absorb thousands of immigrants from diverse cultures, the theatre was called upon by the government to function as a cohesive mechanism. The next years saw vast social changes. Between 1948 and 1951 the nature and scope of immigration into Israel changed the character of the country. Between these two dates 687,000 people entered the country, almost doubling the population to 1,500,000.<sup>2</sup> However, unlike the immediate postwar influx, the majority of immigrants were from a Middle-eastern background and there was only a trickle of Holocaust survivors.<sup>3</sup> Few of these new immigrants spoke Hebrew. By using images that were representative of the new Israeli utopia, employing the Hebrew language, and adopting a pedagogic tone, it was intended that theatre should play its part in the creation of a new homogeneous society. For this specific purpose the Ministry of Education and Culture set up a unit in 1953 called *Telem* whose brief was to take theatre to temporary rural settlements, 'in order to introduce new immigrants to Hebrew and Israeli culture and lifestyle'.<sup>4</sup> To achieve this, playwrights and novelists were commissioned to write about everyday Israeli life in a realist style. The struggle to make the barren earth green, the need to defend the land, community spirit and Zionism were the main themes. 'Youth' was particularly emphasized as was the ideal of Kibbutz life. As Emanuel Levy writes:

Until these years, the kibbutzim were at the peak of their power and were viewed with great respect by the rest of the country. To be a Kibbutz member was to be a national hero, and the Kibbutz was the symbol of the Chalutz (pioneer) the prototype of the new Jews. It should be noted that the Kibbutz population in Israel never amounted to more than 7.5% of the population. However, because of the Kibbutz's political and ideological importance, its members were always prominent within the leadership of the country.<sup>5</sup>

In literature, Kibbutz heroes were created who were equally versatile with the rifle as the plough.

The 1948 war coincided with Moshe Shamir's dramatization of his novel *He Walked in the Fields* for the Cameri.<sup>6</sup> The Czech director Joseph Millo formed the Cameri with the

<sup>1</sup> H. E Barker, *The Legal System of Israel*, Jerusalem/London/New York: Israel Universities Press, 1963, p. 39: the law was passed on 7 July 1950.

<sup>2</sup> Kohansky, *Israeli Theatre*, p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> Matras, *Social Change in Israel*, p. 35: Between 1948 and 1951 a large percentage of Jews emigrated from non-European countries for the first time e.g. 35% of all immigration 1948-51 was from Iraq, the Yemen, Persia and Turkey with a further 14% from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Libya.

<sup>4</sup> Shoshana Weitz, 'From Combative to Bourgeois Theater: Public Theater in Israel in 1990', in Ben Zvi, *Theater in Israel*, pp. 101-116; p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> Levy, *The Habima*, pp. 198-9.

<sup>6</sup> Moshe Shamir, 'He Walked in the Fields' trans. Audrey Hodes, in Herbert S. Joseph, ed., *Modern Israeli Drama - An Anthology*, London/Toronto: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983. The play premièred 31 May 1948.

aim of producing plays of greater realism, using the Hebrew vernacular. Shamir's novels deal with the young sabra generation and their heroic exploits. *With His Own Hands: Chronicles of Elik* (1951), for example, describes the courageous sacrifice of a young Palmach officer who dies on escort duty.<sup>1</sup> *He Walked in the Fields* likewise expresses the aims and spirit of the sabra generation. The critic Mendel Kohansky was at the opening:

The première was the first in independent Israel... The subject, plus the timing, made the play a symbol of the War of Independence, a morale builder for the troops who jokingly called it, 'a secret weapon'. Performances were held in army camps, in places where mortar fire and explosions occasionally drowned out the voices of the actors. The trucks bearing the cast and set rode into Jerusalem in the wake of the troops who had liberated the city after a long siege, and a performance was given the same evening.<sup>2</sup>

The play centres on the story of Uri, a sabra, and his girlfriend Mika - a Holocaust survivor. As the curtain rises, a narrator informs the audience that it is the tenth anniversary of Uri's death and that Kibbutz members have gathered to mourn and celebrate the young hero who lost his life trying to stop British troops from intercepting a ship carrying illegal Jewish immigrants. The audience's attention is focused on the decisions the characters have made as the narrative shifts to what happened ten years ago. The audience is particularly invited to agree with Uri's decision to fight for his country. He may have sacrificed himself but now the Kibbutz flourishes and children live 'happily ever after'. The play is didactic in nature and Brechtian both in its style and staging:

Millo's staging was as direct and matter of fact as the milieu, the Kibbutz and the characters. The acting was devoid of any pathos or sentimentality; the atmosphere of the Kibbutz as a place of work was conveyed by a novel feature - actors changing scenery at an open curtain, doing it casually as if they were just going about their regular chores. There was a touch of Brecht in the show, the audience was constantly reminded that they were watching a play, not life... landscape sketches in black on white were projected onto a screen.<sup>3</sup>

*He Walked in the Fields* expresses an image of an Israeli Utopia that is only articulated by comparing it with the alternative: the Diaspora. Those characters who have emerged from war-torn Europe are directly juxtaposed to the sabras with the focus falling on the different choices these two opposing groups make in moments of crisis.

The moral crux of the play lies with Uri. Having graduated from an agricultural college, Uri would rather stay on his Kibbutz and become a farmer than fight in a Palmach unit. The other characters are essentially foils to Uri, especially Mika who is portrayed as weak, selfish, neurotic and unused to the hardships of Kibbutz life. When Uri is called up

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<sup>1</sup> No English translation of the novel is available but key speeches of the book are translated in P.R. Simpson, *Patriots and Pacifists: The Experience of War as Reflected in Recent Contemporary Israeli Hebrew Literature*, Manchester University: Ph.D. thesis, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> Levy, *Israeli Theatre*, p. 157.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 156.

she does everything she can to persuade him not to go unlike Dinahle, Uri's unit nurse, a vibrant woman who is willing to fight for her country. Another member of Uri's unit is Seymon, a former member of a Jewish resistance group in Europe. Unlike Mika, he believes fighting and sacrifice are necessary for collective survival. Even though his girlfriend is dangerously ill in hospital, he volunteers for the most dangerous assignment that the unit has to undertake - the blowing up of a bridge to act as a diversion for the British troops. Uri is paralleled with his Palmach comrade, Ginger. Uri argues that both farmers and fighters are equally important in Israel and that one man cannot fill both roles. Ginger rebukes him, 'Without the Palmach, there'd be no kibbutzes and nothing else either.'<sup>1</sup>

In the end, it is Uri who takes it upon himself to carry out the bombing of the bridge and is killed in the attempt. Mika, separated from him, has become increasingly neurotic and plans an abortion. However, in the end she decides against termination so that she might sanctify new life in Israel.

*He Walked in the Fields* is about Israeli identity. The play highlights the fact that in the early 1950s Israeli identity was formulated by a simple rejection of the alternative - the Diaspora Jew. Much writing, therefore, took on a thematic discourse where sabras (linked with bravery, positivism, fertile land and self-determination) were opposed to Diaspora Jews and immigrants who were associated with victimhood, weakness, cowardice, moral corruption and fatalism.

Yet the play is not one sided. The audience, learning of Mika's suffering in the camps, is made to sympathize with her plight. Many of Uri's family and friends are against the marriage and Mika is victimized by other women who find salacious scandal in the rumours that she was imprisoned in a brothel during the war. Generally, Mika is made to feel like a second-class citizen. When she is rebuked by Uri for not being strong enough for life in Israel, she points out that she has had to be stronger than any sabra in the past. Now in relative safety, it is her time to be weak and let others look after her.

Ultimately, *He Walked in the Fields* falls on the pro-Zionist side. It is Mika who must make the effort to change, understand and assimilate. In the new state there is no place for the weak and needy. Israelis must be willing to fight to the death if they are to prevent a second Holocaust. For the Israeli audience at that time, there was a complete identification with the sabra generation. The critic Y.M. Neuman observed in *Deva Ha-Shavua* (19 June 1948):

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<sup>1</sup> Shamir, 'He Walked in the Fields', p. 47.

There was no barrier between the stage and the audience. There were a lot of Palmachniks and soldiers in the audience. It seemed as if Uri, Wili, Ginga and Rutka had gone down into the audience and that some people from the audience had climbed up onto the stage. Absolute identification.<sup>1</sup>

Coinciding with the euphoric birth of a new nation, *He Walked in the Fields* enjoyed immense success. It was given 171 performances and seen by 172,000 people and Millo directed the film version in 1967.<sup>2</sup>

By comparison Natan Shacham's 1954 play *A New Reckoning* closed after only twenty-one performances at the Cameri.<sup>3</sup> The story centres on an Israeli immigrant, Dr Auerbach, beset with guilt over his past life as a kapo in a concentration camp. The play's lack of success indicates the general disinterest in the problems and histories of survivors and the belief that those who collaborated were morally corrupt. In *A New Reckoning*, Ami, a young sabra discovers Auerbach's secret past as a collaborator and resolves to kill him for this 'crime'. The more sanguine character of Pomerans rebukes Ami's self-righteousness.<sup>4</sup> This message was unwelcome. *A New Reckoning* coincided with the Kasztner Trial in 1954. After the Hungarian invasion in March 1944, Rudolf (Reszö) Kasztner, a Jewish leader in Hungary had negotiated to 'buy' Jews from Eichmann. As a result 1,686 Jews left Budapest by special train in June 1944.<sup>5</sup> After the war, Kasztner emigrated to Israel where he was vilified as a Nazi collaborator. In 1954, ostracized by Israeli society, Kasztner brought a law suit against Malchiel Grünwald for slander. At the hearing Justice Benjamin Halevi, the President of the Jerusalem District Court, described Kasztner as 'someone who sold his soul to the devil'.<sup>6</sup> A year after the close of the trial in 1957, Kasztner was assassinated in Tel Aviv. Such was the magnitude of public contempt for the man that his death was celebrated by some, ignored by the rest. According to the principle of Maimonides, collaborators were as spiritually bankrupt as the Nazis themselves.<sup>7</sup>

Israeli theatre continued to be forward looking with social plays forming the bulk of the theatrical output, especially those that dealt with the need for national security. After the 1948 war, Arab farmers began to infiltrate the borders.<sup>8</sup> These incidents were never part of a co-ordinated Arab plan backed by foreign governments but they did have a great

<sup>1</sup> Gershon Shaked 'Actors as Reflections of their Generation: Cultural Interactions between Israeli Actors, Playwrights, Directors and Theaters', in Ben Zvi, *Theatre in Israel*, pp. 85-100; p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Levy, *Hebrew Theatre*, p. 158.

<sup>3</sup> Corina Shoef, 'Hebrew Holocaust Theatre', paper given at The Shoah and Performance Conference, Glasgow University, September 1995. No hard copy available.

<sup>4</sup> Ben-Ami Feingold, 'Hebrew Holocaust Drama as Modern Morality Play', in *Theater in Israel*, pp. 269-83; pp. 271-2. Dan Laor, *Theatrical Interpretation of the Shoah: Image and Counter-Image*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 682.

<sup>6</sup> Dan Laor, *Theatrical Interpretation of the Shoah*, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> See chapter 1, p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> These were mostly conducted by Arab 'Fallaheen' (farmers) along the Gaza strip who tried either to re-take or re-settle their former properties.

psychological impact on the Israeli settlers. Fears arose of Arab encirclement. The Arabs, for their part, feared Israeli expansion. As Yair Avron writes:

Arab mythology and Israeli mythology combined to make these incursions across the border seem the first part of a campaign to liberate Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

Images of war, soldiering and state security were predominant in the Israeli national consciousness. Yigal Mossinson's *In the Wastes of the Negev* (1949), for instance, focused on the heroic stand of the Jewish settlements in the Negev against the Egyptian army during the War of Independence. It takes many of its themes and plot devices from *He Walked in the Fields*. Like Uri, the central characters of Dan and his father Avraham (the Kibbutz commander) must make choices between personal and public duties. The Kibbutz is besieged by Egyptians. The clinic has run out of medical supplies. The only hope is to break through the blockade and evacuate the casualties to the nearest hospital. Avraham knows that his son, Dan, is the only person who can drive the van. Instead Avraham orders his son to make an inventory of the stockroom. Nor is Dan too keen to put his life at risk as it is the eve of his wedding. Eventually Avraham realizes that there can be no individual privileges in their community and orders his son to drive the van. Dan agrees to postpone his wedding and drives the van full of wounded out of the Kibbutz. When they reach a road block Dan switches on the headlights to draw fire while the casualties are carried to safe ground. He dies a heroic soldier-martyr. The play can be seen as a re-staging of Jewish response to physical liquidation, with the Kibbutz as the ghetto and the Egyptians as the Nazis. As Avraham himself says:

I could have been in Warsaw - unarmed and been slaughtered like a sheep! Today I have weapons in my hands... I want to look my son, Dan, in the eyes as a man who fought and not as a miserable refugee who fled from his land.<sup>2</sup>

The play is a parable on the correct action to take in the face of persecution. *In the Wastes of the Negev* was hugely successful and ran for 227 performances.<sup>3</sup> Both *In The Wastes of the Negev* and *He Walked in the Fields* embodied the dynamism and ebullience of a new nation. Audiences were not interested in moral paradoxes, historical subjugation or past humiliations.

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<sup>1</sup> Yair Evron, *The Middle East*, London: Elek, 1973, p. 29. Fears for Israeli national security spiralled into irrationalism and espionage. In 1954 a group of Israeli agents were caught in Egypt accused of planting bombs in public locations including the American Library in Cairo. The Israeli plan cast an international shadow of doubt over Egypt's trustworthiness.

<sup>2</sup> Simpson, *Patriots and Pacifists*, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Levy, *The Habima*, p. 196.

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Nine years after the end of the war, the Holocaust was consigned to the archives of history both in Israel and the Germanies. For the Germans and the Israelis the Holocaust was primarily an embarrassment - a time and place peopled by abject victims and sadistic murderers. New political urgencies had overtaken the need to come to terms with the past. The war crimes trials had ended, the Nazis had been set free<sup>1</sup> and Adenauer had financially compensated the survivors.

This sense of closure was illustrated by Adenauer's refusal to accept the principle of collective guilt and Ben Gurion's response to this. Ben Gurion's government had demanded that in the Restitutions Agreement package Adenauer would have to make a public acknowledgment of German collective guilt. In the Bundestag on 27 September 1951 Adenauer gave his address on the Restitution Agreement but made no mention of 'collective guilt'. Ben Gurion did not push the matter. The future security of Israel's alliance with West Germany was more important. Most West Germans had disagreed with Israel's assertion of collective guilt. Moreover, public opinion polls showed that only eleven per cent of West Germans agreed with any monetary restitution.<sup>2</sup> For the majority of Germans, the Holocaust was not their responsibility.

The Allied re-education programmes and the Germans' forced public stance of atonement created resentment. There was no outlet for self-mourning. German writers had been attempting to mourn their own dead and loss of innocence since the war. They saw themselves as victims, both of the war and the war's victors, ostracized from the community of civilized nations. The Germans old enough to be involved in the war saw themselves as victims of Hitler; the younger generation believed themselves to be the victims of their parents. The East Germans regarded themselves as the victims of Soviet orthodoxy.

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<sup>1</sup> Ginsbergs/Kudriatvsev, *The Nuremberg Trial and International Law*, pp. 275-6. During 1950-51 almost all imprisoned Einsatzkommando participants had been pardoned and released.

<sup>2</sup> Wolffsohn, *Eternal Guilt?*, pp. 14-19.

### 2.3. 1955-1960

#### *Introduction*

#### *The Diary of Anne Frank and The Ulm Trial*

Ten years after the end of the war there was a sudden re-awakening of interest in the Holocaust. Survivor testimonies emerged that challenged the immediate postwar narratives and images. Primo Levi's *Si questo è un uomo (If This Is A Man)* previously published as a limited edition of 2,500 copies in 1947 (of which only two thirds were sold) was re-printed in 1958 and has remained in print ever since.<sup>1</sup> In 1955 Alain Resnais's documentary film on Auschwitz - *Nuit et Brouillard (Night and Fog)* - opened to critical acclaim. But the most important testament was *The Diary of Anne Frank*, published in German, in 1956, followed by productions of Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett's stage version in many German theatres from October onwards, and a film version in 1959.<sup>2</sup> The play also opened at the Habima in January 1957:<sup>3</sup>

The critics, on the whole, praised the Habima's choice of play, its sincerity and the superb acting of Ada Tal as Anne... The public was deeply moved by the production and kept it running for 179 performances making *The Diary of Anne Frank* one of the company's greatest artistic and financial successes in this period.<sup>4</sup>

In West Germany, Dr Gerhard Schröder, the Federal Minister of the Interior, made a statement to the Bundestag on 18 February 1960 recounting the government's attempts to rectify the situation that the 1954 Allenbach report had revealed:

Films were also enlisted to spread information. More than one hundred copies of the documentaries *Night and Fog* and *Concentration Camp Henchmen* - the latter a report on the Sorge-Schubert trial - were distributed. Among the feature films available for non-commercial distribution I may mention *In Those Days*. This film contains a long sequence which tells the story of an elderly couple where the wife is Jewish, who are driven to suicide by Kristallnacht, the boycott of their business and other measures of the Third Reich. The documentary *The People and Country of Israel* serves as an antidote to anti-Semitism.<sup>5</sup>

He concluded, by pointing out that at the end of 1959 copies of Alan Bullock's biography of Hitler had been sent to history teachers in all secondary schools. In addition, The Institute of Contemporary History had been established in Munich for research into National Socialism

<sup>1</sup> Primo Levi, *If This is A Man*, London: Abacus Books 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, New York: Random House, 1956. Premiered on Broadway October 1956.

<sup>3</sup> Corina Shoef 'The Holocaust and Hebrew Theatre 1948-73'.

<sup>4</sup> Levy, *The Habima*, p. 199.

<sup>5</sup> Ginsbergs/Kudriatvsev, *The Nuremberg Trial and International Law*, p. 198.

and anti-Semitism. By 1959 the Institute had published twenty-five monographs, including Rudolf Höss's Auschwitz diary, and assisted in providing teaching aids such as photographic evidence and statistics for schools.<sup>1</sup>

Other important testimonies were published: H.G. Adler's *Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft (Theresienstadt 1941-45. The Face of Forced Resettlement)* was published in 1955 winning the Leo Baeck Prize. It was followed by a sequel in 1958 *Die Verheimlichte Wahrheit: Theresienstädte Dokumente (The Secret Truth: Theresienstadt Documents)*. Elie Wiesel's *La Nuit (Night)* was published in France in 1958 (English edition 1960);<sup>2</sup> and Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, published in 1959, challenged standard Communist images of the Holocaust and had important consequences for eastern bloc writers. Moreover, Borowski showed that the question of collaboration between Nazis and victims was not always clear-cut.<sup>3</sup> In 1958 the Ulm Trial of those involved in Einsatzkommando units in Lithuania challenged the image perpetuated by the Nuremberg Trials that the Nazis who had committed atrocities were merely a handful of 'psychopaths'. Now the question of the 'degrees' of guilt was again being raised. The Ulm Trial showed that the Final Solution had been a wide-ranging programme that had incorporated the mobilization and complicity of many - including the Wehrmacht, not just the SS.

After *Anne Frank* and Ulm, new Holocaust images appeared both of oppressor and oppressed - in particular the face of a little girl as victim and the ordinary German soldier as criminal. In Israel and the Germanies, the issue of representing and articulating the Holocaust found inspiration in the Anne Frank story - a story told by a child who witnessed history from below. As Lawrence Langer notes:

The choice of children as victims compounds the anonymity because of the even more limited comprehension of children.<sup>4</sup>

The use of children offered pathos rather than political analysis. Children and young people became thematic vehicles on the stage to re-animate cauterized emotion, symbolize hope for the future and give a sense of healing to past wounds. A child's point of view was not 'heavy-handed', political, or concerned with issues of guilt

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 195-211.

<sup>2</sup> Elie Wiesel, *Night*, trans. Stella Rodway, New York: Avon Books, 1971. German edition 1963.

<sup>3</sup> Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, trans. Barbara Vedder, London: Penguin, 1976. Jan Kott in his introduction writes, p. 19: 'The public was expecting martyrologies; the Communist party called for works that were ideological, that divided the world into the righteous and the unrighteous, heroes and traitors, Communists and Fascists. Borowski was accused of amorality, decadence and nihilism.'

<sup>4</sup> Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination*, p. 164.

### 2. 3. *a Israel*

The pioneers and *kibbutzim*, who were seen to represent the Israeli consensus, found their power dwindling from the mid 1950s onwards. The reason behind this was the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of the country's population after the African and Middle-Eastern immigration wave. For instance, the Habima presented no new plays about Kibbutz life after 1956. As national identity became fragmented, questions arose over issues which had been taken for granted, in particular received images of the Holocaust, its survivors, the Diaspora and Zionism. This was encouraged by the publication of works by survivors and immigrants which allowed a brief thaw in the hegemony of the Zionist narrative.

In 1956 Joseph Millo directed Leah Goldberg's *The Lady of the Castle*. It premièred at the Cameri and ran for 105 performances.<sup>1</sup> Born in Lithuania in 1911 and educated in Bonn, Goldberg emigrated to Tel Aviv in 1935 where she worked primarily as a poet. Having had first-hand experience of life in the Diaspora she had a different investment in the Zionist-Diaspora discourse than that of sabra writers such as Moshe Shamir. Her attitude towards Israel's European heritage was ambiguous.

The play is a romantic allegory with elements of ghost story and murder mystery genres. Two Israeli emissaries - Michael Sand and Doctor Dora Ringel - are forced to spend the night in an old castle somewhere in Eastern Europe. A storm rages outside and the telephone lines are down. Sand has come in search of lost Jewish books, Dora in search of adopted and hidden Jewish children. Unfortunately, as Sand points out, children do not follow Dora so easily as the books accompany him. The last child she tried to help committed suicide when he discovered his true identity. Yet Dora believes she is morally justified in uprooting these children and returning them to the Israeli fold.

The caretaker of the castle is revealed to be its former owner - Count Zabrodsky. Initially it appears that he might have been a collaborator. However, his fraternization with the Nazis was merely a cover for his resistance activities. At the end of the first act Sand, examining a broken cuckoo clock (his father had been a watchmaker in Europe), inadvertently gives a pre-arranged signal to a girl, dressed in white, who appears from a secret compartment in the wall. Her melodramatic entrance is accompanied by a crash of thunder and a flash of lightening.

By Act Two the audience discovers that the girl, Lena, is no ghost but a Jewish child hidden by Zabrodsky during the war. Unable to be separated from her, he has not told her that the war is over. Much of the second act is taken up with Sand trying to persuade Lena

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<sup>1</sup> Leah Goldberg, *The Lady of the Castle*, trans. T. Carmi, Tel Aviv: Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 1974.

otherwise and Dora's hard-sell of sunny Palestine where she will be able to 'work, be free and walk in the open air'.

Initially Goldberg appears to be mocking Dora's Zionist ideology and lamenting the loss of the old traditions of Diaspora life. Dora hates all that is old and everything associated with the Count. For her, these are symbols of Jewish degradation. For Goldberg the past is more ambiguous and has many beautiful things to offer. As Zabrodsky points out, sometimes one generation of people can only validate itself by denigrating the previous one:

Always it is the scum of humanity, those who cannot grasp the ancient tradition and the true culture, who prophesy a new life, build another culture, and meanwhile they riot, murder, rape, and spit on carpets.<sup>1</sup>

Zabrodsky is talking about the Nazis but Dora (and presumably an Israeli audience) presupposes that he is criticizing the Zionists. Like Moshe Shamir's picture of Israel in *He Walked in the Fields*, Dora's ideology is based on a negative attitude towards the past rather than any constructive movement towards the future. The difference is that Goldberg, unlike Shamir, is both conscious and critical of this.

It is Sand, the play's voice of reason, who eventually agrees that Lena's best interests lie in Palestine. Ultimately Zabrodsky is shown to be selfish and callous. He wanted to possess Lena, not care for her. As Lena leaves, Zabrodsky warns her, 'You must forget everything if you wish to live there... In their world... dreams must be banished from the heart', to which Sand replies, 'In the world of the wide-awake there are dreams - many dreams. Only they're dreamed differently.'<sup>2</sup>

Despite Goldberg's romantic nostalgia for life in the Diaspora, she finally agrees that Zionism can be the only way forward in a post-Holocaust world. Like Shamir's *He Walked in the Fields*, the play is about the Holocaust's consequences for Israeli identity and not the event itself. But whereas Shamir assumes that there can be no reasonable alternative to life in Israel, Goldberg mocks the self-righteous figure of Dora who, by cutting herself off from her past, has little identity of her own. Like Mika's unborn baby, the child figure of Lena is a symbol of hope and movement towards the future. Perhaps she will have dreams of her own, unlike Dora, who unthinkingly regurgitates the ideas and dreams of others.

Similarly, Uri Orlev presents an ambiguous picture of Israel. Born in 1931 to an assimilated Jewish family in Warsaw he spent the years 1939-41 hiding in the Warsaw ghetto with his brother. In 1943 they were deported to Bergen-Belsen. Both of them survived and emigrated to Israel in 1945. Uri Orlev's 1956 novel *The Lead Soldiers* shares many

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 94-5.

similarities with *The Lady of the Castle*.<sup>1</sup> This time children are the main protagonists; the story of the Holocaust is told from a child's point of view, specifically that of Yurik and his brother, Kazik. The book is an exploration of the negative aspects of Diaspora life without dwelling on the horrors. When the brothers arrive at Bergen-Belsen, Orlev interjects:

But none of this belongs to our story... Our story concerns just two boys who came to this place by sheer chance and the cabin in which they lived.<sup>2</sup>

The Diaspora may have had its hardships but ultimately, like Goldberg, Orlev refuses to extol life in Israel in a facile comparison of the two. At the end of the war, when the two boys arrive with their older sister in Israel, they have to face many new hurdles. Significantly for Yurik, at his new Israeli school, the bullying does not stop. Both Goldberg and Orlev, because of their Diaspora roots, have ambiguous feelings both for the new state and the old European inheritance.

However, between 1955 and 1960 various political events in the Middle East consolidated the Zionist attitude expressed in Shamir's *He Walked in the Fields*. 1955 was a bloody year along the Egyptian-Israeli border. An Arab assault on an Israeli primary school in the village of Shafree, for example, killed seven children.<sup>3</sup> The rise of General Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt with his apocalyptic visions of Israeli destruction brought to mind similar threats made by another anti-Semitic leader in 1933. Nasser threatened to unite the Arab world against the Israelis in a full-out war.

After a brief relaxation in attitude, sabra writers and audiences were no longer interested either in moral ambiguities or the beauty inherent in their Diaspora past. Palestinian roots were preferred over European ones with images of heroes being put forward once again. The government took a leading role in establishing the image of Jew as hero through monument building and national remembrance days. Holocaust Remembrance Day (*Yom Hasho'ah Vehagvurah*), initially established by law of Knesset in 1953 as part of a decree for a Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority (*Yad Vashem*), was intended as a national secular remembrance day and not a religious one.<sup>4</sup> Yom Hasho'ah was not formally realized until 1958. The government, by giving the Holocaust its own special day and

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<sup>1</sup> Uri Orlev, *The Lead Soldiers*, trans. Hillel Halkin, London: Peter Owen, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 178

<sup>3</sup> Evron, *The Middle East*, p. 28: The number of border incursions increased and in February 1955 the Israelis attacked an Egyptian convoy of reinforcements in the Gaza strip resulting in thirty eight Egyptian dead with sixty-two wounded. In total that year, two hundred and thirty four Arabs and fifty-five Israelis were killed along the border.

<sup>4</sup> Most orthodox congregations had incorporated the Holocaust into the liturgy of lamentations recited on *Tesha B'av* which recall the destruction of the first and second temples. The orthodox rabbinate in Israel officially mourn the Holocaust on the Tenth of *Tevet* - *Yom Hakaddish*.

linking it with heroism (in other words it was the Jews, not God, who had delivered the people from exile) removed the event from the biblical continuum and placed it within the framework of Zionist history. As James E. Young points out, the design of the museum at Yad Vashem highlights this narrative as does its location: Mount Herzl, named after the Zionist leader. The exhibition itself is split into three time periods in three separate rooms. The first deals with rising anti-Semitism in Europe 1933-41; the second with the extermination process 1941-5. In the third room are exhibits relating to armed Jewish resistance, particularly the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, together with photographs of immigrants arriving in Israel:

For as the photographs of the survivors coming ashore at Haifa and Caesarea illustrate, the end of the Holocaust comes only with the survivors' return and redemption in Eretz Israel.<sup>1</sup>

The government, by linking Jewish resistance to the immigrants of Israel, highlighted the need to defend the land and place the Holocaust within the Zionist story.

Never was the need for self-defence so important as it was during and after the 1956 Suez Crisis. After Suez, America, in reprisal, suspended all military aid, leaving Israel in a vulnerable situation.<sup>2</sup> With Egypt re-armed by the Russians, Israel desperately needed a weapons supplier. Israel's national security remained precarious until Ben Gurion and Shimon Peres approached the Adenauer administration and an unlikely alliance was formed

In December 1957, Shimon Peres (then Israel's deputy defence minister) held secret talks in Bonn with the West German government in the hope of securing weapons for Israel. By the end of 1958 Israel had the highest defence expenditure *per capita* in the world.<sup>3</sup> The German-Israeli arms deal was kept secret but eventually in 1959 the story hit the headlines and Ben Gurion addressing the Knesset laid the foundation stone of a generation when he said:

There is only one thing I have learned from the appalling atrocities and butcheries of Hitler - to make every possible effort through the power of the State to prevent such a disaster falling on the people of Israel, for it is a danger that lies in store for this people... for although Hitler was defeated and burnt,

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<sup>1</sup> James E. Young, *Writing and Re-writing the Holocaust. Narratives and Consequences of Interpretation*, Bloomington & Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> There had been an escalating danger of military conflict with the Arabs ever since the Egyptian Revolution in 1952 particularly after 1954 when Abdel Nasser assumed power. Nasser proceeded to play the Russians off against the Americans to see which affiliation would offer the best deal. The Americans, in an attempt to keep Egypt friendly, poured money into the Aswan dam project. The British, French and Israelis saw Nasser as a lunatic potentially in control of one of the most important global waterways - Suez. In a pre-emptive strike in 1956 Israeli, French and British forces not only failed to secure Suez but severely damaged the canal. Their actions drove Nasser back into the arms of the Russians. With all three powers internationally discredited, America was left as the only real western representative in the Middle East. Moreover the United States cut off all military aid to Israel.

<sup>3</sup> Lavy, *Development of relations Between Germany and Israel*, p. 102.

his disciples and collaborators in the Middle East live on, and it is they that rule in the Arab countries that surround us.<sup>1</sup>

Ben Gurion was not interested in the past; he was only concerned with the issues of the present. The 'disciples and collaborators' were references to budding East German influences in the Arab world. In January 1959, for instance, the Egyptian government had received Otto Grotewohl (the Prime Minister of East Germany) in Cairo. By 1961 an East German consulate had opened in Damascus, Syria. The anti-Semitic rhetoric of Nasser had convinced the Israeli population that Ben Gurion had been prudent in his actions. An opinion poll carried out by *Ha'aretz* indicated that sixty-five per cent of the Israeli population supported the arms purchases.<sup>2</sup> The spirit of the moment was again articulated in the theatre.

Forward looking plays that celebrated young fighting heroes were preferred. Shamir's *He Walked in the Fields* was revived in 1956 during the Sinai campaign.<sup>3</sup> The importance of the collective was emphasized. Immigrants were enjoined to assimilate into the homogeneous mass. Hanoach Bar-Tov's play, *Each Had Six Wings*, which opened at the Habima in 1958, illustrates the problems encountered by immigrants and survivors trying to adapt to their new lives.<sup>4</sup> Bar-Tov lived for two years in the immigrants' quarter of Jerusalem where he studied what he described as, 'the other Israel.'<sup>5</sup> In the play the immigrants forget their diverse origins and become an integrated and united community with the sabras. This is symbolized through the birth of a baby girl to two immigrants who give her a Hebrew name, rather than a European one. Again, little reference is made to the Holocaust.

But the Zionist spirit was best exemplified by the Habima's decision, in 1957, to announce a playwriting competition on the subject of Hannah Senesh to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. As with the exhibits at Yad Vashem, Senesh's heroism and sacrifice were therefore linked to the creation of the new state. Of the scripts submitted, *Blessed Be the Match* by the Hungarian writer and friend of the Senesh family, Avigdor Hameiri, placed Hannah's death within the tradition of biblical martyrology. This play, like the others, was considered unsuitable. Ben Gurion, the plans for Yom Hasho'ah and Yad Vashem stressed the secular and political nature of the Holocaust in new national identity, not the biblical tradition.

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<sup>1</sup> Printed in the *Israeli Digest* (10 June 1959).

<sup>2</sup> Lavy, *The Development of Relations Between Germany and Israel*, p. 106.

<sup>3</sup> The Sinai Campaign was the Israeli thrust of the Suez strike.

<sup>4</sup> Hanoach Bar-Tov, *Each had Six Wings*, English translation: Tel Aviv: World Zionist Organization Department of Culture and the Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 1974.

<sup>5</sup> Levy, *The Habima*, p. 204.

The Habima turned to a friend of Senesh's, Aharon Megged, who had written a short biography of her life in 1955 entitled *The Burning Bush*. His play, *Hannah Senesh*, premièred in 1958<sup>1</sup> and over the next twelve months was performed a total of 116 times to packed audiences.<sup>2</sup>

The play charts the story of how Hannah Senesh, parachuted back into her native Hungary but was captured and tortured by Hungarian Nazis. The play is an exploration of Senesh's heroism with other incidents woven into the plot. For instance, Senesh's Hungarian mother is also imprisoned in an attempt by the Hungarians to extract information from the daughter. But it is the heroism of Hannah that is central. The action begins in prison shortly after Hannah had been captured with numerous references within the first few minutes to Hannah's superhuman ability to withstand torture. Guards faint from exhaustion before she does from pain and the most hardened torturers go weak at the knees in awe of her bravery. She is more resourceful than her eminently more experienced French resistance comrade, Pierre. He is a seasoned Partisan: she, by comparison, a mere novice. This is Hannah's first mission as a spy. In addition, her strategic importance in the course of the war is enhanced. 'If we make her talk, it'll be the greatest coup since the Germans got here', Rosza, the Hungarian Interrogation Officer, tells his staff. And Himmler, himself, is reported to be personally interested in the case.

The play divides National Socialism's victims into two opposing camps: the Jews who went 'like sheep to the slaughter' and those who fought back. Hannah derives her superhuman strength from her love of Palestine. Repeatedly, the bountiful and beautiful Palestine is compared to the murderous Diaspora. Importantly, it is not the Germans that Hannah is being tortured by but her 'own' people - the Hungarians. Hannah emigrated to Israel because she wanted to live in a country where she could hold her head up high and not be considered a second-class citizen. While awaiting trial in the Hungarian prison, Hannah proceeds to extol the Zionist ideology to all who will listen, even finding time between interrogation sessions to teach her mother Hebrew so that she will be able to prepare for life in Palestine. After her execution, Hannah returns as a ghost to her outcast mother. Hannah's closing words are:

Go to my home, mom. Look at my footprints in the soft sand, the two trees I planted by the tent, and listen to my voice in the murmur of the waves... These will be beautiful days. No more wars, and evil men won't howl at little girls' faces, and daughters won't part from their mothers anymore.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Aharon Megged, 'Hannah Senesh', trans. Michael Taub, *Modern International Drama*, 27/1 (Autumn 1993), pp. 101-34.

<sup>2</sup>The number 116 comes from Dan Laor in 'Theatrical Interpretations of the Shoah: Image and Counter Image'. Corina Shoef in 'Hebrew Holocaust Theatre' calculates that there were 179 performances.

<sup>3</sup> Megged, *Hannah Senesh*, p. 133.

In *The Lady of the Castle* and *The Lead Soldiers*, the authors express mixed attitudes towards Israeli society and identity. On the other hand, the Zionist tenets expressed in *Hannah Senesh* appear unassailable. *Hannah Senesh* indicates the degree to which the theatre played a social and political role in the shaping of the young state. Hannah is a martyr for her country - not in a biblical sense but in a political one - her martyrology being compared to that of Socrates, Wycliffe, Galileo. The central message of the play is delivered by Hannah's fellow prisoner, Clary, who believes that by acquiescing to the Nazis the Jews have brought the calamity on their own heads: 'If you're determined and fearless they retreat. But if you try to ingratiate yourself...' and she gestures to their current situation in the prison cell.<sup>1</sup> The conclusion is that Diaspora Jews were weak, passive and cowardly whilst resistance fighters and Israelis are strong and brave.

Again, as in *The Lady of the Castle* and *He Walked in the Fields*, the writer uses a young person to symbolize hope for the Israeli future. Senesh's conviction in the Zionist dream is unshakeable and she feels that she must transmit this faith to as many people as possible while she still has time. The intention was that young people everywhere would identify with such an icon. Similarly, the character of Menashe in *Each Had Six Wings* fulfilled the same function. Menashe, arrives in Israel from war-torn Europe with his recalcitrant parents who scorn the agricultural and backward country they are now forced to call home. Menashe dreams of living on a Kibbutz. His father, Klinger, bitterly opposes this move which he considers juvenile and foolish. The last thing his parents want to do is integrate. They prefer to cling to their old traditions. Menashe must show his elders how to let go of 'the old ways'. He runs off to the Kibbutz of his dreams hotly pursued by Klinger. It is only after his father witnesses how it is possible for a diverse community to come together and flourish that the family finally lets go of the past. They can now begin to fulfil their dreams in Israel. Youth took centre stage to be held up as role models for all generations.

### 2.3.b *The Germanies*

In the two Germanies the figures of children and young people also became thematic vehicles. Moreover, the victims of Nazism now appear as the main protagonists. The publication of *The Diary of Anne Frank* and the success of its sentimental American stage version in Germany was influential in this shift. Another reason why a child's point of view was favoured can be attributed to the repercussions of the 1958 Ulm Trial. Unlike the findings at Nuremberg, Ulm revealed that the Nazi system had been upheld by ordinary

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 122.

people, not just lunatic or sadistic high ranking officers. People were forced to reformulate their concept of guilt and responsibility. Political, social and psychological questions about those who designed and facilitated the Holocaust became more complex. By giving command of the narrative to a child a whole host of 'difficult' issues could be avoided - political discourse for one. For example, Ernst Schabel in his radio play *Anne Frank: Spür eines Kind* (*Anne Frank: Trace of a Child*, 1958) focuses his attention solely on recreating Anne's thoughts and feelings for the listener in the most scrupulous journalistic style.<sup>1</sup>

As questions about the past became increasingly uncomfortable, writers retreated into greater political generalization by the use of analogy and universalization. Children were portrayed as innocent victims of twentieth-century warfare: Bernhard Wicki's 1959 film *Die Brücke* (*The Bridge*) continued themes explored by Borchert and Böll; Erwin Sylvanus's play of the same year, *Korczak und die Kinder* (*Doctor Korczak and the Children*) represented all Jewish and German children by using one child-actor;<sup>2</sup> and Günter Grass's 1958 absurdist play *Onkel Onkel* (*Mister, Mister*)<sup>3</sup> like Eich's *Dreams*, employed images from diverse sources in order to link suffering in a world gone mad.

Naturally children were obvious candidates for authors who wanted to heighten tragedy and intensify pathos. Goodrich and Hackett's *Anne Frank* was deliberately designed to have a deep emotional effect upon the audience. So too was the use of children in *Doctor Korczak and the Children* and Bruno Apitz's 1958 novel *Nackt unter Wolfen* (*Naked Among the Wolves*).<sup>4</sup> It was as if writers believed that the only way they could break through the taboo of the Holocaust was by overwhelming their audience with emotion. The rapid events of the previous decade, coupled with the struggle of day to day living, had not enabled a national catharsis to occur.

### *i. East Germany*

When the East German state was created, literature, media and publishing came under direct control of the Communist party.<sup>5</sup> Before that time German writers had been able to play a tactical game with the authorities. After the 1953 June Uprising, Khrushchev had allowed a degree of freedom to appease the masses. The Fourth Writers' Congress in Berlin, January

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<sup>1</sup> Ernst Schabel, *Anne Frank: Spür eines Kindes*, Hamburg Radio Archive. The play is based on his book, *Anne Frank: Portrait in Courage*, trans. Richard & Clara Winston, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World inc., 1958.

<sup>2</sup> Erwin Sylvanus, *Dr Korczak and the Children*, trans. George E. Wellwarth, eds, Michael Benedict & George E. Wellwarth *Postwar German Theatre*, London: Macmillan, 1968, pp. 116-57.

<sup>3</sup> Günter Grass, *Onkel, Onkel*, trans. Ralph Manheim, Martin Esslin, ed., *Günter Grass-Four Plays*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1967.

<sup>4</sup> Bruno Apitz, *Naked Among the Wolves*, Frankfurt-am-Main: Roderberg, 1984.

<sup>5</sup> Seymour-Smith, *Guide to Modern World Literature* (Vol. 2), p. 359.

1956, criticized government artistic policy. Both Khrushchev and Ulbricht took note. Many of Stalin's political opponents were released from prison and western pop musicians were allowed to play in East Germany. However, the Hungarian Uprising in November 1956 put an end to such leniency.

Like Günter Eich and Erich Kuby, East German writers related historic events to present political concerns as the Cold War set in again harder than ever before. For example, Marc Silberman argues that the escalating Cold War was behind DEFA's<sup>1</sup> decision in 1956 to film Zuckmayer's anti-militaristic play *The Captain of Köpenick* (1931). The director, Helmut Käutner, removed all Zuckmayer's references to anti-Semitism as well as all Jewish characters. The film was instead intended to be an indictment of the Federal Republic's re-armament programme.<sup>2</sup> As with Eich's *Dreams*, the past was revived to service the present. The difference was that Eich had intended to remind people of the Holocaust to prevent unthinking acceptance of government policy. Käutner's aim, on the other hand, was to universalize all victims of National Socialism, displacing Jewish victims in the text with German ones, in order to concur with Soviet government policy.

Bruno Apitz spent a total of eight years in Buchenwald having been imprisoned as a leading member of the German Communist Party in 1937. His 1958 novel, *Naked Among the Wolves*, is based on personal experiences, and in particular on the story of a three-year old Jewish child smuggled in a suitcase from Auschwitz with a prisoner transferred to Buchenwald. In the novel, the Communist inmates protect and feed the child at great risk to themselves, while plotting the Buchenwald uprising. The Jews, on the other hand, are described as a mass: 'sheep-like', terrified of the Nazis, cowering in corners. The Communists act as their protectors. Like the other Jews in the story, the child's presence highlights the Communist's humanity and heroism.<sup>3</sup> The denouement depicts the Communist underground liberating all the prisoners in bloody revolt. In reality, the camp was liberated by the Americans in a bloodless surrender in tandem with a number of prisoners who took over the camp.<sup>4</sup> Buchenwald became a central shrine to the anti-Fascist resistance movement.

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<sup>1</sup> Deutsche Film AG.

<sup>2</sup> Marc Silberman, 'Semper Fidelis: Staudte's *The Subject* 1951', in *German Film and Literature - Adaptations and Transformations*, Eric Rentschler, ed., London: Methuen, 1986, pp. 146-60.

<sup>3</sup> Public attitudes towards the Jews by the Soviet authorities were mixed. In some cases they were downright anti-Semitic. In 1953, for example, the 'Doctors' Plot' Trial began in the USSR. Physicians including a number of Jews were falsely accused of conspiring to murder top Communist officials in a huge cover-up. In 1952 show trials had also taken place in Czechoslovakia where anti-Semitic sentiment had been used to smear the credibility of those accused. As a result, the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Rudolf Slansky, and ten cabinet ministers were given the death sentence.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Burma, 'Buchenwald' *Granta*, Vol. 42 (winter 1992) London: Penguin, pp. 65-73; p. 69.

A socialist realist statue of a group of starving inmates 'liberating' themselves stands in the centre of the former camp, re-designed as a huge monument.<sup>1</sup>

*Naked Among the Wolves* was put on East German school reading lists and became part of the Communist narrative of Buchenwald.<sup>2</sup> Otto Grotewohl, the first Prime Minister of the GDR, had even quoted the novel in a speech at the camp in 1958. *Naked Amongst Wolves* received the National Prize in 1963 and the Erich Weinart Medal in 1966. Susan E. Cernyak-Spatz, herself imprisoned in Auschwitz-Birkenau for two and a half years and now a literary critic, disputes the plausibility of a three month child escaping the initial selection process in Auschwitz, never mind being smuggled to Buchenwald in a suitcase and then surviving for a further three years in secret. Of the book's critical success in East Germany, she concludes, 'It must be assumed that these honours were awarded for propaganda value.'<sup>3</sup> Yet Alexander Donat writes that when 410 Hungarian boys were sent to Buchenwald, the Resistance arranged that each boy was assigned a 'protector' responsible for feeding, and clothing him. As a result, all 410 boys survived.<sup>4</sup> If Donat's story is true, Apitz's account is not that impossible.

Like Apitz, Brecht chose the eastern sector when he returned to Germany in October 1948. In the late 1950s his World War Two plays were revived. In 1957 Peter Palitzsch, Lothar Bellag, Käthe Rüllicke, Carl Weber and the Pole, Konrad Swinarski, staged scenes from *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*. The following year Palitzsch directed the German première of *Ui* in Stuttgart. Four months later he was one of the co-directors on the Berliner Ensemble's production. For the authorities these two plays satisfactorily fulfilled the function of explaining recent history from a Marxist point of view. But Ralph Mannheim argues that when Brecht had looked again at the script of *Ui* in 1953, it was not Hitler he wanted to lampoon. To give an indication of the truly universal nature of Brecht's writing, he had been inspired to dig out the script after the June Uprising of 1953 when he was forced to take a long hard look at Ulbricht and the East German government.<sup>5</sup> Tyrants, for Brecht, were interchangeable.

Yet it would be wrong to assume that the arts in East Germany interpreted World War Two by purely Communist criteria. Nor was it assumed by the inhabitants of the Democratic Republic that their country was any more de-Nazified than the west. In 1958, for example, the film *Sonnensucher (Sunseekers)* was released. It portrayed absorbed Nazis and contemporary Communists working together in the same mine.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Susan E. Cernyak-Spatz, *German Holocaust Literature*, New York: Peter Lang, 1985, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Terence Des Pres, *The Survivor. An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*, New York: Washington Square Press, 1976, p. 128.

<sup>5</sup> Bertolt Brecht, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, trans. Ralph Manheim, London: Methuen, 1992. p. xvii.

ii. West Germany

The journalist Ernst Schabel avoided direct political comment by concentrating instead on the act of *collecting* evidence in his radio play *Anne Frank: Trace of a Child*. The play is based on his book *Anne Frank - A Portrait in Courage*. In it, the author attempts to recreate the authentic voice and person of Anne compared to, as he states, the 'inaccurate' American stage version.<sup>1</sup> In some ways, both the book and the play are more about the act of collecting and recording facts than they are about Anne Frank. The radio play is narrated by the author who describes the collecting process. Schabel argued that he wanted to present the facts as clearly as possible unlike Goodrich and Hackett who manipulated the raw material. His aim was to get to the truth. What 'truth' is only revealed by the end of the play.

Schabel wrote a prototypical docudrama which anticipates the documentary movement of the 1960s. His linguistic influence can be traced back to Group 47 as well as his own journalistic background as a reporter and producer with Nordwestdeustcher Rundfunk. He stressed that he either spoke directly with or wrote to forty-two people who had known Anne Frank. Yet the play is not a dry document. Its emotional heart lies in what is unsaid. And the 'truth' Schabel calls for is to be found in the audience response to this silence. The text calls for several long silences in between key scenes which gives moments for the listeners to reflect on what they have just heard. Silence is absence. Something is missing or has been lost. Here, Anne's absence is re-informed by the fact that she is never heard. The words she left are read by others. The silences in the script are occasionally punctuated by the sound of bells, acting as a leitmotif. The mournful sound of Westerböck church bells and air raid warnings act as reminders of the dead.

Schabel has created an emotional martyrology. Both the book and the play end on the same note: Schabel describes how Anne's story 'tells how these millions lived, spoke, ate and slept, and it has outlasted the shouts of the murderers and has soared above the voices of time'.<sup>2</sup> The last line indicates a desire to heal the past. But Schabel proposes that healing can only come with remembering and not forgetting. *Anne Frank-Trace of a Child* was the first radio play on the Holocaust that achieved a favourable response and widespread critical acclaim. It won the Prize for Human Rights in 1958.

Schabel, like Borchert and Böll, wrote from the German perspective. The difference is that, in Schabel's work, German guilt, complicity and identity are central, not German suffering. Schabel draws attention to the Franks' German characteristics to force a German

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<sup>1</sup> Ernst Schabel, *Anne Frank: Spür eines Kindes*, Radio Archive Hamburg, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Schabel, *Anne Frank: Portrait in Courage*, p. 192.

listener into the shoes of the 'victim'. The arresting officer is incredulous that Otto Frank fought for the Germans in the First World War. Otto's way of not showing his emotion is described as 'a very Prussian trait' and the Frank family are described as being 'as German as the Gestapo chief in the Netherlands, as the German Reich's Commissioner in The Hague, as German as Hitler'.<sup>1</sup> The comparison was intended to underscore the writer's belief that individual choice is the basis of whether one follows a life of good or evil: Schabel is asking his audience to examine their consciences.

A similar technique can be seen in Erwin Sylvanus's 1959 play *Doctor Korczak and the Children*. Again the image of a child is central to the emotional journey of the play which recounts the story of the Warsaw ghetto childrens' orphanage whose inhabitants were deported to Treblinka in 1942. The head of the orphanage, Doctor Janusz Korczak was apparently told that if he ensured that the deportation went smoothly, the Nazis would spare him his life. He instead refused to abandon the children and accompanied them into the gas chambers.

Sylvanus's play was premièred in February 1959 by the Hamburg Youth Theatre. It was subsequently performed throughout Germany, both east and west, and a production in Yiddish was given in Warsaw.<sup>2</sup> According to the first night review in the *Hamburg Echo*, Sylvanus had written the play to confront the German audience with the fact that they all played an equal part in the shame of their recent past.<sup>3</sup> His intention, he stated, was to rebuke them for their collective amnesia.<sup>4</sup> Like Schabel, Sylvanus believed that the past could not be overcome by forgetting.

Again, like Schabel, Sylvanus adopted a journalistic approach: 'The author has not invented the events depicted in the play; he has merely recorded them', the opening directions inform the reader.<sup>5</sup> Both Schabel and Sylvanus employ a narrator but Sylvanus goes one step further in structuring the play on the Brechtian device of actors assuming roles before the audience. The cast for *Dr Korczak and the Children* calls for two actors (one playing a narrator), one actress and a child. Sylvanus employed this structure because he realized that in order to make a German audience emotionally and intellectually involved in a story about the Holocaust, he had to cajole them into participating. The actors give voice to typical audience attitudes when, at the beginning of the play, they are described as being reluctant to take part in the proceedings. As the actors gradually 'get into' their parts so does the audience. The actors begin to defend the characters they are playing. This is particularly true

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Erwin Sylvanus, introduction to *Korczak und die Kinder*, Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1959, pp. 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> *The Hamburg Echo* (2 February 1959).

<sup>4</sup> Erwin Sylvanus, introduction to *Korczak und die Kinder*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Sylvanus, *Dr Korczak and the Children*, p. 117.

of the actor who plays the officer responsible for the deportation orders. He demands that they improvise scenes to show the audience that he was a good father and a loving husband - not just some evil abstraction. Sylvanus himself had been a member of the Hitler Youth and wanted to 'explain' his generation.<sup>1</sup> His play shows that not all murderers were sadistic monsters or psychopaths. Many were ordinary men, fathers and husbands.

The real stroke of brilliance is in the casting of the child. One child stands for all children of the orphanage and the officer's son. In the closing scene, when he is deported hand in hand with the actor playing Korczak, a German audience is forced to see their own children in the same situation.

However, it is the doubling that also poses the problem as it confuses images of victim and victimizer. As Primo Levi wrote in *The Drowned and The Saved*, 'The oppressor remains what he is, and so does the victim. They are not interchangeable.'<sup>2</sup> The actress plays both the orphanage nurse and the officer's wife. In addition, the character of Doctor Korczak is deliberately paralleled to that of the officer especially in the scene before the deportation where gesture, action and word are mirrored in either character. Korczak puts on his prayer shawl and sings; the officer puts on his uniform and whistles. Korczak faces God in the east whom he promises to obey; the officer faces his portrait of Hitler whom he promises to obey. Their situations are compared. Both men are faced with moral decisions the outcomes of which are based on similar boyhood epiphanies. Each had something irreversibly drilled into their psyches. Whereas the officer learned that lying was sometimes a necessary evil, Korczak vowed he would never tell a lie. Individual moral choice is therefore the crux of the play and it is this which salvages the technique of the doubling process. Here comparisons are made to stress the differences. Sylvanus like Schabel asks his audience to question certain decisions they made under Hitler's rule.

The last scene of *Korczak* is more contentious. After Korczak and the child have walked hand in hand into the gas chamber, the narrator recites the prophecy of Ezekiel - the redemption of the Jewish people in the land of Israel. Possibly intended as a message of hope, it seeks to heal the gash that the Holocaust represents in history. As Lawrence L. Langer writes, the full extent of the Holocaust can only be expressed by presenting it as a rift and not a continuation.<sup>3</sup> After 1948 the cost of the millions of dead was seen to be reimbursed by the establishment of Israel and the Federal Republic's payment of reparations. *Dr Korczak and the Children* inadvertently reinforced this. The play's intent to heal contributed to a sense of closure on the past.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Hamburg Abendblatt* (2 February 1959).

<sup>2</sup> Primo Levi, *The Drowned and The Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal, London: Abacus Books, 1988, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence L. Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1975, pp. 250-1.

*Korczak and the Children*, and *Anne Frank: Trace of a Child* are remarkably simple and moving. The intention behind both plays was not political elucidation but emotional identification. After the war, the marriage of ideology and art was still considered a *mésalliance*. C.E. Williams argues that traditionally German writers had tended to be anti-intellectual and anti-analytic. They preferred to shroud their country's history in myth.<sup>1</sup> The use of myth and metaphor is not compatible with historical specifics. Emerging narratives of the war were therefore characterized by political universalization and an eschewal of the images and words of Holocaust victims and survivors who would counter these narratives. The Holocaust was circumvented by metaphoric vocabulary. Ortega Y Gasset writes that the roots of metaphor lie in taboo.<sup>2</sup> As Hamida Bosmajian noted, metaphor is a weapon against bringing the 'unspeakable' to light. Metaphor obscures reality, transforming trauma and pain.<sup>3</sup>

In such a generalized vision, the German people saw themselves as the collective victim of a terrible fate rather than morally responsible individuals. World War Two was just one of many manifestations in an endless struggle between good and evil; the Nazis were demonized - a terrible visitation inflicted on the twentieth century. This was mirrored in the arts by Borchert and Böll. Schabel, Sylvanus, Eich and Apitz, on the other hand, stressed individual choice and, with the exception of Apitz, the human face of evil.

The German tendency towards apoliticism and myth was satirized by Günter Grass in *Die Blechtrommel (The Tin Drum; 1959)*<sup>4</sup>. Grass had been coerced into joining the Hitler Youth at the age of fourteen and was then drafted into the Wehrmacht at the age of seventeen only to be captured by the Americans in the last days of the war.<sup>5</sup> *The Tin Drum* is narrated not by a child but by a dwarf, Oskar Matzenrath. Oskar is born with a fully formed personality and knowledge of German history. His reaction to this knowledge is to retreat into infancy and apathy. Oskar by refusing to grow up, belongs to the apolitical tradition. Rather than accept responsibility, he runs away from it. Grass is burlesquing German petit-bourgeois political infantilism. Here, Nazi Germany is not synonymous with that represented by the high culture of Thomas Mann's in *Dr Faustus* but with the *Mittelstrand* - the apolitical mass whose mercantile interests coincided with Hitler's deconstruction of *Länder* power and business monopolies. It was they who unthinkingly gave their vote to the party offering the best financial deal. By withdrawing from politics, this class gave Hitler his

<sup>1</sup> C.E. Williams, *Writers and Politics in Modern Germany 1918-1945*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977.

<sup>2</sup> Ortega Y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Essays on Art and Culture*, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1965, pp. 15-16.

<sup>3</sup> Hamida Bosmajian, *Metaphors of Evil. Contemporary German Literature and the Shadow of Nazism*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1979, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965.

<sup>5</sup> Demetz, *After the Fires*, p. 363.

mass support. Judith Ryan describes *The Tin Drum* as Grass's diametrically opposed answer to Thomas Mann's novel.<sup>1</sup> Whereas Mann locates Nazism within the German classicist and humanist tradition, Grass locates it within the apathetic, small-minded, middle classes. In the living room of the Matzenrath family, Beethoven's portrait on the wall is replaced by Hitler's. However, Beethoven is not totally removed but simply given a less important position on the opposite wall where he 'glares' at his replacement. For Grass, Hitler and the German romantic tradition are opposites not complementaries. Nazism's roots did not grow in such noble soil but rather in the muck of the farmyard and factory floor. Like Schabel and Sylvanus, Grass's Nazis are ordinary Germans.

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Ryan, *The Uncompleted Past. Postwar German Novels and the Third Reich*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983, pp. 56-69.

## 2. Conclusion

Primo Levi wrote of the nature of memory:

The memory of a trauma suffered or inflicted is itself traumatic because recalling it is painful or at least disturbing: a person who has been wounded tends to block out the memory so as not to renew the pain; the person who has inflicted the wound pushes the memory deep down, to be rid of it, to alleviate the feeling of guilt. Here... we are dealing with a paradoxical analogy between victim and oppressor, and we are anxious to be clear: both are in the same trap.<sup>1</sup>

The psychological reasons for avoiding direct reference to the Holocaust both on the Israeli and German stages were pain and guilt. Forgetfulness was also augmented by political considerations. As A. F. Bance writes of the German situation, 'A rapid suppression of events in postwar West Germany encouraged a suppression of recent memories... The 1950s were a period when politics was pushed into the background and ideologies were suspect.'<sup>2</sup> As Terence des Pres writes, the Final Solution was soon regarded as the 'usual solution'.<sup>3</sup> Little 'Holocausts' were erupting all over the globe especially in the Far East. The threat of the nuclear holocaust overshadowed all else as the Cold War escalated. Christopher Innes notes that during this period more attention was given to nuclear warfare on the German stage than the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> The Jewish Holocaust existed in the present as a lesson to be drawn on. German writers concerned with global issues subsumed Holocaust iconography within their writing to trigger still-raw nerves in order to incite audiences to contemporary protest (for example, Günter Eich; Günter Grass; Bertolt Brecht).

The erosion of the specific Jewish narrative was aided by Theodor W. Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's *The Authoritarian Personality* (1947)<sup>5</sup> and *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947).<sup>6</sup> Both Horkheimer and Adorno had been published widely in Germany before the war and these two publications, whilst written in the United States, merely emphasized what the Frankfurt School of Marxist philosophy had stated before.<sup>7</sup> With the possible exception of Franz Neumann, the Frankfurt school considered the specific issue of Nazi anti-Semitism to be a mere by-product of an essentially class-oriented war:

Bourgeois anti-Semitism has a specific economic reason: the concealment of domination in production.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> A.F. Bance, *Hitler's War in German Fiction*, Keele: Keele University Library Series, 1983, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Des Pres, *The Survivor*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Innes, *Modern German Drama*, p. 120.

<sup>5</sup> T.W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York: Harper & Row, 1950.

<sup>6</sup> T.W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming, New York: Continuum, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Jay, 'The Jews and the Frankfurt School. Critical Theory's Analysis of Anti-Semitism', Zipes/Rabinowitz, *The Germans and Jews since the Holocaust*, pp. 287-301.

<sup>8</sup> Adorno/Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 173.

Adorno and Horkheimer argued that the Jews bore the brunt of the working class's frustration with the capitalist exploiters. Rather than direct their anger against the owners, the working classes were led to believe (by their employers) that the Jews were the engineers behind their poverty. These conclusions had obvious affinities with the official Soviet historiography. Therefore on both sides of the east-west divide, Communism was working to erode historical specifics in an attempt to confine events within one particular historicist discourse.<sup>1</sup> 'Evil' became generalized through the paralleling of opposing characters either in the writing or in the doubling of actors (e.g. Sylvanus and Zuckmayer). Settings became timeless and political arguments were abstracted into metaphysical expressions. After 1958, when more evidence emerged of wider popular involvement in Nazi crimes, these generalizations widened and writers, preferring not to confront these new complexities, wrote from the viewpoint of the politically inarticulate: the children. Usually represented as victims, their voyage into the Holocaust remained largely untackled. For example, as one critic wrote of Walter Jens's *Ahasver*: 'We are not directly confronted with the nightmarish facts... the persecution of Jews in Germany, life in the concentration camps.'<sup>2</sup> Auschwitz and Treblinka are only hinted at in *Anne Frank, Trace of a Child* and *Dr Korczak*. Heroism and saintliness are emphasized over terror, martyrdom preferred over death. Whilst Sylvanus and Schabel try to engage their audiences' emotions they simultaneously deny emotional involvement by theatrical technique, particularly in representations of 'reality'. By that I mean, the way in which Anne Frank and Korczak's Jews are filtered to the spectator. They are presented at one remove from their historical reality: actors visibly (and aurally) assume their roles. The actors in *Dr Korczak* and the journalist in *Anne Frank* are actively creating the characters before us. The result is that the audience is never quite sure whom the actors are really speaking for - themselves, the characters as written, the writer or the historical personages. The stress both Schabel and Sylvanus place on their concern for the 'facts' only deludes the audience all the more into believing that they are witnessing the historical truth. After Adorno, many writers were too afraid to put Jewish characters on the stage for fear of being deemed tasteless. In addition, very few Germans, especially those of the younger generation, were acquainted with Jews. Another reason for this 'distancing' was the degree of sensitivity in dealing with the Jewish story in a collective setting. German audiences needed to be coaxed rather than confronted if any self-examination was to occur.

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<sup>1</sup> The new theory in Horkheimer's and Adorno's 1947 publication was that the Jew was now seen as a symbol for modernity itself after the collapse of the Enlightenment - the inability of modern society to accept 'difference' in a world of supposed assimilation.

<sup>2</sup> Usmiani, *The Invisible Theater*, p. 268.

Yet many fictional Nazis remained demonized (Apitz's Nazi thugs and Langässer's demonic visitations) despite the findings of the Ulm Trial. In addition, the victims remained objectified (Schabel's Anne and Sylvanus's child). Notions of evil, atonement, and collective guilt were still contentious. Obviously not all Germans had been monsters, nor had they been entirely innocent. As Primo Levi wrote, 'Compassion and brutality can co-exist in the same individual and in the same moment, despite all logic.'<sup>1</sup> Sylvanus's SS officer, to some extent, vindicates this truth.

Yet despite the recently re-awakened interest in the Holocaust, a survey printed in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 9 May 1959 indicated that most West German schoolchildren knew very little about the war and the Holocaust.<sup>2</sup> The West German minister, Doctor Gerhard Schröder, speaking to the Bundestag in February 1960, despite listing all recent, government attempts to counter rising anti-Semitism and rectify the absence of Hitler and the Holocaust on the school curriculum lamented:

What went wrong in teaching German youth about the guilt and the fate of the Third Reich? What do these young people know about Hitler and about the Jews?<sup>3</sup>

The material was available but whether the public wanted to view it was another matter. *Night and Fog*, for example, was 'greeted with a notable amount of resistance'.<sup>4</sup> It played in art houses, but was not shown on West German television until January 1978.<sup>5</sup>

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In Israel, the Holocaust was being incorporated into a secular, contemporary vision of Jewish identity. Only an armed Jew, not divine intervention, was capable of defending the Jewish nation:

What the young sabras of Israel did not understand is that heroism is not inherent in human nature. Their whole education tends to inculcate it in them from their infancy, in the form of military courage.<sup>6</sup>

Survivors who had not fought back were considered second-class citizens. Immigrants were enjoined to assimilate. The richness of Diaspora life was denied compared to the Utopia of

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<sup>1</sup> Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Ginsburgs/Kudriavtsev, *The Nuremberg Trial and International Law*, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Schröder's speech given 18 February 1960 reprinted pp. 195-211.

<sup>4</sup> Reimer, *Nazi retro-Film*, p. 135.

<sup>5</sup> Kaes, *From Heimat to Hitler*, p. 110.

<sup>6</sup> Steiner, *Treblinka*, p. 12.

Palestine. The only meaning the Holocaust retained was as a Pavlovian battle cry to defend the Israeli soil.

Alexander Donat, a survivor and literary critic, stated that the centrality of God to the Jewish faith was slowly, but surely, replaced by the centrality of the state of Israel.<sup>1</sup> The arrangement and location of Yad Vashem and the date of Holocaust Remembrance Day were designed to facilitate this displacement. The Holocaust was removed from its place in the long tradition of divinely planned persecution and placed within a contemporary political construct. The Holocaust was the Jews' greatest 'shame'. Therefore, the individual voices of survivors were ignored, even though the event itself became central to Israeli identity. Raul Hilberg estimates that by the end of the 1950s, about 18,000 survivor testimonies had been chronicled in archives.<sup>2</sup> Few of these testimonies made it to the publishing houses. Of those that did, Sidra Dekoven Ezrahi concludes, 'this body of memoir literature produced only a small ripple on the public consciousness.'<sup>3</sup>

Yael S. Feldman writes, 'What is in effect striking is the extent to which Israeli culture, particularly in its earlier phases, attempted to assimilate the experience of the Shoah into its overall Zionist perspective.' He concludes that Holocaust literature in Israel is not synonymous with the voice of the survivors: 'they are ignored'. The 'emplotters' are important in Israeli writing and they favour narratives which involve myth-making, collectivization, ritualization and 'life-affirming closure'.<sup>4</sup>

Only the explosive events of the 1960s - the Eichmann trial, the Frankfurt-Auschwitz trial, the Six Day War, the coming of age of the postwar German generation and the rise of the student movement - would shake many of the assumptions established as truth over the previous fifteen years.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Donat, 'The Voice of Ashes' paper given at a Conference on the Holocaust in New York in 1975, quoted in Edward Alexander, ed., *The Resonance of Dust: Essays on Holocaust Literature and Jewish Fate*, Columbia: Ohio State University Press, 1979, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Berel Lang, *Writing and the Holocaust*, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Didra Dekoven Ezrahi, *By Words Alone. The Holocaust in Literature*, London: University of Chicago Press, 1973; p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Yael S. Feldman, 'Whose Story Is It Anyway? Ideology and Psychology in the Representation of the Shoah in Israeli Literature', in Saul Friedlander, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation*, Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1992, pp. 223-35, p. 223.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**THE POSTWAR GENERATION**  
**1960-67**

**Introduction**

In his 1964 novel, *Hundejahre (Dog Years)*, Günter Grass describes the German market flooded with 'miracle glasses' which enable teenagers to see the wartime version of their parents.<sup>1</sup> In reality, the 'miracle glasses' of the 1960s were the Eichmann trial (1961)<sup>2</sup> and the Frankfurt-Auschwitz trials (1963-4), the most significant war crimes tribunals since Nuremberg. The proceedings ricocheted among the younger generation in West Germany where historical narratives were questioned - both at national and familial level. Many young Germans attacked their parents' proclivity for historical amnesia, postwar materialism and concern for state-building. The young discovered that many of their elders had much to keep silent about. And it was on this foundation that the so called 'Economic Miracle' (and consequently their own comfort) had been built.<sup>3</sup> As Detlev Claussen argues, the ensuing generational conflict had much of its roots in the guilt complexes of a new strata of educated 'rich kids'.<sup>4</sup>

The Federal Republic's Government's rapid re-armament programme did not ameliorate matters. The consensus among the young was that a nation which had initiated a war that had ended in the deaths of over forty-five million people, and had then tried to sweep this fact under the carpet, had not proved itself responsible or mature enough to take its place again among the world's military powers.<sup>5</sup> The 1961 Cuban Missile Crisis (the threat of World War Three/nuclear holocaust) and the reintroduction of military conscription further aggravated this.

Students sought to distance themselves from their elders by seizing every opportunity to demonstrate how they, by comparison, were ethically-minded moral crusaders. Beginning at the Freie Universität in Berlin, students and other fringe groups combined to form the

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<sup>1</sup> Günter Grass, *Dog Years*, trans. Ralph Manheim, London: Secker & Warburg, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> Adolf Eichmann, the man entrusted with planning the Final Solution, was kidnapped from his home in Argentina by Mossad in May 1960 and subsequently tried in Israel in 1961.

<sup>3</sup> K.S. Parkes, *Society and the Individual in the Works of Martin Walser*, University of Bradford: Ph.D. thesis, 1971/2, p. 3: Between 1950 and 1960 the Gross National Product doubled from 2, 072DM to 5, 268DM per head. 1959-66 were boom years. By the early 1960s West German unemployment figures were virtually at zero.

John Sandford, *The New German Cinema*, London: Oswald Wolf, 1968, p. 12: The increase in purchasing power was seen in the steady rise in television set ownership. In 1957 there were one million television sets in West Germany but by 1960 there were four million. By the end of the decade this figure quadrupled to 16.75 million.

<sup>4</sup> Detlev Claussen 'In The House Of The Hangman', trans. Merle Kruger in Rabinbach/Zipes, *Germans and Jews since the Holocaust*, pp. 50-62.

<sup>5</sup> Alan Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives*, London: Fontana, 1993, p. 1086.

Extra-Parliamentary Opposition Movement. Much of the movement's ideology was based on a misreading of Marx and a hatred of cultural imperialism.<sup>1</sup> Their attack fell on America's interference in Vietnam and Arab hegemony in the Middle East especially in the prelude to the Six Day War. They viewed a possible Israeli defeat as a potential second Holocaust. It was a moment in history which offered young Germans the chance to prove their ethical superiority.

In effect, the students sought to distance themselves from their own historical identity as Germans. They were particularly antagonistic towards all forms of 'authoritarianism' which they equated with Fascism which in turn was synonymous with Nazism. Just how far the students believed in this lineage can be seen in the upheavals triggered by the Bundestag's proposal to reinstate the Emergency Laws (1967-8).<sup>2</sup> The immediate popular connotation was Hitler's 1933 invocation of the same Emergency Laws and the subsequent establishment of military rule. The discovery that the then joint-chancellor with Willi Brandt, Kurt George Kiesinger, had been a member of the Nazi Party, increased tension. From 1966 onwards, student demonstrations degenerated into street battles and arson attacks. In June 1967 Jürgen Habermas, a philosopher of the Frankfurt School, publicly warned the students of their 'Fascism of the Left'.<sup>3</sup> The students, however, continued to follow their extremist crusade which ended in the shooting of two students by the police.<sup>4</sup>

The appeal of Marx lay in his ideological opposition to Hitler. As Peter Sichrovsky writes, after the Frankfurt-Auschwitz Trial the younger generation lacked positive capitalist and parental role-models.<sup>5</sup> West German youth had been led to believe that only East Germany harboured former Nazis, unlike the Democratic Republic. This belief was shattered as teachers, civil servants and other 'ordinary' people were vilified as former Nazis. In addition, the building of the Berlin Wall also ironically propelled students in the West in a Marxist direction.<sup>6</sup> With the geographical division came the recognition that Germany would

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> The Emergency Laws were finally passed on 24 June 1968.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Demetz, *After the Fires*, p. 66

<sup>4</sup> The shooting of twenty-six year old Benno Ohnesborg at a protest march against the diplomatic visit of the 'imperialist puppet', the Shah of Iran, was particularly brutal. He had been shot in the back of the head by a policeman who was never brought to trial. After a fierce and bloody climax in 1968, the shooting of a policeman and the burning down of two department stores in Frankfurt-am-Main, the student movement lost its momentum. It never had the support of the Trade Unions, the real working class or the Social Democrats. Terrorism only succeeded in alienation. By 1968 the Extra parliamentary Opposition was over but from its ashes rose the Rote Armee Faktion (the Baader-Meinhof Gang) and the urban guerrilla warfare of the 1970s.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Sichrovsky, *Born Guilty. The Children of the Nazis*, trans. Jean Steinberg, London: I. B. Taurus & Co. Ltd, 1988, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Vadney, *The World Since 1945*, p. 292: On the 13 August 1961, the Communists began constructing the Berlin Wall. West Berlin deep in the heart of the Democratic Republic provided an escape route for many East Germans. In 1960, 152,000 East Germans crossed the border. On 6 May 1961, it was estimated that 2,305 people crossed into the West. Needless to say, this was an embarrassing situation both for the East German leader, Walter Ulbricht, and for the Soviet premier Khrushchev.

not be re-united in the foreseeable future. Separate national identities and historical narratives were consolidated. The younger generation on either side of the divide perceived east and west as two independent countries whose inhabitants bore little resemblance to each other. Obviously, the number of East German refugees dropped after the borders were sealed with the result that many young West Germans had little first-hand knowledge of either their eastern cousins or the situation in the Eastern Bloc. In other words, they had little knowledge of Marxism in practice.<sup>1</sup> But Marx, the antithesis of Hitler, was an attractive champion. Compared to the authoritarianism of the Bonn government and the university authorities, the right-wing bias of Axel Springer's newspaper empire and the 'discovery' of Nazis in West Germany's infrastructure, their Marxist neighbours seemed uncontaminated.

In Israel, the decade began with the Eichmann Trial which consolidated Zionist identity and ended with the Six Day War which triggered a major re-interpretation of both Jewish identity and historical narratives. Laws against genocide, Nazism and collaboration had been passed in 1950<sup>2</sup> but the Eichmann case was the first major trial on Israeli soil. It also had a political and social function beyond establishing Eichmann's guilt. Ben Gurion wanted to instil the nationalist spirit in the new generation by means of historical example. A public ritual to unite the Jewish community against external threat was needed. So Adolf Eichmann was kidnapped and whisked to Israel by Mossad. His trial was intended to have an educational impact on the nation by tackling the entire history of anti-Semitism. Compared to the Nuremberg Trials, where the defendants had been accused of crimes against humanity, Eichmann was accused of committing crimes against the Jewish nation specifically. Mr Hausner, the first prosecutor, gave an opening address that lasted three sessions beginning with Pharaoh in Egypt and Haman's decree 'to destroy, to slay and to cause them (the Jews) to perish'.<sup>3</sup>

Ben Gurion never appeared at the Trial but, as Hannah Arendt interpreted the situation, he acted as a stage manager behind the scenes.<sup>4</sup> Before the trial Ben Gurion stated:

We want to establish before the nations of the world how millions of people, because they happened to be Jews, and one million babies, because they happened to be Jewish babies, were murdered by the Nazis.<sup>5</sup>

And in *Davar*, the paper allied with Ben Gurion's Mapai party, he was even more explicit:

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<sup>1</sup>The Communist Party had been banned since the end of the war.

<sup>2</sup>Barker, *The Legal System in Israel*, pp. 67-73: The Punishment of Nazis and their Collaborators Law 1950; The Crime of Genocide (Prevention and Punishment) Law 1950.

<sup>3</sup>Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem - A Report on the Banality of Evil*, New York: Faber and Faber, 1963, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

Let world opinion know this, that not only Nazi Germany was responsible for the destruction of six million Jews of Europe. We want the nations of the world to know... and they should be ashamed.<sup>1</sup>

Victor Gollancz's pamphlet arguing against the execution of Eichmann attacked Ben Gurion's proposed pedagogic purpose:

What needs to be encouraged in the young people of Israel today is not an intensification of racial or particularist solidarity but a passion for human solidarity, for the solidarity of the whole human race: not a steadily growing nationalism.<sup>2</sup>

The Israeli collective was, and still is, based on ritual. Government legislation had ritualized Holocaust remembrance in its national monuments, events and holidays. The first 'Remembrance Day for the Fallen of the War of Liberation and the Defence Army of Israel' took place in 1963.<sup>3</sup> It takes place in April, between *Yom Ha-Sho'ah* and Independence Day. Israeli military sacrifice is thus presented as the answer to Jewish martyrdom (the Holocaust), and the destruction transfigured through Zionist deliverance (Independence).

The Six Day War challenged the Zionist narrative. This was the first conflict Israel fought without outside help. Many Israelis, including the soldiers themselves, drew parallels between their own situation and that of the European Jews after 1933. The Israelis were outnumbered and encircled. Previous harsh judgements on Diaspora mentality and behaviour were re-evaluated as was sabra self-definition.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Victor Gollancz, *The Case of Adolf Eichmann*, London: Victor Gollancz 1961, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Barker, *The Legal System in Israel*, p. 6. This holiday came into effect on 5 April 1963.

### 3.1. The Federal Republic

#### *Introduction*

Two developments can be seen in the handling of the Holocaust by German dramatists and writers in the 1960s. The first is apparent in characterization. Both the Eichmann and Frankfurt-Auschwitz trial drew a fresh perspective on the psychology of the Nazi, revealing them as ordinary family men and civil servants. Hannah Arendt, at the Eichmann Trial, aptly coined the term 'the banality of evil', describing Eichmann as a 'desk-top' murderer. She repudiated the accepted image of Nazi as devil-figure which had been standard fare, more or less, since Nuremberg despite the findings of the Ulm trial:

The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terrifyingly normal.<sup>1</sup>

Egon Monk's television film, *Ein Tag (One Day, 1965)* presented concentration camp guards as ordinary Germans. Peter Weiss, Rolf Hochhuth, Martin Sperr and Martin Walser followed suit with their stage plays. The *Betriebsunfall* theory of Hitler (as an 'accident' in German history) and the notion that he duped an innocent population were questioned as more and more officials and schoolteachers were vilified as former Nazis and removed from their positions - or, as in some cases, continued in their chosen profession even when their crimes had been identified. In the Treasury Department the existence of the former Nazi, Doctor Hans Globke, a close advisor to Adenauer, caused particular furor. Such hypocrisy was unacceptable to the young. Crucially, these issues were first questioned in the writings of Heinrich Böll. His 1964 novella, *Entfernung von der Truppe (Absent Without Leave)* portrays a different war-torn Germany to that of his earlier works. Formerly the Nazis had infected the 'true' Germany. Now the Nazi movement reflects it. *Absent Without Leave* attacks German self-willed historical amnesia. Böll deliberately constructs a 'war-story' without mentioning the war. He ironically invites the reader to forget the more barbarous features of the conflict, 'dismissing the Nazi business as something between a cold and a hail of brimstone'.<sup>2</sup> At the end Böll asks, 'The narrator is concealing something. What?'<sup>3</sup> The irony becomes clear. The narrator has selected his historical details and conveniently concealed others. The Nazis were not just a 'hail of brimstone'. They developed out of the German psyche and the German people and this should never be forgotten.

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<sup>1</sup> Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 253

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 87.

The second literary development can be seen in form. For the younger generation, the absurdity and hypocrisy of their elders' claim to have recanted their Nazi past and embraced democracy was ludicrous. It was also tragic. The theatrical style chosen to explore themes of parental guilt and historical amnesia marries absurdist techniques with irony and farce. Young writers found a natural affinity with the theatre of the absurd. Historians, parents and the government had subtly concealed monstrous acts. Adolescent role-models were tainted by a murderous past. That both a brute and a loving parent were manifest in the same person was inexplicable. There were few certainties left in life:

The Theatre of the Absurd strives to express its sense of senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought.<sup>1</sup>

Eugene Ionesco envisaged that the absurd would provoke critical examination. The ironic and impossible situations that characters find themselves in mirror those similar absurd situations of the human condition. The absurd forces the audience to face aspects of daily as well as metaphysical reality, that many would rather not scrutinize too deeply. It compels this confrontation by shattering language and social rituals that have been perpetuated without being renewed, reinterpreted and invented afresh before they are passed on to the next generation. The objective of the absurd is to shake the audience out of their tired, clichéd modes of speech and atrophied structures of thought. For German authors, absurdist drama offered a model by which writers hoped to shatter calcified historical narratives and re-awaken emotion that had been deeply buried after the war.

Henri Bergson, at the beginning of the century wrote that comedy is an intellectual process, demanding, 'something like a momentary anaesthesia of the heart. Its appeal is to the intelligence pure and simple.'<sup>2</sup> For Brecht, comedy places the audience at a critical distance from the material and, more importantly, invites both personal and social change. Laughter is about making an audience think. Brecht exerted an enormous influence over West German writers. It is as though (after generations of Germans rendering up 'thought' and 'will' to the establishment - first to the Kaiser, then the Nazis and finally the Allied Occupation Authorities) these writers sought to jolt their readers and spectators into thinking for themselves.

Yet laughter and tragedy are very close as Ionesco noted: 'As far as I am concerned, I have never been able to understand the difference that is made between the comic and the tragic. As the comic is the intuition of the absurd, it seems to me more conducive to despair

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, London: Penguin, 1977, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Bergson, *Laughter- an Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton & Fred Rothwell, London: Macmillan & Co., 1913, p. 5.

than the tragic.<sup>1</sup> Both tragedy and comedy are based on disaster and both can be purgative in a social sense. Comedy offered many possibilities: critical analysis, catharsis, satire, change, collective response. Writers such as Martin Walser and Martin Sperr experimented with absurdism and comedy not only to encourage an intellectual response but also to achieve the catharsis of grief and shame, which should have taken place after the war, but had been impeded by guilt and the rapid social and political changes.

However, irony, farce and absurdism were not the only styles employed in the attempt to 'jump-start' the nation's mental faculties or produce the long awaited catharsis. In a *Theater Heute* article of May 1963 Henning Rischbieter commented on the large amount of contemporary documentary writing.<sup>2</sup> The 1960s documentary movement developed out of two roots: the German epic theatre of the 1920s, exemplified by Erwin Piscator, and the photographic realism of the *Kahlschlag* style which sought to eradicate excess, hysteria and euphemism. The premise of docudrama is that because it is structured on 'facts' it is objective and therefore, supposedly, more truthful. The audience filters the given raw material to draw its own objective conclusions. Yet the use of bleak facts can also encourage an emotional response as Schabel's radio play *Anne Frank-Trace of a Child* had showed. For instance, in Alexander Kluge's short story of 1966, *Lieutenant Boulanger*, the language of the Aryan master race is presented in its original form so that the horror is revealed in its stark simplicity. *Lieutenant Boulanger* centres on a letter (based on a real one, dated February 1945), written by a Professor A. Hirt, demanding Jewish and Russian skulls for research:

When the death of the Jew has subsequently been brought about, in a way which will not damage the head, the officer will separate the head from the trunk, and after immersing it in preserving fluid in a metal container (with a close-fitting lid) specially provided for the purpose, will forward it to its destination. The photographs, measurements and the other data pertinent to the head and eventually the skull will permit the laboratory to embark on comparative anatomical research, as well as study of racial origin, pathological features of the cranium formation, brain formation and size, and many additional aspects.<sup>3</sup>

Emotion comes in the cold and brutal use of language.

Yet the fallacy of the documentary, as Susan Sontag pointed out, is that the mere selection of facts is subjective.<sup>4</sup> Quoting Nietzsche, Sontag highlighted the truism that there are no facts only interpretations. The artist, therefore, has ultimate control over the meaning by the selection of facts, their running order and mode of presentation. Docudrama is

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<sup>1</sup> Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Henning Rischbieter, 'Neue Chancen für das Zeitstück?' in *Theater Heute* (4 April 1963), pp. 8-14.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Kluge, *Lieutenant Boulanger*, in Langer, *Art from the Ashes*, pp. 395-6.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979, p.6.

insidiously manipulative because it cajoles the audience into the belief that they are thinking for themselves when, in fact, their perceptions are shaped and determined for them.

Historically, German documentary drama has always been interested in movements not people. Postwar documentary writing reflects the same interests. The complexities of the war and the inexplicable behaviour displayed was taken to indicate that the realms of history, politics and sociology were now beyond psychological analysis or 'naturalistic' presentation. The twentieth century could only be expressed through the workings of mass movements, statistics, ideologies and not individual psychology. This tendency was additionally augmented by similar dramaturgical thought emanating from Switzerland. In 1956 Friedrich Dürrenmatt's play, *Der Besuch der alten Dame (The Visit)*, illustrated, by the example of a village community persuaded to commit a 'communal' murder, how the individual could become the plaything of social determinism if he/she withdrew from active decision-making. In 1961 *Andorra* by Dürrenmatt's compatriot, Max Frisch, was staged in West Germany after a successful première in Switzerland.<sup>1</sup> *Andorra* is about anti-Semitism, identity, responsibility and apathy in a socially determined world. After witnessing the inhumanity displayed during the war, Frisch and Dürrenmatt believed that individual action had become increasingly difficult in modern mass society. Frisch concluded that 'reality' was being determined by political ideologies alone with the individual in danger of becoming a victim or puppet of mass movements. Similarly, Dürrenmatt asserted that the major questions which confronted his generation perhaps could no longer be explored through psychological motivation or 'realism'. 'The stage has lost its human contours', he noted, 'and just as physics can only interpret the world in terms of mathematical formulae, so the state can now only be expressed in statistics.'<sup>2</sup> Obviously, the notion of the individual as victim of mass movements found favour with the German assertion that the ordinary person had been a victim of a totalitarian regime. At the very least, it offered a way to understand the parental generation. Peter Weiss, for example, writing about his drama on the Frankfurt-Auschwitz Trial, *Die Ermittlung (The Investigation)*, stated:

I think that audiences are ready to become concerned with the real world than with the private loves and hates of individuals... The lead roles are played by history and ideas.<sup>3</sup>

The 1960s in West Germany are interesting for the tensions between the retrospective and progressive elements in the arts. While Peter Weiss and Rolf Hochhuth's stylistic roots lie in the 20s and the 50s, writers such as Martin Walser and Martin Sperr were very much part of

<sup>1</sup> Max Frisch, *Andorra*, trans. Michael Bullock, London: Eyre Methuen Ltd, 1964. The play premièred at the Zürich Schauspielhaus in 1961.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Dürrenmatt, 'Problems of the Theatre', (1954), quoted in Innes, *Modern German Drama*, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Dekoven Ezrahi, *By Words Alone*, p. 39.

the 1960s youth generation. Peter Weiss's roots are found in Piscator, Brecht and Group 47. Rolf Hochhuth's influences for *Der Stellvertreter* (*The Representative* or *The Deputy*) can be found in Schiller, Ernst Wiechert and Karl Zuckmayer. One man links both of these productions: Erwin Piscator. Both Hochhuth and Weiss utilize documents to varying degrees but to different ends. Weiss asserts that his work can contain 'nothing but the facts', whereas Rolf Hochhuth writes that such an assertion is self-defeating because one can never be in possession of the full facts.<sup>1</sup> Yet Hochhuth has constructed a play based on historical 'facts' which he vehemently defends in his sixty-two page appendix to the play. Although thought to be radical in their day, both *The Investigation* and *The Representative* are retrospective in style and political philosophy compared to the works of Walser and Sperr.

### 3.1.a. Rolf Hochhuth and Peter Weiss

#### *Movements not Man?*

##### i. Rolf Hochhuth

*The Representative* caused what Eric Bentley described as 'almost certainly the largest storm ever raised by a play in the whole history of drama'.<sup>2</sup> Hochhuth wrote his play over a three year period, beginning in 1959, for his Jewish friends and his wife whose mother had been killed in Auschwitz.<sup>3</sup> It was directed by Erwin Piscator, the recently appointed director of the Freie Volksbühne in West Berlin and opened at the Theater am Kurfürstendamm on 20 February 1963. With the conclusion of the Eichmann Trial and the Frankfurt-Auschwitz Trial on the horizon, the timing of the play could not have been more apt.<sup>4</sup> 40,000 copies of the text sold within the first three months and by 1975 it was established that over 7,500 articles or books had been published about the play.<sup>5</sup> However, the excitement did not derive from Hochhuth rubbing his countrymen's faces into the dirt of Auschwitz but rather because

<sup>1</sup> Rolf Hochhuth, *The Representative*, p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> Eric Bentley, *The Storm Over The Deputy - Essays About Hochhuth's Explosive Drama*, New York: Grove Press, 1964.

<sup>3</sup> Mandel, *Group 47*, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup> Derek Fogg, 'Outrage and Outcry: The Première of *Der Stellvertreter*', in Claude Schumacher/Derek Fogg, eds, *Hochhuth's The Representative at the Glasgow Citizens 1986*, Glasgow: Theatre Studies Publications in association with The Goethe Institute, 1988, pp. 35-47; p. 37 translating *Der Spiegel* (13 March 1963 & 27 February 1963) respectively: Piscator persuaded Rowohlt to delay the publication of the script until the day of the première. Making himself ever-ready for the press, Piscator managed to create an atmosphere of anticipation and panic. Bertold Beitz, Managing Director of Krupp Industries (the firm that had profited from slave labour in the concentration camps) was reported to be trying to procure a copy of the text. The Catholic News Agency was gathering together their defence of Pius's actions (or inaction) and issued a press release before the play opened.

<sup>5</sup> James Trainer, 'The Play as Published', in Schumacher/Fogg, *Hochhuth's The Representative*, pp. 6-14; p. 7.

of what many regarded as the play's central aim: a slanderous attack on Pope Pius XII who, Hochhuth claimed, had failed in his duty as God's representative on earth by refusing to speak out against Hitler's crimes against the Jews and break the Concordat.<sup>1</sup>

The narrative charts the course of a fictional young Jesuit priest, Riccardo Fontana, who is informed of the death camps by SS officer, Kurt Gerstein, who, unlike Riccardo's character, is based on an historical person. Riccardo confronts the Pope and challenges him to speak out against Hitler and his crimes against humanity. Pius, however, far from being ignorant of the atrocities, is more concerned with playing a tactical game between Hitler and Stalin. The Jews, unfortunately, are the sacrifice needed to stem the tide of Bolshevism, thus safeguarding the Catholic Church (and incidentally Vatican-capitalist business investment in the production of war materials). Pius views Hitler as a necessary evil which can be safely discarded after the defeat of Stalin. Riccardo, unlike the Pope, remembers his duty as God's representative and, attaching a yellow star of David to his robes, voluntarily joins a group of Jews deported to Auschwitz. It is there that the devil-like 'Doctor' challenges Riccardo's faith.

*Theater Heute* identified the central paradox of *The Representative*. Hochhuth's concern was not to write a play about the Holocaust or even the Pope but a philosophical discussion piece based on the model of Schiller who had utilized historical figures to communicate educational, moral messages.<sup>2</sup> Henning Rischbieter in *Theater Heute* judged that it was confusing and even 'embarrassing' when such grand philosophizing was juxtaposed with issues of national guilt. The two objectives clashed against each other with a jarring effect.

The play had come too soon after the event to be viewed dispassionately. The main problem was that Hochhuth's exploration of non-German complicity, less than twenty years after the war, was interpreted as a shifting of guilt away from the Germans. Hochhuth, by the example of historic personages, had intended to illustrate the acute importance of individual moral choice. Unfortunately, the people he chose to exemplify failure in this respect were non-Germans. Some critics argued that Hochhuth's intention was to exonerate German guilt by analogous example of non-German atrocities. A similar controversy followed his *Soldaten: Nekrolog auf Genf* (*Soldiers: an obituary on Geneva*, 1967) in which Churchill was attacked for the saturation bombing of Dresden. Such was the antagonism towards the play that when Lawrence Olivier approached the board at National Theatre in London they refused to stage it; and when Olivier attempted to produce it independently, he

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<sup>1</sup> The Concordat between Nazi Germany and the Holy See was negotiated by Cardinal Pacelli and signed by Pius XI on 20 July 1933. To the world, the Papacy had therefore sanctioned the Nazi state.

<sup>2</sup> Rischbieter, 'Neue Chancen für das Zeitstück?'

was denied a permit by the Lord Chamberlain's office.<sup>1</sup> Only after the Lord Chamberlain's office was abolished could Olivier produce the play in 1968 in the West End. The British press condemned the play as an attempt to absolve German war guilt by passing the buck.<sup>2</sup> The play was regarded as a case of German *Schadenfreude*.<sup>3</sup>

Other writers who explored individual moral responsibility through non-German historical figures encountered similar problems. In the 1964 play *Joel Brandt, die Geschichte eines Geschäfts* (*Joel Brandt*), Heinar Kipphardt condemned the British for rejecting the Eichmann-Brandt-Kastzner 'Jews for Trucks Deal'.<sup>4</sup> And in *In der Sache J. Robert Oppenheimer* (*In the Case of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, 1964)<sup>5</sup> Kipphardt drew on the 1954 transcripts of the Atomic Energy Commission to show that Oppenheimer regretted turning over his discoveries to a government who used them for destructive purposes. Oppenheimer himself protested against the play arguing that the production was an attempt to mitigate German war atrocities.<sup>6</sup> As Eric Bentley writes, 'each country has its own bad conscience and puts focus onto other countries' misdemeanours'.<sup>7</sup> And as Franz Stangl, Kommandant of Treblinka, argued years later in an attempt to reduce the magnitude of his own crimes, 'Look at Katyn, look at Dresden, Hiroshima and now Vietnam.'<sup>8</sup> It can be argued that both German writers and foreign critics focused on the crimes of each other's governments to reduce the scale of those committed by their own. The furore over *The Representative*, *Soldiers* and *In The Case of J. Robert Oppenheimer* occurred because the historical scars were still fresh. It was also because the accusations and arguments, in Hochhuth and Kipphardt's cases, were neither water-tight nor the work of historians. Their plays were polemics, not objectively researched documents.

Hochhuth, like Günter Eich, intended to use historical example to inspire ordinary people to resist corruption and make the right moral decisions at moments of historical significance. As Piscator stated:

*The Deputy* makes liars of all those who assert that a historical drama as a drama of decision is no longer possible for decisions as such are no longer possible for man, given the featureless anonymity of social-political arrangements and pressures in an absurd construction of human existence that sees everything determined.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mandel, *Group 47*, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> *Times Literary Supplement* (9 November 1967).

<sup>3</sup> There is no literal translation for this word but it basically refers to mischievous delight in someone else's misfortunes or evil doing where the spectator is on the moral highground for a change.

<sup>4</sup> Heinar Kipphardt, *Joel Brandt, die Geschichte eines Geschäfts*, Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp, 1964.

<sup>5</sup> Heinar Kipphardt, *In the Case of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, trans. Ruth Speirs, London: Methuen, 1967.

<sup>6</sup> Innes, *Modern German Drama*, p. 73. Kipphardt was dismissed from the Deutsches Theater in 1959 for refusing a dramatically inept propaganda play by Gustav von Wangenheim.

<sup>7</sup> Eric Bentley, *The Theatre of Commitment*, New York, 1968, p. 215.

<sup>8</sup> Sereny, *Into That Darkness*, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Bentley, *The Storm Over The Deputy*, p. 11 quoting Piscator's introduction to the German publication of *The Representative*, trans. Clara Mayer.

Moral apathy is the crux of both plays: 'Not to be against them, that's as bad as to be with them', states Riccardo, and Harras in *The Devil's General* concludes, 'Permitting viciousness is worse than doing it.'<sup>1</sup> There are obvious similarities between *The Representative* and *The Devil's General*: the festive atmosphere among the various Nazi Party members and hangers-on in Act One of *The Devils' General* and the Jägerkeller scene of *The Representative*; the icy and devilish Doctor Schmidt-Lausitz and Hochhuth's demonic Doctor; the questioning, idealistic Riccardo and Lieutenant Hartmann who try to effect change; the good German, Harras, who gives sanctuary to the Jewish Korrianke and the good German, Gerstein, who saves the Jewish Jacobson by concealing him in his apartment. Both writers were devotees of Schiller and, like Ernst Wiechert, both were concerned with Christian responsibility. In *The Forest of the Dead* and *The Devil's General*, priests, laymen and soldiers find themselves on a Christian pilgrimage to martyrdom. So does Hochhuth's Riccardo Fontana. *The Representative* is a Christian psychomachia with man (Riccardo) poised between the good angel (Gerstein) and the bad (the Doctor) who is confused by false prophets (the Pope). For example, in the stage directions the Doctor 'has the stamp of absolute evil'.<sup>2</sup> Hochhuth leaves his reader in no doubt as to his intentions:

An age-old figure of the theatre and the Christian mystery play has once again stepped onto the stage. As this unholy apparition from another world is obviously only playing the part of a human being, I will avoid further attempts to fathom his human characteristics for they can add nothing to the understanding of this incomprehensible figure and its actions.<sup>3</sup>

This concept was explored by the German director Hans Schalla in Bochum in 1964 where the characters walked about in mysterious shafts of light and took on a 'ghostly' appearance.<sup>4</sup> Walter Kaufman, having seen the play, concluded that it was 'a modern Christian tragedy - perhaps even the only Christian tragedy' because it asks that the individual 'becomes a Christian in the most demanding sense of the word'.<sup>5</sup>

Hochhuth refused to release the rights for an East German performance because he felt that the Communists would utilize the text to indict organized Christianity. It was not until 1966 that the play was staged in four theatres in the Democratic Republic and a further three in Poland.<sup>6</sup> From a Jewish perspective, the play is neither about the Jews nor the Holocaust as the critic, Sraya Shapiro, wrote at the Israeli première:

<sup>1</sup> Hochhuth, *The Representative*, p. 137; Zuckmayer, *The Devil's General*, in Haskell/Shed, *Masters of Modern Drama*, p. 940.

<sup>2</sup> Hochhuth, *The Representative*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> James Trainer, 'The Play as Published', p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Kaufman, *Tragedy and Philosophy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 329.

<sup>6</sup> J.D. Hind, *Ambivalent Polemicist - A Study of the Political and Philosophical Outlook of Rolf Hochhuth*,

We were given an anti-German play which fits in well with the general campaign against normalization of relations with Germany. It was stressed very clearly that it was the Russians who saved the Auschwitz victims, or what remained of them; and that the fear of Russia was the main motive which kept the Pope squarely in the German camp, the Jews being an unsavoury but necessary price to be paid to Hitler for his anti-Communist services. Of the Jews and their problems there was very little.<sup>1</sup>

However, Hochhuth had intended his play to provoke German consciences. However, this intention was mitigated by thematic inconsistencies.

As with *The Devil's General*, *The Representative* glorifies the German resistance movement through the character of Gerstein. His portrayal worked against Hochhuth's original intention to stress individual responsibility because Nazism was depicted as an aberration rather than an expression of German mentality. Gerstein, like Zuckmayer's General Harras, represents the 'eternal' Germany:

For Hitler is not Germany  
he is only her despoiler.<sup>2</sup>

Guilt belongs to the Nazis, not the ordinary Germans. In addition, the central character, or 'everyman' who must make the crucial decisions is not German but Italian. Hochhuth's intention to focus on German decision making is negated. This is reinforced by the figure of Pius. Hochhuth asserts:

Pius is a symbol, not only for all leaders, but for all men - Christians, Atheists, Jews. For all men who are passive when their brother is deported to death. Pius was at the top of the hierarchy and, therefore, he had the greatest duty to speak.<sup>3</sup>

The intended moral message is that we are all our brother's keeper. However, condemnation falls squarely on Pius. As one Catholic publication put it, '*The Deputy* is character assassination.'<sup>4</sup> Hochhuth responded to such charges by insisting, 'The arsonist does not become less guilty because a fireman resigns in front of a great fire.'<sup>5</sup> According to Christopher Innes, Hochhuth's original scheme did not include Pius at all. He was only

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Nottingham University: Ph.D. Thesis, 1980, p. 195 translating from *Der Spiegel* (27 February 1963).

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Claude Schumacher, 'The Representative Outside Germany: A Stage History', in Schumacher/Fogg, *Hochhuth's The Representative*, pp. 49-59; p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Hochhuth, *The Representative*, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Judy Stone, 'Interview with Rolf Hochhuth', in *Ramparts* (Spring 1964), quoted in Bentley, *The Storm Over The Deputy*, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> *America - the National Catholic Weekly Review* (17 March 1964), quoted in Bentley, *The Storm Over The Deputy*, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> Judy Stone, 'Interview with Rolf Hochhuth', p. 43.

introduced as an antagonist to emphasize Riccardo's moral standpoint.<sup>1</sup> In the stage directions Hochhuth's intentions appear confused:

The actor playing Pacelli should remember that His Holiness is much less a person than an institution; big gestures, and vivid movements of his exceptionally beautiful hands and a smiling aristocratic frigidity are enough<sup>2</sup>

If Pius is symbol for 'everyman', the question remains as to why Hochhuth included an historical appendix detailing his specific argument against the Pope. At Piscator's première, Dieter Boscher, the actor playing the Pope, gave a naturalistic and internal performance.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Boscher was made-up to be an exact physical replica of Pius.<sup>4</sup> Such an interpretation focuses the issue of guilt on a single historical individual rather than forcing a discussion on individual moral responsibility.

Piscator further reduced the German aspect by directorial cutting. He removed Adolf Eichmann and the Jägerkeller scene where various industrialists discuss the use of slave labour. This scene is crucial for its allusion to German companies which continued to flourish after the war and therefore the historical continuity between Nazi and modern Germany. Piscator removed seventeen of the forty-two roles and avoided the German dimension.<sup>5</sup> Without these parallels the example of the Pope and Riccardo is meaningless for ordinary Germans. Piscator's production became a *Stationendrama* charting the course of Riccardo's moral pilgrimage. Subsequent German productions followed suit. The problem facing most directors was that Hochhuth's script, uncut, would take an estimated six to eight hours to perform. Directorial cutting was merciless and politically selective. Apparently not a single production mentioned German war criminals, businessmen, companies or scientists being re-absorbed into the establishment after the war.<sup>6</sup> In the East German productions, however, the business angle was emphasized, thus condemning capitalism for producing the death camps. Not only did the Marxist discourse affirm the Soviet historiography of World War Two but the spectacle of a West German writer criticizing his government's reabsorption of former Nazis was firm proof that the Federal Republic was a hive of Nazi activity. The fact that the script became such malleable material in the hands of various directors indicates the multi-levelled nature of Hochhuth's intentions.

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<sup>1</sup> Innes, *Modern German Drama*, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> Hochhuth, *The Representative*, p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> Rischbieter, 'Neue Chancen für das Zeitstück?', p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Derek Fogg, 'Outrage and Outcry: The Première of *Der Stellvertreter*', in Schumacher/Fogg, *Hochhuth's The Representative*, p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

The main confusion is Hochhuth's central premise that the decisions all men make are crucial, yet he indicts only one man. His later plays centre on men who are forced to make equally momentous moral decisions: his *Soldaten*, for example, examines Churchill's failure to agree with the Red Cross on a Geneva Covenant that would prohibit saturation bombing of largely civilian centres of population. Yet, despite Hochhuth's concern with the individual *The Representative* contains the following contradictory stage direction which again reduces the onus on the individual and the focus of specific German responsibility:

The characters grouped together by twos, threes, and sometimes fours may be played by the same actor - since in an age of general conscription it is not necessarily a question of merit or blame, or even a question of character, whether a man puts on this or that uniform or is on the side of the hangman or the victim.<sup>1</sup>

Piscator ignored this stage direction. Most German productions did not. Peter Brook's 1963 Paris production costumed all the actors in the same blue-grey suits over which symbolic articles of clothing were slipped.<sup>2</sup> Human beings become pawns in great political movements and specific accountability is reduced. As Hochhuth stated:

I hope that this play will give a lecture for the future because I think the terror against the Jews in our time is only one example of the terror which reigns on Earth at all times, in all epochs, in every century. In every nation there are feelings that wait for a Hitler to awaken. In other centuries there was the Inquisition.<sup>3</sup>

The universalization of atrocity, the Christian framework and the burden of moral responsibility falling on an Italian Pope and an Italian priest dilute German involvement. In addition, those who resist the regime meet grisly ends, thus indicating the futility of resistance to the regime. Bruno Bettelheim saw *The Representative* in Germany and the United States. He noted some stark differences in audience reception:

I saw *The Deputy* both in the United States and in Germany. In the United States the audience was deeply moved, and left the theatre with the conviction that the only moral position possible was that of the hero to take a firm stance against evil, even if it meant risking one's life... Americans were particularly disgusted or depressed and disheartened by a Pope's shirking his responsibility to speak out against genocide. In Germany I met with an entirely different reaction to this play: the theatre goers were pleased with it and relieved by what they experienced as its message. They felt fully justified by the play. It showed that those who tried to fight evil perished, and that even the Pope acquiesced, and this proved to members of the audience that they had been right not to pay any attention to the concentration camps that existed in their midst<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hochhuth, *The Representative*, p. xv.

<sup>2</sup> Claude Schumacher, 'The Representative Outside Germany: A Stage History', in Schumacher/Fogg, *Hochhuth's The Representative*, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Bentley, *The Storm Over The Deputy*, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, p. 279.

This reaction was partially confirmed by Hochhuth himself who was deeply worried when the première performance of *The Representative* provoked much enthusiastic applause. Exactly what the audience was applauding he was unsure of but was shocked to hear a spectator saying as he left the auditorium, 'Yes, we got what was coming to us, but so did the Pope.'<sup>1</sup>

The play also shifts the focus away from individual responsibility by its condemnation of capitalism. Once again, it is through the ambiguous portrayal of Pius that this theme is examined. Hochhuth presents the Vatican as a huge brokers with Pius as the wheeling-dealing businessman. If Vatican business holdings are at odds with Christian morality then the wording of the morality is wrong. Like Stalin and Hitler, Pius manipulates language to defend his actions:

The Fathers, you say, acquire dividends  
from the bombers: my dear Count!  
Let us not regard things in that light.  
The aeroplane is a blessed invention.  
That they are now, at this sad time,  
loaded with bombs instead of passengers,  
that is not the fault of the good Fathers, is it?<sup>2</sup>

Later the Pope reveals that his antagonism towards the 'Godless Bolsheviks' is sheer hypocrisy. He puts commerce before religion:

At the moment Stalin is a very good customer  
Of The Society of Jesus.  
The Order has the monopoly.  
To whom is it going to sell  
if Russia ceases to be a customer?<sup>3</sup>

More ominously, the Vatican has shares in 'Hungarian railway holdings' at a time when the deportation of the Hungarian Jewry could still be impeded. The Vatican is shown as a capitalist emporium. That is why Pius is afraid of Stalin - not because the Revolution has swept God aside, but because it has demolished private enterprise. This angle was explored in a 'Brechtian' production in Düsseldorf where religious dogma was equated with political propaganda and ethical behaviour was shown as unlikely to be forthcoming from the Pope, the Vatican's managing director.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rischbieter, 'Neue Chancen für das Zeitstück?', p. 10: 'Ja, wir kriegen alle unser Fett ab, auch der Papst.'

<sup>2</sup> Hochhuth, *The Representative*, p. 179.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>4</sup> *Theater Heute* (5 May 1964) p. 30 Hans Jörg Utzerath, director of the Düsseldorf production, used the word 'epic'.

However, the important feature of the play was that it was the first in Germany to depict Auschwitz on the stage, albeit in non-naturalistic terms. The script tackled the horrors, not in metaphors, but in concrete images. Auschwitz, the gas chambers, the crematoria and the Jews were called by their real name.

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ii. *Peter Weiss*

*The Investigation* was written in 1964 and first published in a special edition of *Theater Heute* in 1965. Weiss's father was a converted Czech Jew.<sup>1</sup> Weiss took up writing in the late 1950s and became interested in Communism. In 1965 he announced his allegiance to East Germany but continued to remain in capitalist Sweden.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, although he aligned himself with the East, he was not subject to the censorship his eastern colleagues had to circumvent. His writings have been published and performed both in the Federal and Democratic Republics.

*The Investigation* is a docudrama based on the proceedings of the Frankfurt-Auschwitz Trial which Weiss attended. His other source material was Bernd Nauman's journals of the trial first published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.<sup>3</sup> Seventeen productions were staged concurrently in Europe in 1965, thirteen of which were in the two Germanies. The Royal Shakespeare company also gave a rehearsed reading at the Aldwych in London under the direction of Peter Brook. Their midnight reading was timed to coincide with the multiple European première. The première of the play was therefore intended to act as a major 'happening' to unite Europeans and especially Germans in a collective and ceremonial exploration of the Nazi years.

Weiss chose to write the play as a documentary:

This can contain nothing but the facts as they came to be expressed in words during the course of the trial.<sup>4</sup>

For the strict documentary maker, fiction is a lie because it manipulates historic 'truth'. On the other hand, a dramatic historian such as Hochhuth asserts that fiction can be the only way to ascertain the truth. Like Schiller, Hochhuth believes it is necessary to create a lie (a fabrication) in order to reveal a greater truth, but Weiss, like his colleagues in Group 47, mistrusted fictional writing because the Nazi propaganda machine had churned out one fiction

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<sup>1</sup> When Peter Weiss was eighteen the family fled to England. He then went to study art in Prague but left for Switzerland when Germany annexed Czechoslovakia. He eventually joined his parents in Sweden where he became a citizen in 1939.

<sup>2</sup> Seymour-Smith, *Guide to Modern World Literature* (Vol. 2), p. 334.

<sup>3</sup> Nauman, *Auschwitz*.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Weiss, *The Investigation*, trans. Alexander Cross, London: Calder & Boyars, 1966, p. 10.

after another with monstrous consequences. The *Kahlschlag* style sought facts above all else. And it was through 'facts' that these writers hoped to reach the 'truth' and alert the world.<sup>1</sup> Whilst avoiding direct political reference, Group 47 and its successor Group 61 aimed to effect social change. So had Weiss's other self-confessed influence, Bertolt Brecht. Despite the differences in style (documents versus satire/farce/fiction) Weiss like Brecht identifies racism as an inevitable feature of capitalist society. Additionally, both Brecht and Weiss used irony to create an intellectual response in their audience.

The initial impetus for the play came from a member of Group 47 who challenged his colleagues to create art from the trial. A secondary stimulus might have been the 'staging' of the Eichmann Trial which Hannah Arendt suggested took the format of a stage play: the judges sat on a platform, arguments about evil and justice were well rehearsed and the verdict was a foregone conclusion.<sup>2</sup> Arendt's statement on 'the banality of evil' was also influential in that it challenged the postwar image of the Nazis. The murderers were bureaucrats - ordinary people who are 'terrifyingly normal'.<sup>3</sup> Challenging Emmanuel Kant, who assumed Man was innately good, Arendt asserted that to be evil is Man's natural state. 'Goodness' is extraordinary. Weiss's defendants, as those at the real Frankfurt-Auschwitz trial, are unrepentant and banal 'little men'. Arendt, by focusing on the banality of evil, gave impetus to German writers not only to examine the role of the 'little man' in the course of the war but also to universalize specific atrocity into generic evil. In *The Investigation*, Nazism is perceived as just one example of global criminality. As Weiss stated:

I do not identify myself any more with the Jews than I do with the people of Vietnam or the blacks in South Africa... I simply identify myself with the oppressed of the world... *The Investigation* is about the extreme abuse of power that alienates people from their own actions... For that matter, given a different deal, the Jews could have been on the side of the Nazis. They too could have been the exterminators. *The Investigation* is a universal human problem.<sup>4</sup>

Concentration camps and persecution could never happen in a Communist society, argues Weiss. Critics have challenged this assumption by pointing to Stalin's gulags and use of the

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<sup>1</sup> The call for 'facts' became even more extreme with the establishment of Group 61 by Max von der Grün who demanded that art should be socially committed as it was felt that Group 47 had become too removed from everyday life and everyday people.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp.4-5: 'The proceedings happen on a stage before an audience, with the usher's marvelous shout at the beginning of each session producing the effect of the rising curtain. Whoever planned this auditorium... had a theatre in mind, complete with orchestra and gallery, with proscenium and stage, and with the side doors for the actors' entrance. Clearly, this courtroom is not a bad place for the show trial David Ben Gurion, Prime Minister of Israel, had in mind when he decided to have Eichmann kidnapped in Argentina and brought to the District Court of Jerusalem to stand trial for his role in the 'final solution to the Jewish question.' And Ben Gurion... remains the invisible stage manager of the proceedings.'

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 253.

<sup>4</sup> Sidra Dekoven Ezrahi, *By Words Alone*, p. 39.

Nazi concentration camps on Soviet soil for the incarceration of political prisoners.<sup>1</sup> Yet Weiss is talking about Marxism as a concept not as practised. And in his 1965 *Ten Working Points of a Writer in a Divided World* he more explicitly aligns himself with Leninist ideology.<sup>2</sup>

If one is to look solely at the statements Weiss made about *The Investigation*, one would assume that he places the onus for the camps specifically on capitalism. Although he intended the play to be a Communist interpretation of recent history, it is far more complex. Critical arguments have centred on the 'Marxist' portrayal (or nullification) of the Jew and the universalizing of atrocity within a general historical framework so that the specifics are subsumed. The word 'Jew' does not appear once in Weiss's script. On the other hand, political prisoners (Communists) are emphasized. As James E. Young points out, Weiss uses neither the word *Juden* (Jew) or even *Opfer* (victim) but *Vergolten* - a legal term meaning 'those under persecution'.<sup>3</sup> Weiss changed all references in Nauman's records of 'Jews' to either *Vergolten* or the anonymous third person. Original testimonies from Jews, Communists and other groups are mixed together, juxtaposed and interwoven. The boundaries are blurred with the result that it appears as though the majority of prisoners were political and that it was they who suffered the worst tortures. This erosion of history is reinforced by the removal of emotion and individual identity from the play. The witnesses are nameless speaking tubes:

The personal experiences and confrontations must be softened into anonymity. Which means that the witnesses in the play lose their names and become little more than megaphones.<sup>4</sup>

The defendants on the other hand retain their names, as Weiss explains:

The bearers of these names should not be accused once again in this drama. To the author, they have lent their names which, within the drama, exist as symbols of a system that implicated in its guilt many others who never appeared in court.<sup>5</sup>

The defendants are the focus of the play. This is because the play is an intellectual investigation of the perpetrators' actions and decisions. That is why the emotion had to be removed. The play is written as an oratorio, to be recited, not acted. Nauman records that

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Burma, 'Buchenwald' in *Granta: Krauts!*, Vol. 42 (Winter 1992), Granta Publications Ltd/Penguin, pp. 65-75; p. 71-2. Buchenwald, outside Weimar, was in use as a prison camp well into the 1950s as a former inmate Robert Zeiler described. Imprisoned by the Nazis as a Jew and then by the Soviets as a spy in 1945, Zeiler spent a total of five years in Buchenwald under two different regimes.

<sup>2</sup> Demetz, *After the Fires*, p. 48: The article was first printed in a Swedish newspaper on 1 September 1965 and then translated into many languages. In it Weiss links events in the Third World, Auschwitz and capitalist exploitation.

<sup>3</sup> Young, *Writing and Re-writing the Holocaust*, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> Weiss, *The Investigation*, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Dekoven Ezrahi, *By Words Alone*, p. 36.

the daily court sessions were extremely emotional. But Weiss felt that this emotion had to be purged so that his audience could critically assess how the system which created the death camps came about. For Bernd Nauman, on the other hand, the victims were the focus of the event as he noted after the first witness took the stand:

And with his recital comes the feeling that this marks the true beginning of the Auschwitz Trial.<sup>1</sup>

Even so, Weiss does not concentrate on the accused to reiterate their guilt once more. Nor does he remove the victims' individuality to belittle their suffering. In *Meine Ortschaft* (*My Place*, 1965) Weiss recounts a visit he made to Auschwitz in a more descriptive and imaginative language than in *The Investigation*.<sup>2</sup> He imagines individual victims, their individual cries and individual suffering. In *The Investigation*, he argues that it is impossible to give voice to the victims because of the unimaginable magnitude of the slaughter. To name a handful of victims would only reduce the scale. The nameless state of the victims, on the other hand, reinforces the enormity of the carnage. But to give a human face to this overwhelming massacre, Weiss concentrates on one victim, Lillie Tofler, whose story runs through the play.

*The Investigation*, written in eleven cantos, is structured on Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In the inferno, the poet seeks to save one life, that of Beatrice. In *The Investigation*, Weiss asks his audience to consider what would have happened if they had tried, like Dante, to save just one life each. Lillie Tofler's story is where the emotional heart of the play lies. As with Schabel's *Anne Frank*, we never see Lillie; her absence is emphasized to enhance her tragic disappearance and the failure of the audience to save her. The key to the play lies in Witness 3's statement about Doctor Flage:

Camp physician Flage showed me  
that it was still possible  
to think of one life  
among thousands  
that it would have been possible  
to influence the machinery  
if there had been enough  
of his kind.<sup>3</sup>

Weiss presents the audience with a cross section of people who were involved in Nazism at all levels to propose the question of what would have happened if each of these people, whatever their position, had tried to effect change. The play opens with Witness 1 who was

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<sup>1</sup> Nauman, *Auschwitz*, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Weiss, *Mein Ortschaft*, Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp, 1965.

<sup>3</sup> Weiss, *The Investigation*, p. 84.

the head of the railway station where 'shipments' to Auschwitz arrived. The judge's cross-examination of Witness 1 highlights the possibilities of what this individual (and hence the audience) might have done in the circumstances to alleviate suffering. Throughout the play, as the audience follows the rise in rank of those accused, the attempts to pass the responsibility for the tortures further and further up the chain of command are clearly seen. Weiss, like Hochhuth, focuses on the moral decisions all Germans took during the war. The Holocaust was indeed 'a universal phenomenon' because there was universal responsibility.

Yet, because of Weiss's Communist interpretation of history, he also gives attention to the industrial concerns within the camps and emphasizes how those who participated in the system continued to reap the rewards years later. James E. Young argues that, by blaming the economic structure, the suffering is no longer a question of individual tragedy and the salvation of the victims no longer a matter of individual responsibility. People are the casualties of mass movements, in this case capitalism.<sup>1</sup> One of Weiss's defendants asserts that he is inconsequential compared to those who escaped and were reabsorbed into the system. Those who should be on trial, as Witness 3 testifies, are the big business corporations that used Auschwitz's slave labour and were never brought to justice:

In the last analysis  
the Defendants in this trial  
are here only as underlings  
Others more important than those  
standing before this court  
have never had to justify themselves  
They live in shame  
They enjoy high office  
They multiply their possessions  
and continue those works  
for which the prisoners were formerly employed.<sup>2</sup>

Such an interpretation of events is partially understandable given the climate of 1960s West Germany. Former Nazis were coming out of the woodwork. Yet, these 'little people' on the stand are again only passing the burden of responsibility to others rather than accepting their own complicity. Weiss indicates that no matter how insignificant the action, the Germans were all part of a capitalist exploitation system. The theme of the play is the individual's role in society. Similarly, Judge Hofmeyer, at the real trial itself, focused on the momentous role of the 'little people':

They were just as vital to the execution of the extermination plan as those who drew up their plans at their desks... This state has been in existence from 1871 to the Weimar Republic to the Federal

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<sup>1</sup> Young, *Writing and Re-writing the Holocaust*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.

Republic and has always had the same penal code. Under this penal code murder has always been a punishable offence. National Socialism did exercise all embracing power in Germany, but this did not give it the right to turn wrong into right.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of *The Investigation* on the German stage in 1965, like that of *The Representative*, was that it did not refer to the Holocaust obliquely. The script did not make the atrocities palatable for the German audience: most of the play concentrates on itemizing the brutal manner in which people were tortured and murdered. It describes the gas chambers and crematoria in painstaking detail. In 1965, *The Investigation* was an educational tool that bluntly exposed the Nazi system rather than transfigured it into a mythic experience through allusion and euphemism. The documentary aspect, far from removing emotion allowed catharsis to take place because the audience could not delude themselves into thinking that they were watching a total 'fiction'. Even with the cutting, the editing and the theatricalization of the transcripts, *The Investigation* was intended to be a living lecture on the Holocaust.

The apparent contradictions and confusions inherent in both *The Representative* and *The Investigation* arise from the respective writers' attempts to examine the Holocaust through rigid historicist discourses and literary styles. Both were condemned for their universalizing of responsibility and 'dilution' of the Holocaust as a singular event. This was an inevitable result of their individual philosophies. *The Investigation* is concerned both with individual moral choice and with condemning a specific economic structure which not only brought the camp system into being but perpetuated it. Observers have failed to acknowledge this two-pronged attack and criticized Weiss's play as an attack on capitalism alone. And, although Hochhuth stated he was interested in the moral decisions which individuals must make at crucial junctures in history, he, paradoxically, was more concerned with ideologies.

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<sup>1</sup> Nauman, *Auschwitz*, p. 415.

### 3.1.b. Walser and Sperr

#### *Man not Movements*

Martin Walser and Martin Sperr were attracted to comedy for a number of reasons. First, Brecht, whose plays were more widely performed in the west than in the east, utilized irony, farce and clowning to encourage intellectual deconstruction.<sup>1</sup> His plays encouraged the spectators to think for themselves - something which appealed greatly to Sperr and Walser. Second, absurdism encouraged audiences to look at the world and its rituals from a different, and hence, critical angle. Since 1958 almost all the premières of Ionesco's plays had taken place in Germany. Beckett himself directed *Endgame* in Berlin in 1967. Yet German dramatists adapted rather than adopted absurdist techniques. Martin Walser and Martin Sperr experimented with absurdism and Brechtian use of comedy to re-animate audiences' intellectual faculties and to touch their innermost emotional core. The themes Walser and Sperr explored were: collective guilt, collective responsibility, the reabsorption of Nazis, the covering up of the past, the materialism of West German society and the question of re-armament. Their main aim was to highlight the continuity between Nazi Germany and the Federal Republic.

#### *i. Martin Walser*

Like Weiss, the former Wehrmacht soldier Martin Walser attended a number of sessions at the Frankfurt-Auschwitz Trial.<sup>2</sup> His response to what he saw and heard was very different to Weiss's. A member of Group 47, Walser had been writing short stories and plays for radio since the early 1950s. It was this trial, he said, that inspired him to turn his talents to the stage.<sup>3</sup> He began a trilogy which investigated the early years of the Federal Republic: *Eiche und Angora (The Rabbit Race, 1962)*; *Der Schwarze Schwan (The Black Swan, 1964)*, and *Überlebensgross Herr Krott (The More than Lifesize Herr Krott, 1963-5)*. The first two touched on World War Two and its ramifications.

*The Rabbit Race* was inspired by the true story of a young Pole who was hanged in a village near Walser's home on Lake Constance for having an affair with a German girl.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Innes, *Modern German Drama*, p. 72. Brecht's plays were considered dangerous by the authorities in the Democratic Republic who soon realized that they had not purchased a compliant propaganda device by luring Brecht back to the East with the golden carrot of the Berlin Ensemble. Brecht's Midas touch in the east soon evaporated. But in the west he was lionized.

<sup>2</sup> Demetz, *After the Fires*, p. 360.

<sup>3</sup>A. E. Waine, *Development of Martin Walser as Dramatist*, Lancaster University: Ph. D. Thesis, 1986, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> 'Gespräch mit Martin Walser', in *Theater Heute*, Vol. 2 (November 1962), pp. 56, I-II.

*Rabbit Race* opened at the Schiller Theater Berlin under the direction of Helmut Käutner. It received the Gerhart Hauptman Prize of 1962.<sup>1</sup> Set in the provincial German village of Brezgenburg, the play opens during the last days of the war. Act Two begins during the de-Nazification years and ends ten years later with West German re-armament and conscription. The village's inhabitants are middle-class opportunists and ordinary individuals who unthinkingly adapt, keeping in tune with the political climate in order to survive. They are incapable of taking their destiny into their own hands. As Maschnick, a Brezgenburger waiter, states at the beginning of the play, 'Sacramente! What a situation; I've been a waiter for thirty-nine years and this is the first time I haven't had anybody to serve. This could undermine my morale.'<sup>2</sup> Individuals, reacting instinctively according to group dynamics, find themselves in absurd situations. Much of Walser's interest in the nature of the 'herd' can be found in his admiration of Franz Kafka who similarly concentrated on small communities who react in a collective and blinkered manner to external threat.<sup>3</sup>

The plot of *Rabbit Race* centres on a simple young man called Alois Grubel, who vainly (and hilariously) tries to keep up with the political changes that overtake him between 1945 and 1960. At the beginning of the play, he is revealed to be a former Communist who has been 're-educated' in a pre-war concentration camp. As the allies advance, he unthinkingly recites Nazi ideology whilst those around him feverishly endeavour to shed any association with the Party. In Act Two Alois continues to make political gaffs: he insists on celebrating Hitler's birthday at a community gathering in 1950 while his old colleagues refuse to acknowledge their own pasts. Alois, for his part, cannot understand the fuss caused by his references to the beloved 'Führer'. By 1960, after a spell in an asylum, Alois has converted to Christianity and capitalism. Ironically, 'the Reds' are now back in favour and Gorbach tries to recruit an anti-Communist Alois.

For Walser, Alois represents the German nation - tractable and exploitable:

Alois is, so to speak, the embodiment of the masses, the people. He mirrors the mentality of the common man which always changes after the government and not with it.<sup>4</sup>

Alois's castration in the concentration camp where he volunteered for medical experiments is a symbol of this. It is not political ideology that made Nazism 'successful' but the unthinking acquiescence of the average person anxious to be accepted into the community. As Hellmuth Karasek reviewed the play:

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Walser, 'The Rabbit Race', in *Martin Walser Plays* (Vol. 1), trans. Ronald Duncan, London: John Calder, 1963, pp. 9-99.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Innes, *Modern German Drama*, p. 125. Walser wrote his doctoral thesis on Kafka.

<sup>4</sup> Bettina Knapp, 'Interview with Martin Walser', in *Modern Drama* Vol. 13 (1970-71), pp. 316-23; p. 319.

German fate was not presented as a *Götterdämmerung* but as a shabby prank; with Walser satire has won a sharpness not heard since the pieces of Brecht.<sup>1</sup>

In his introduction to the 1963 German translation of Elie Wiesel's *Die Nacht zu begraben, Elischa (Night)*, Walser asserted that the murderers were not confined to the ranks of the SS and Reichskabinet. In 1965 he published *Unser Auschwitz (Our Auschwitz)*, based on his observations of those on trial at Frankfurt. Like Arendt, he concluded that the ex-guards and doctors were not social deviants or devils, but easily recognizable, mundane people. Demonizing Nazis, he argued, merely distanced ordinary Germans from their true history and complicity:

If... nation and state are still at all sensible names for a political entity, that is to say for a collective that appears in history and in whose name justice is spoken or laws broken, then everything that occurs is conditioned by the collective, then the cause for everything is to be sought in this collective.<sup>2</sup>

In *Rabbit Race*, bigotry is shown to be a congenital German trait. In Act One, for instance, Gorbach, the local Nazi party official, displays no ideological commitment to the party. His anti-Semitism is part of a natural prejudice inherent in his German upbringing. This historic constant is embodied in Walser's choice of location. Act One takes place on nearby Oak Ridge where Alois links the purity of the trees to that of the German race. The oak is traditionally associated with Goethe. The inhabitants of the village are thus associated with a long German tradition and Nazism is presented as something other than a mere temporary aberration in German history. This idea was accented by H.W. Lenneweit's design for the original production where the German Romantic tradition was taken to excess. The revolve was employed with a naturalistic rural setting reminiscent of Max Reinhardt's classic *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Every time the word 'nature' was said it was accompanied by a twittering of birds. As Christopher Innes writes:

The whole play was represented as a folk song, culminating in set pieces like the artificial sweetness in a castrato rendition of *Über alles Gipfeln ist Ruh*. These popular images are contrasted throughout with the characters' actions to reveal their emptiness.<sup>3</sup>

Walser used the German *Volkstück* (folk play) - celebrating or satirizing rural simplicity and purity - to show that certain German 'virtues' helped facilitate the rise of Nazism.

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<sup>1</sup> Mandel, *Group 47*, p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Walser, *Heimatkunde*, Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp, 1968, p. 20; Also translated by K. Stuart Parkes and quoted in Parkes, *Writers and Politics in West Germany*, pp. 207-8.

<sup>3</sup> Innes, *Modern German Drama*, p. 126.

The use of comedy (by a postwar writer) is new in the treatment of the Holocaust and the War. Comedy, as Umberto Eco wrote in *Il nome della rosa (The Name of the Rose)*, is by nature iconoclastic and threatens those who hold the reins of power.<sup>1</sup> Walser wanted to shock his middle-class, middle-aged complacent Schiller Theater audience - to make them see old issues in a fresh light. He also uses comedy and bad taste to embarrass the older members of his audience who may have something to hide. It is only by shocking them at such a fundamental level that any dialogue or emotional contact can be achieved. The use of irony is central to this. For example, Alois in Act One recounting his instruction under the Nazis unwittingly jokes: 'You forget, I've been re-educated. I can't be fooled like other people any more.'<sup>2</sup>

Walser's central concern is the vigilance required to remain a thinking individual in the collective. The play is about the traditional German proclivity towards apoliticism before, during and after the National Socialist years. Walser was more concerned with the war's consequences than the event itself. Act Two begins in April 1950. A restaurant is about to be built on Oak Ridge, now a symbol of the economic boom. Old Nazis have been reabsorbed although they have not recanted their crimes - in fact, there is nothing to recant because they do not consider themselves responsible for anything at all. Pacifism is in fashion and a sign is hung on an oak tree: 'He who defends his homeland destroys it.' The second half of Act Two takes place in 1960. The political climate has changed. Conscription and re-armament have begun: 'Now, the west wind smells of blood', and the sign on the tree is removed. Forgetting is undertaken by the villagers for the common good. The Orwellian rapidity with which people forget past events and accept new histories is a key theme. Any reference to a 'different' past must be avoided. Alois, for example, is prevented from singing at a local festival in 1960 because his castrato voice will immediately act as an historical *aide mémoire*:

One bar from your Bretzenburger nightingale and every man and woman up here will find themselves jolted back, their minds filled with the images of the concentration camps and the memories they don't want to remember.<sup>3</sup>

But forgetting is counter-productive and only leads to more violence as history repeats itself. Alois, for the sake of the community, agrees to slaughter the rabbits he has been breeding since he was interned in the concentration camp. Gorbach has complained that the smell is

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<sup>1</sup> Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, London: Picador in association with Secker and Warburg, 1980, pp. 475-6: Jorge: 'If laughter is the delight of Plebeians, the license of the Plebeians must be restrained and humiliated and intimidated by sternness. And the Plebeians have no weapons for refining their laughter until they have made it an instrument against the seriousness of the spiritual shepherds.'

<sup>2</sup> Walser, *The Rabbit Race*, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

causing the clientele to fall away in his nearby Oak Ridge Restaurant. The rabbits had all been given Jewish names. Their slaughter is symbolic of the continual ritual of obliterating the past from collective consciousness. As Elie Wiesel wrote in *Let Us Say Kaddish*, forgetting the victims is tantamount to killing them a second time.<sup>1</sup> Alois, after the slaughter of his prized rabbits, realizes that the answer is not to be found in forgetting. At the close of the play, half-grasping his own inability for self-determination, he pleads:

I want to find out why I did it. That's why I want to go inside again. Maybe some bit of me is still a Communist. Some bit they didn't squeeze out in the camp, or maybe there's a trace of their Nazism left which the Doctors didn't cure the last time I was in the Asylum. I must find out what it is otherwise I might do something like this again or much worse.<sup>2</sup>

The disastrous results of 'forgetting' are explored in *The Black Swan* (1964) which was initially begun in 1957-8 with the first draft completed in 1961. It tells the story of a middle-aged couple, the Gootheins, who have built a new life with the money they purloined from selling gold fillings that were wrenched out in the camps where Herr Goothein was a doctor. Their son, Rudi, opening a book one day discovers a letter dated March 1942 addressed to the Kommandant of Großrosen concentration camp. He realizes how the family fortune has been acquired. There follows a Hamlet style escapade in which Rudi pretends to be mad by playing the role of his father. In this way he hopes to provoke confession and perhaps repentance. Rudi pretends that it was he who wrote the letter and is about to face trial. Herr Goothein seeks help from Professor Liberé who had worked in the camps with him but now runs a psychiatric clinic. To shield his own daughter, Irm, Liberé has invented a fictitious past in India for himself and his family. However, Irm and Rudi begin to remember how they used to play together in the camp grounds and how ill and depressed Rudi's mother became.

In Act Two Rudi stages his play with the inmates of Liberé's asylum while the Doctor and Goothein watch. The play traces the career of a concentration camp doctor who returns home as a guilt-ridden *Heimkehrer* but eventually becomes a successful businessman, marketing a lifesaving drug. The play does not draw out a confession from Rudi's father. Instead, Herr Goothein blames his son's continued madness on Liberé and orders him to leave. In despair over his father's crimes and his lack of repentance, Rudi tries to persuade Irm that they should commit suicide. As representatives of the younger generation, Rudi argues, they have to make a protest. Irm rejects the idea but Rudi shoots himself. The sins of the father have been visited on the children. Liberé now considers giving himself up to the authorities but Goothein persuades him not to. Life goes on as normal.

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<sup>1</sup> Elie Wiesel, *Let Us Say Kaddish*, in *Legends of Our Time*, New York: Holt and Co., 1968.

<sup>2</sup> Walser, *Rabbit Race*, p. 97.

Walser felt that a normal relationship would never be achieved between his generation and that which came before. Moreover, Auschwitz would always prevent a positive German self-definition. Rudi is a symbol of this disinherited and ostracized Germany as Walser explains:

My generation (unfortunately) and probably every generation finds itself in a Hamlet situation. The problems confronting our generation, however, are even more difficult to bear: the problem of Germany.<sup>1</sup>

## ii. Martin Sperr

Martin Sperr's Germans are also middle-class, unthinking survivors. They are, however, more Darwinian in their tactics than Walser's characters and the comedy is blacker. Sperr trained as an actor at the Max Reinhardt seminar in Vienna. By 1965 he was working as an assistant director in Bremen, where he staged his first play, *Jagdscenen aus Niederbayern* (*Hunting Scenes From Lower Bavaria*, 1966).<sup>2</sup> He described it, as Walser had done with *Rabbit Race*, as a *Volkstück*.<sup>3</sup> It won the Gerhart Hauptmann Prize that year. Like Walser, Sperr examined how ordinary Germans had contributed to the rise of Nazism and more importantly, the Holocaust. Like Walser, Sperr sets his story in a small, close-knit, provincial community - here a small town in Bavaria: the *Land* symbolic as the birthplace of Nazism. It was in Bavaria that Hitler staged his first unsuccessful coup.<sup>4</sup>

In *Hunting Scenes From Lower Bavaria*, Sperr presents the entire social structure of a typical village from the wealthy *Bürgermeister* and the local priest to the lowly farmhand and gravedigger. Sperr shows how the community angrily persecutes those who do not belong, for example Silesian refugees, a retarded young man who is afraid of being institutionalized by his widowed mother and the character of Abram who fears his homosexuality will be discovered. Members of the community agree that another Hitler is required to deal with such people.

The play was intended as part of a trilogy. His second play, *Landshuter Erzählungen* (*Tales from the Landshut*), continues the same themes but is more biting. It won the Theater Heute Prize for young people in 1967, following its première at the Munich Kammerspiele in October of the same year.<sup>5</sup> The story centres on a feud between two Bavarian families in the construction industry - the Laipers (a Catholic family) and the Groetzingers (a Protestant

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<sup>1</sup> Knapp, 'Interview with Martin Walser', p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> *Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria* was filmed by Peter Fleischman in 1968.

<sup>3</sup> Demetz, *After the Fires*, p. 239.

<sup>4</sup> On 8 November 1923, Hitler and the SA tried to seize power in Munich in what became known as 'The Beer-hall Putsch'.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Sperr, *Tales from the Landshut*, trans. Anthony Vivis, London: Methuen Playscripts, 1969.

family). In a travesty of the Romeo and Juliet story, a love affair develops between Laiper's son, Sorm, and Sieglinde, Groetzinger's daughter. The only reason for their 'love' is to secure a business merger between the two companies and provide a respectable home for the imminent arrival of their 'love-child'. Sorm, however, is reluctant to marry until he has control over both companies.

Beneath this farcical plot lies the story of Sieglinde/Sarah. Herr Groetzinger had married a Jewish woman. Both his wife and their daughter, Sarah, were interned in a camp where Frau Groetzinger died. Sarah survived and was returned to her father. Groetzinger, ashamed of his part in the family's deportation, renamed Sarah with the German Sieglinde. It is an act which symbolizes the community's need to bury the past. Like Walser, Sperr is concerned with how rapidly recent events are forgotten to alleviate guilt. As Marha, Laiper's wife, claims:

Those gas ovens were built by the Yanks after the war, so they'd have something to blame on us. I'm convinced of it.<sup>1</sup>

Or as Veit, Groetzinger's foreman, argues over soap manufactured from human remains in the camp:

To make soap you need fat. Everybody knows that. And, as the papers never tire of telling us, there wasn't one bloody ounce of fat on those Jews: How do you reconcile that?<sup>2</sup>

Sperr, like Walser, believes that forgetting leads to repetition. Sperr's plays are concerned primarily with the re-emergence of right-wing Fascism and nationalism in Germany. He set his play in 1958-9, at the peak of the reconstruction period and economic boom. At the time, West Germany was undergoing the first economic recession since the end of the war and social tensions were increasing. In the play, when depression sets in the old scapegoats are blamed: the Blacks, the *Gastarbeiter* 'the Jews, the yanks and all the other scum'.<sup>3</sup> As with Walser's characters, middle-class mentality has not changed. The inhabitants of this sleepy little town need not have thrown away their Nazi armbands in 1945: 'It's all the fault of the Jews and Communists. Hitler was right, you know', proclaims Veit. Racism and xenophobia are not ideologically based. Prejudice is instinctive and badly reasoned. Most of Sperr's characters are not even aware that they are racist. The point is brought home with cutting irony, through Laiper:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> The 1960s had witnessed the introduction of foreign workers - the *Gastarbeiter*. Subject to German laws and taxes these people, usually Blacks, Slavs and Turks were not granted citizenship. A whole sub-strata of society was created which was underpaid and under-protected by the law.

I want to make it quite clear: I've got nothing against the Jews. I'd even go so far as to say that I object to the fact that they were killed. Just rooting them out would have done.<sup>1</sup>

It is Veit who, running for local council election, tries to stir up racial tensions in the attempt to gain power. Like the young Hitler, he chooses the setting of a beer hall from which to launch his political campaign:

We're sick and tired of seeing TV where the Jews are always right and the Germans always wrong. It's time we stopped running ourselves down.<sup>2</sup>

Scorned for his extremist views, Veit is thrown out of the pub, but as the economy falters, he is taken more seriously.

According to Sperr, the parental generation has not learned anything from the past. The Germans are still as bigotted and nationalistic as ever as Laiper demonstrates as he sits with his wife and reminisces about the Hitler years:

Us older people, we haven't forgotten what Germany is, eh, Marha? She's a fine land. I worry about her. We've got two children and neither of them knows what Germany has been.<sup>3</sup>

Laiper follows this comment with a patriotic rendition of *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles* thus linking the Third Reich and the Democratic Republic through the national anthem.

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Walser and Sperr concentrated on the Holocaust as a German issue, a German experience. The themes explored are contemporary German society, the effect of a hidden past on German youth, and German capitalism. The farce, the crude language, and the iconoclastic portrayal of Jews served to shock audiences. Shamelessly tasteless and contentious, these two writers intended to provoke outcry and hence discussion.

The representation of the Jews causes a major problem. They hover on the periphery and their stage image is ambiguous. In *Rabbit Race* Jews are represented by Alois's rabbits and the character of Woizele, a half mad Polish Jew, who in 1960 is still looking for his sons - 'the charcoal-burners'. 'The smoke will give them away. Have you noticed any smoke, Herr Gorbach? I smell it, it hangs in the air. I smell it everywhere', says Woizele.<sup>4</sup> But Walser felt that Woizele was problematic. The second production of *Rabbit Race* opened at

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<sup>1</sup> Sperr, *Tales from the Landshut*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Walser, *Rabbit Race*, pp. 72-3.

the Zurich Schauspielhaus on 2 May 1963 with the part of Woizele considerably reduced. In the printed German version he was cut altogether.<sup>1</sup> Walser either felt that the character endangered the comedy by reminding the audience of the atrocities or that the Holocaust itself was no subject for a joke.

Terence Des Pres wrote that since the time of Hippocrates, laughter's medicinal power has been recognized, and 'most of us would agree that humour heals'.<sup>2</sup> Even so, he asks, can laughter be restorative in the case of the Holocaust given that it is also irreverent? Jorge in *The Name of The Rose* argues that comedy erodes respect.<sup>3</sup> And Alvin H. Rosenfeld proposes that to laugh at atrocity alienates one from the historical reality of the event.<sup>4</sup> This is the danger of comedy. With black comedy, the objective is to throw the tragic into relief. Sperr's use of light and shade is more extreme than Walser's which is why the shock is more profound. The German audience implicates itself with each laugh. As Bergson noted, laughter is a salty froth that leaves a bitter after-taste.<sup>5</sup> The comedy is so crude that the audience consciously edits its response each time. Should they laugh? If they laugh, they would appear superficial and callous. If they refrain from laughing they would appear guilty. In the main, laughter is a collective activity and the individual always judges what his response should be by watching the response of others. When one laughs, others take note. Laughter puts one in a vulnerable position. The audience is the subject of Walser's and Sperr's plays. The collective experience of the production falls on them. But the combination of comedy and atrocity can only work with a specific audience. When the audience is not implicated in the crimes represented on stage, comedy can trivialize. Walser perhaps felt that his comedy was misfiring on an audience that did not feel itself implicated. In other words, his plays were seen mainly by younger audiences. Hence he was preaching to the converted. This is probably why Woizele was axed.

### 3.1. Conclusion

German writers in the 1960s were looking for a style with which to present the Holocaust on stage and force the audience to confront the past. Some attempted historical accuracy, others chose more abstract styles. However, the main problem that faced many writers was how to portray Jews on stage. Most writers circumvented the problem by not including any, some objectified them as innocent victims whilst others portrayed them in an iconoclastic manner.

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<sup>1</sup> Demetz, *After the Fires*, p. 354.

<sup>2</sup> Terence Des Pres, 'Holocaust Laughter' in Lang, *Writing and the Holocaust*, pp. 216-33; p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> Ecco, *The Name of the Rose*, pp. 475-6.

<sup>4</sup> Rosenfeld, *Imaging Hitler*, p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> Bergson, *Laughter*, p. 200.

Hochhuth, Weiss and Walser nullify or minimize the Jewish narrative and Sperr's portrayal was considered by some to be anti-Semitic.

West Germany's attitude to Jews remained ambiguous. Jews within the Federal Republic were still seen as outsiders. This was reflected in Alexander Kluge's 1966 film *Goodbye to Yesterday*. Based on the true story of Anita G., the narrative centres on a Jewish girl who leaves East Germany to come to the West. Drifting in and out of jobs, never accepted, she ends up as an unmarried mother in prison. The semi-documentary style of the film emphasizes Kluge's indictment of West Germany's sanctimony in its handling of the continuing Jewish saga. The philo-Semitism displayed in the Federal Republic's relationship with Israel and public support of German Jews was in stark contrast to the real nature of popular sentiment.

The fraught Israeli-German relations of the 1960s contributed to this dichotomy. Complications arose when it was discovered that West German rocket scientists were working on military technology in Egypt. In 1962 two new types of rocket, capable of reaching Israeli targets, were publicly paraded through the streets of Cairo. Golda Meir, the then foreign minister, declared to the press:

There is no doubt that the motives of this evil crew are, on the one hand, lust for gain and on the other a Nazi inclination to hatred of Israel and the destruction of the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

The Israeli government repeatedly used the issue of war-guilt to manipulate West German foreign policy. Levi Eshkol and Golda Meir wanted the West German government to intercede directly in Cairo by forcibly removing its people and step up arms sales to Israel. Ben Gurion was the only politician to criticize the anti-German sentiment in the newspapers and the Knesset. In reality Bonn had no right to interfere with what was happening in Egyptian affairs and tried to appease the Israelis. Adenauer and his heir, Ludwig Erhard (1963-1966), wanted to avoid all reference to the Nazi past and so pressure from the Israelis curtailed West German policy. Plans for ending the Statute of Limitations on the prosecution of war criminals were amended. The statute was due to run out on 9 May 1965. Bonn extended it to 31 December 1969. Diplomatic relations were finally established in 1965 but the political machinations did not end.<sup>2</sup> The feeling in West Germany was that the 'debt' had

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<sup>1</sup>*The Israeli Digest* (29 March 1963). Parallels were drawn between Nazi genocide and continued West German participation in the annihilation of the Jews. The matter escalated when in 1963 a German rocket scientist was shot near the Swiss German border close to Basle. This followed the unsolved kidnapping of another scientist Dr Heinz Krug in Munich. Both were thought to have been working on the Egyptian rocket programme. On 16 March 1963 *The Times* broke the news that Mossad had been responsible for both crimes after two Israeli agents had been arrested.

<sup>2</sup>Lavy, *Development of Relations Between Germany and Israel*, p. 268. To celebrate the establishment of diplomatic relations, a state dinner was held for Adenauer in Jerusalem. The Israeli premier Levi Eshkol made a speech which went on at length about the debt West Germany owed to Israel after the crimes of the Nazis. It

been paid to the Jews. Continued antagonism over the issue of the 'past' from the Israeli establishment did not endear the Jews to West Germans. It was only during the crisis of the Six Day War in 1967, with the threat of Israeli annihilation, that the West Germans, especially the students and Extraparliamentary Opposition, threw their support firmly behind Israel.

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caused much diplomatic embarrassment. Rolf Pauls, the first ambassador to Israel, responded at the Israeli Industrial Fair in June of the same year by indicating that Eshkol had overstepped the mark and that it would be better for all parties to concentrate on the future rather than carp on about the past.

### 3.2. *The Democratic Republic*

#### *Introduction*

The 1960s opened uneasily as diplomatic relations with the West were at an all time low after the construction of the Berlin Wall. They ended, however, with a degree of rapprochement with Willi Brandt's Ostpolitik.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the 1960s, the Communist cultural monitors closely followed developments in West Germany. Whatever the West could do, the East could do better. Literary developments therefore kept pace with those in the West. The East German counterpart to Group 61 was seen in the establishment of the *Der Bitterfeld Weg (The Bitterfield Line)*, a government instigated movement that promoted documentary writing and insisted that artists go and work in the fields and factories. By using their own experience and that of the workers these artists were expected to create real proletarian art. Performances in barns, factories and other places of work were encouraged.

Following West Germany's lead in radio, East Germany produced its first significant radio drama in 1960 and its first anthology of radio plays the same year. In the introduction the editor, Gerhardt Reutsch, enjoined writers to produce plays of 'high ethical value'.<sup>2</sup> One such writer was Alfred Matusche whose work examined moral decision making under National Socialism.<sup>3</sup> One of the better received radio plays was Hedda-Zimmer's 'anti-Fascist' *The Ballad of Ravensbrück* in 1961.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Rolf Schneider*

The most interesting play to come out of East Germany was Rolf Schneider's *Prozess in Nürnberg* (translated as *The Wild Justice*, 1967) which directly parallels Weiss's *The Investigation*.<sup>5</sup> Schneider's play is a documentary drama based on the first Nuremberg Trial. His sources were the forty-two volumes of the findings of the International Military Tribunal. The result is a condensed version of the event written in five acts rather than Weiss's eleven

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the biggest factor in the thawing of Socialist policy was Willi Brandt's Ostpolitik. Beginning in the late 1960s, when Brandt was still foreign minister, he presented the 'Eastern Policy'. The idea was that the division of Europe was finally to be accepted in the hope of establishing diplomatic relations between the two Germanies so that a discourse could be started without the interference of either the Americans or the Soviets. Brandt wanted to reduce the possibility of war on European soil with Germany as the epicentre. The Soviets were receptive to the idea as only western technology and trade could break the deadlock of the current economic stagnation.

<sup>2</sup> Usmiani, *The Invisible Theatre*, p. 20, quoting Gerhard Reutsche, *Kleines Hörspielbuch*, Berlin, 1960.

<sup>3</sup> Gottfried Fischborn, *The Drama of the German Democratic Republic Since Brecht: An Outline*, trans. Peter Harris/Pia Kleber, *Modern Drama*, Vol. 23, (1980-1), pp. 422-34.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 427.

<sup>5</sup> Rolf Schneider, *Prozess in Nürnberg*, Berlin: Henschelverlag, Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1970. Translated by David Porter in folio version as *The Wild Justice*, National Library of Scotland Edinburgh, Traverse Theatre Archive: dep 256 Box 59.

cantos, but each section has a Brechtian heading as in *The Investigation* which leads the spectator further into the concentration camp universe.

Pierre Vidal-Naquet argues that 'there is, in a strict sense, no soviet historiography of the genocide of the Jews'.<sup>1</sup> But Schneider includes the Jewish narrative in his play and specifically named Jewish witnesses. *Prozess in Nürnberg* is a two pronged attack on capitalism and anti-Semitism. The play indicates that it was possible to stage plays that did not solely adhere to the Communist interpretation of World War Two. (It also suggests the extent to which West German Marxists clung to *Das Kapital* in a less critical manner compared to those who were directly experiencing Communism.)

In his notes to the play Schneider explains why he felt the need to write a documentary play about a trial that happened twenty-five years previously. Unlike the Eichmann Trial, he argues, Nuremberg never received the attention it should have. Nuremberg was very important for the Russians in that, of the four occupation powers, it was their judiciary who had been the most dutiful of all the prosecutors in collecting evidence and meting out harsh sentences. But perhaps the most significant background to this play was the Frankfurt-Auschwitz Trial. There had been much cross-fire between Berlin and Bonn over claims that the other harboured former Nazis. It had degenerated into a grotesque competition of self-righteousness. The Frankfurt-Auschwitz Trial was a propaganda coup for the Soviets, as it indicated that many Nazis, under the Adenauer administration, had been walking free in West Germany for nearly twenty years. Schneider's play, chosen by the Deutsches Theater to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian revolution, stood as a benchmark to Communist morality in contrast to western hypocrisy. As such it functioned in the same manner as Apitz's *Naked Among the Wolves*.

It is all the more surprising, therefore, that Schneider, far from adhering to Soviet historical orthodoxy, focuses specifically on the individual victim and persecutor more than Peter Weiss had done. Schneider goes further in apportioning blame for the Holocaust to the average German citizen. He is concerned with establishing individual as well as collective guilt. Weiss had accented responsibility, not the individual guilt of those on the stand, and focused on the nature of the crimes. As the American prosecutor at Nuremberg emphasized, Hitler was the legally elected leader of Germany - democratically chosen by the people. Schneider underscores this fact on numerous occasions, stressing that Hitler's ascent to power was achieved by national consent:

First Defence Counsel:   What had given your Party its strength in the Reichstag?

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory - Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlmann, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 94.

- Göring:                   The normal elections, held in accordance with the current electoral laws.
- First Defence Counsel:   Is it then true to say that the majority in the Reichstag represented the majority of the German population?
- Göring:                   Completely ... We came to power in a perfectly legal manner.<sup>1</sup>

Schneider chose to concentrate his play on the proceedings against Field Marshall Keitel and other army officers highlighting that far from being unaware of the atrocities committed by the Einsatzgruppen and SS, the army actively participated in them. This was a far cry from the sentiment expressed in *Der Ruf* which had sought to distance the Wehrmacht from the SS. The age-old supposition that the German army was a respectable and honourable fraternity was thus put into question. Far from Hitler possessing sole responsibility, the chiefs of staff are revealed to have had considerable free will.

Named witnesses appear on stage unlike in *The Investigation*. The moving testimony of Abraham Sutzkever is included as is the French resistance fighter, Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier. The audience is shown the reasons why certain groups were targeted. When Madame Vaillant-Couturier is asked to identify the largest number of prisoners in Auschwitz she declares that it was the Jews - a different analysis than that of Weiss. The play attacks anti-Semitism and the myth of the world Jewish conspiracy by quoting sections of *Der Stürmer* and by the lengthy interrogation of its editor Julius Streicher.

Schneider, unlike Weiss, does not seek to reduce the emotion from the trial proceedings. *Prozess in Nürnberg*, despite its strict documentary format, is an extremely moving text. *The Times* critic, Peter Borgelt Göring, at the première in Berlin wrote that the three hour performance did not lag and that it was a 'moving' and 'spellbinding theatrical experience'.<sup>2</sup>

The play, however, is Marxist in its interpretation of events. Schneider emphasizes capitalist business interests just as Weiss had done:

It has been understood all along by the United Nations, that German industrialists were guilty in exactly the same degree. Their actions may, in comparison, have seemed unimportant. In fact, they carry particular weight. Not only did they create the weapons for Hitler's war. They created Hitler, and through him, the war itself. They created markets for themselves, for the quickest turnover, for the highest profits.<sup>3</sup>

Businessmen and corporations participated in the slave labour system with the aim of making a quick profit. Schneider concentrates his attack on the financiers such as Hjalmar Schacht

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<sup>1</sup> Schneider, *The Wild Justice*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times* (29 November 1967).

<sup>3</sup> Schneider, *The Wild Justice*, p. 4.

(Minister of Economics) and Albert Speer. In Schneider's text, the American prosecutor rebukes Speer:

For you, from the beginning, Hitler's regime was worth a gamble. For you and for German industry, which you represented. When it became too risky, you withdrew.<sup>1</sup>

World War Two as a Fascist crusade against Communism is, naturally, accented. As Göring states, 'Bolshevism was a deadly enemy. We made that clear from the very beginning! We never pretended anything else.'<sup>2</sup> The detailing of Operation Barbarossa constitutes one of the major sections of the play. Stalingrad is described as a war crime comparable to 'other war crimes'. And in one section, Schneider uses the same tactics as Weiss by juxtaposing two groups of prisoners to increase the suffering of the 'lesser' wronged group: Keitel is asked whether he knew of the mass killings. This conversation is intercut with dialogue about the killing of Soviet prisoners of war. Victims merge and categories are ill-defined. All the time the Soviet prosecutor is portrayed as the guardian angel of the Jews whereas the other prosecutors (by authorial omission) seem indifferent to the Jewish issue.

Like Weiss, however, Schneider was criticized for being anti-Semitic. Susan E. Cernyak-Spatz writes that Schneider took certain 'questionable' liberties in re-creating the speech patterns of Abraham Sutzkever:

The language emerges as a persiflage of the Yiddish language as it was used by *Der Stürmer* in a derogatory manner when that newspaper wanted to reproduce dialogue among Jews. This manner of speaking is derisively called *Mauscheln* in German.<sup>3</sup>

*Prozess in Nürnberg* was intended to act as a didactic lecture on the horrors of capitalist exploitation. The director, Wolfgang Heinz, incorporated slides from contemporary global conflicts by way of example. Peter Borgelt Göring concluded that the central message of the production was that the Holocaust could happen again.

A less complementary reading of the play is that it is an indictment of western democracy and West Germany's military re-armament. The fact that Hitler was democratically elected, underscored in the script at several key moments, challenges the foundations of western democracy and hence the very basis of West Germany's (and the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Cernyak-Spatz, *German Holocaust Literature*, p. 95. Schneider wrote an earlier play in 1964-5 called *The History of Moishеле*. The title character is a Polish Jew and the story follows the journey of his life from poor Polish village to ghetto, to concentration camp, to a career in postwar black market racketeering and finally to his incarceration in a re-education camp for juvenile delinquents in the Democratic Republic. In both the concentration and re-education camp, he is hated by all for fawning on the personnel. He continues to exploit the tragedy of others in his black market dealings. Spatz attacked the play for its use of clichéd, Jewish figures straight out of the pages of *Der Stürmer*.

NATO countries') constitutions. In legal terms, there was no difference between Adenauer's election and that of Hitler; the Federal Republic is a continuation of Nazi Germany. The Frankfurt-Auschwitz Trials had seemingly confirmed this. The USSR had accused Adenauer of seeking out 'small fry' Nazis when the 'big fish' had been allowed to escape the net. Second, the way in which Schneider dwells on Hitler's army and the evils of militarization could be read as an indictment of West Germany's re-armament programme, with a sense of continuity between Hitler's military aggression and West Germany's unknown military agenda.

### 3.2. Conclusion

*Prozess in Nürnberg* indicated that it was possible to write outwith the establishment whilst still achieving success. The Soviet attempt to marry the German Resistance with the East German state provided East Germans with a convenient escape clause from having to investigate their contribution to the Final Solution. Schneider challenged this narrative of events. He neither exonerated his people's involvement in the Holocaust nor denied a voice to the victims. An interesting comparison to *Process in Nürnberg*, is Richard Norton Taylor's documentary play *Nuremberg* commissioned by the Tricycle Theatre in London, in 1996.<sup>1</sup> Taylor's play is also a condensed version of the trial proceedings written in a strict documentary format but unlike Schneider, Taylor does not include sections of the trial which highlight Hitler's democratic election or any of the survivor testimony, except by way of appendix in the printed version.

Yet, if Susan Cernyak-Spatz's observations about the Jewish portraits in Schneider's work are anything to go by, East German writers were confronted with the same problem as their western counterparts: how to present Jews on stage. The physical lack of Jews in East Germany and the various political entanglements in the Middle East which dictated official attitudes all created obstacles to creating a realistic stage image which was neither anti nor philo-Semitic.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Norton Taylor, *Nuremberg*, London: Nick Hern Books, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Vadney, *The World Since 1945*, pp. 430-1. Anti-Semitic propaganda had been utilized by the Soviets in the USSR and, increasingly, the Middle East to effect political pressure. The Russians were sick of being drawn into squabbles at a local level - especially by Nasser. The easiest way to promote Arab unity was to exploit the spectre of their common enemy - Israel. This was the crux of a new and vehement propaganda campaign directed against Israel in the mid 1960s. This public face naturally affected the stage image of the Jew on the stage of the German Democratic Republic during the 1960s.

### 3.3. Israel

#### *Introduction*

As in West Germany, the 1960s were boom years of materialism and full-employment. The number of theatre companies expanded as did the scope of theatrical production.<sup>1</sup> The old pioneering ideals were still the official creed of the nation but they became increasingly archaic with the rapidly changing character of Israeli society. For example, when *This Earth* was revived in 1967, it ran for only forty-six performances.<sup>2</sup> Theatre in the 1960s was characterized by the rise of the lavish musical as Israel looked to Broadway and London's West End.<sup>3</sup> The level of indigenous plays produced dropped: between 1931 and 1948 the Habima, for example, had produced only two American plays but between 1949 and 1968 twenty-six American plays were staged in the same theatre.<sup>4</sup> Out of the top fifteen box-office successes for 1960-68, none were Israeli. Generally, theatre abandoned its quest for 'Jewish' identity. By the late 1960s about half of Israel's Jewish population were of African or Asian origin.<sup>5</sup> The debate over the debt Israel owed to its European inheritance and issues concerning the Holocaust were no longer relevant to contemporary society.

This situation changed with the 1967 war. The Israelis found themselves hopelessly outnumbered with no military allies. Nasser's threat to drive the Israelis into the sea and turn it red with Jewish blood was reminiscent of Hitler's threat of extermination. Until then, the young Israelis had dissociated themselves from their European past. Now, they found themselves in a situation similar to that of the European Jews under Hitler. A collection of interviews made with soldiers immediately after the Six Day War by Abba Kovner and Amos Oz describe how the sabra generation suddenly felt an affinity for their Holocaust cousins.<sup>6</sup> Yiddish came back into vogue and there was a sudden interest in Yiddish theatre which had been reinvigorated by a number of Polish actors who had emigrated to Israel in the 1960s. Establishing small touring groups, they produced typical Shund plays and Yiddish classics such as *The Book of Esther* based on a poem by Yitzik

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<sup>1</sup> In 1961, for example, the Haifa Municipal Theatre with a capacity of 854 was opened.

<sup>2</sup> Levy, *The Habima*, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> The emergence of commercial theatre is associated with one particular producer, Giora Godik. His production of *My Fair Lady* opened at the Habima on 6 February 1964 followed in the same year by *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

<sup>4</sup> Levy, *The Habima*, p. 213.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 227.

<sup>6</sup> Abba Kovner & Amos Oz, *The Seventh Day: Soldiers Talk about The Six Day War*, London: André Deutsch, 1970.

Manger.<sup>1</sup> Initially, the audiences were comparatively middle-aged but in 1967 the average age of the spectator significantly dropped.<sup>2</sup> Mendel Kohansky noted:

The struggle for the establishment of Hebrew as the national language - a struggle which was one of the main forces working in favour of Hebrew theatre - had long been won, and Yiddish, with the peculiar warmth and wit in its idiom, began to exercise an attraction on young Israelis who realised the essential rootlessness of cultural life of modern Israel. Young men and women who had at one time looked down at the language they heard spoken by their parents and in the streets, were beginning to pepper their speech with Yiddish expressions, and the classics of Yiddish literature in Hebrew translation were enjoying a new vogue.<sup>3</sup>

The postwar generation looked at its European inheritance and began to search for an alternative identity to that established by the Pioneer generation. The catalyst was the Eichmann trial in which survivor testimony was heard for the first time by a mass audience. The trial was an eye-opener for many young sabras. In the majority of novels and plays in the 1960s, Israeli protagonists, changed by their contact with survivors, question their attitudes, histories and identity. As the horrors of the past are raked up, issues of remembering and forgetting become paramount. As in West Germany, the crippling effect of wilful historical amnesia was examined, especially in its effect upon the young. Generally the need to remember triumphed against the urge to forget. This can be seen in Moshe Shamir's *The Heir* (Haifa Municipal Theatre, 1963). Compared to his earlier *He Walked in the Fields*, *The Heir* is critical of where postwar Zionist ideology has led the Jewish people. The play deals with the spiritual vacuum created by forgetting the past and abusing the memory of the dead in the quest for self-serving material ends. The central character takes advantage of his name, Wolf Cohen, to claim reparations due to another Wolf Cohen, a victim of the Holocaust. Through his newly acquired wealth, the sabra Cohen is able to live a life of luxury. However, he becomes trapped in his identity. It is the Eichmann trial which brings Wolf into contact with real Holocaust survivors and through them he discovers his spiritual poverty. Shamir, through analogy, was criticizing Israel's acceptance of West German reparation money without accepting the moral responsibility to remember that comes with it. As Shamir said:

I admit... that *The Heir* represents the common Israeli mind... We all suffer a breach between the material and the spiritual meaning of our national heritage.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kohansky, *The Hebrew Theatre*, pp. 252-3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>4</sup>Ben- Ami Feingold, 'Hebrew Holocaust Drama as Modern Morality Play', in Ben-Zvi, *Theatre in Israel*, pp. 269-83; p. 273, translating from *Herut* (6 December 1963).

And,

From the point of view of our moral right... who are we?... how are we living... here I see a dichotomy between the external reality and the inner identity. My problem is the person who has undertaken to accept the inheritance without accepting its implications regarding his identity.<sup>1</sup>

The play created a stir in 1963. One critic, A. Ber Meir, wrote that the play was 'a desecration of the holy memory of the victims of the Holocaust and causes revulsion in the viewer'.<sup>2</sup>

It was not only Shamir's criticism of Zionism that caused a furore but the mention of Holocaust horrors. Shamir himself felt that he could not depict the atrocities on stage: 'I myself do not have any right to write a play dealing with people who endured the Holocaust or any direct contact with it'.<sup>3</sup> He did, however, mention some of the more brutal aspects of Terezin and Auschwitz. The visualization of the Holocaust on stage still remained extremely sensitive and contentious.

Generally writers could only use graphic language in the private realm of the novel or on the radio such as Yehuda Amichai had done in his drama *Bells and Trains* which was transmitted by Kor Israel in 1962 winning the prize for best Israeli radio play that year.<sup>4</sup> The play succeeded in broaching the Holocaust through the indirect style of subconscious aural signals in the same way as Schabel's *Anne Frank-Trace of a Child*. Amichai set up a complex pattern of responses using church bells, dinner bells, steam trains and electric trains which have an effect more intense and oblique than words ever could. As one survivor in the play says:

Only my ears remember. The memories are divided among all parts of my body.<sup>5</sup>

The bells suggest how the past infiltrates contemporary German society and the lives of those survivors who have chosen to remain in Germany.

In *Bells and Trains*, the protagonist (Johanan, formerly known as Hans) returns to visit his Aunt Henrietta in an old people's home in the fictional postwar German town of Sinburg. The main reason for his visit is to arrange compensation for the loss of his father's

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<sup>1</sup> Glenda Abramson, *Modern Hebrew Drama*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Yehuda Amichai, *Bells and Trains*, trans. Aubrey Hodes, *Midstream* (12 October 1966), pp. 55-66. Amichai had been born in Würzburg Germany in 1924 into an orthodox Jewish family. He emigrated to Israel in 1936 as a boy of twelve. He therefore had a foot in both the European Diaspora and the new State.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

house. As with Israeli drama of the 1940s and 1950s the fruits of the sabra utopia are set against the dust and corruption of the European inheritance. Henrietta stayed in Sinburg. She now lives a shallow, meaningless existence as a 'ghost' as do all those who remain in the old folk's home - 'a paradise of ghosts'. German society is corrupt. Former Nazis inhabit every stratum of society and enjoy their freedom. The constant presence of the past in the present is illustrated by Johanan's quest for a hotel room:

The proprietor of the Rosen Hotel had a son in the SS. The brother of the owner of the Hotel Königen was one of the heads of the local Gestapo. The Metropol was army headquarters. And in the Hotel zur Glocke they kept Jews in the basement before the last transport.<sup>1</sup>

Europe is a spiritually corrupt world where Jews are tolerated on sufferance. The old synagogue has been knocked down and a supermarket built on the site indicating Germany's postwar obsession with materialism and eradicating all traces of the past. Importantly, this land belonged to the Jewish authorities and had to be sold to pay for the upkeep of the Jewish old people's home, many of whom are survivors. It would seem that Amichai is reprimanding the Germans for not financially atoning for their crimes.

When Amichai approached the Holocaust again in his 1963 novel *Not of This Time, Not of This Place*, he was more critical of Israeli identity and less damning of the European inheritance. Between the play and the book came the Eichmann Trial. *Not of This Time, Not of This Place* centres on the character of Joel, who, like Amichai, was born in Germany. Joel, ironically an archaeologist, must decide which 'past' forms the basis of his identity, Israeli or Jewish/European. If he is Israeli he can stay in Israel and disassociate himself from the Holocaust. This is symbolized by an extra-marital love affair he wishes to pursue. If Joel is Jewish/European he must seek revenge in Germany. The author allows both choices to be followed to their logical outcome by splitting Joel into two versions, each of which follows his different desires. One Joel therefore gets on a train to Germany, whilst the other stays in Israel to consummate the affair. The spectrum of people both Joels meet on their journeys to self-discovery illustrate a wide range of German and Jewish attitudes to the past and self-identity.

As in *Bells and Trains*, Europe is portrayed as corrupt. It has a spiritually disabling effect on any Jew who goes there. Such is the case with Leonora, a Jewess Joel meets in Germany. A German-born, ex-Israeli, Leonora has carved out a career as a German model because of her 'Aryan' looks. She adorns posters that invite tourists to visit picturesque Germany. However, she has become so far removed from her identity as a Jew that she

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

does not realize the moral implications of accepting a part in a German B movie. In the film she makes love to an SS officer while the audience hears the sound of a Jew being tortured beyond the wall. She is making money from Jewish degradation and consequently degrades herself. That is the penalty for forgetting. The main issue of the book is the painful choice between forgetting and remembering. Amichai suggests that the problem may be insoluble. A Polish survivor, Yosel, for instance, has a mermaid tattoo which partially conceals the one he received in Auschwitz:

Why had Yosel covered up the number? In order to forget the past. Why hadn't he concealed it completely? In order to remember the past.<sup>1</sup>

But if Europe is spiritually corrupt, so too is Israel. It can offer nothing refreshing compared to Europe. This is symbolized by Einat, a sterile and unsympathetic girl, who is alienated from her identity both as a Jew and as a human being:

She was almost anti-Semitic, she said, and had her reasons, for she was employed afternoons in an office for former concentration camp inmates. They came to the office with the expressions of tortured martyrs, and 'pull out all kinds of medical certificates on bits of yellowing smelly paper. And suddenly all of them turn out to have been partisans; everyone of them blowing up German trains'.<sup>2</sup>

The decision about which elements of Jewish history should be taken to formulate Israeli identity, what should be remembered and what forgotten, remains ambiguous for much of the novel. In the end the Joel who stays in Israel is destroyed as he wanders out into a desert, stepping on a mine from a war 'apparently not of this time, not of this place'. A past that remains unacknowledged can only lead to destruction. The Joel who goes to Germany abandons his plan for revenge and finds love instead. He neither forgives nor forgets the Holocaust but by examining his past he has found a kind of peace and more importantly his own identity.

*Not of This Time, Not of This Place* contains the seeds of the many themes dealt with by novelists of the period. The dilemma of remembering and forgetting is also explored in Dahn Ben Amotz's *To Remember, To Forget* (1968).<sup>3</sup> Uri, the narrator, like Joel, is a man who left Germany as a young boy and has since then avoided his history. He returns to Germany seeking reparations and revenge but instead, like the Joel who went to Germany, finds love in the arms of Barbara, a young German girl.

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<sup>1</sup> Yehuda Amichai, *Not of This Time, Not of This Place*, London: Valentine Mitchell, 1973, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Dahn Ben Amotz, *To Remember, To Forget*, trans. Zeva Shapiro, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979.

The question of revenge plays a large part in both *Not of this Time, Not of This Place* and *To Remember, To Forget* but is more fully explored in Hanoch Bartov's *The Brigade* which won the Shlonsky Prize in 1965.<sup>1</sup> Elisha Kruk, the nineteen-year old narrator, volunteers for the Jewish Brigade, the Israeli division of the British Army which served in Italy, helping to locate survivors.<sup>2</sup> However, it is not so much the need to save lives as the need for revenge which brings Kruk and his friends to Italy. Their need comes from the desire to rid themselves, once and for all, of the 'shameful', subservient Jewish morality that allowed six million of their people to walk 'like sheep to the slaughter':

But what's to become of us? Shall we go on carrying inside us, in our sick hearts, this nightmare of Amalek, pass on our hatred in whispers from one generation to the next? We want one day of wild revenge. Murder for its own sake, just as they did to us. Rape for rape. Looting for looting. Innocent victims for innocent victims. Only then, after we cleanse ourselves of this canker, this rot, this nightmare of helplessness - only then, clean and at peace with ourselves can we take our place in human society once more. Then we can forget.<sup>3</sup>

Their biblical 'eye for an eye' attitude is the official creed of the entire brigade. Major Kaplan instructs his unit in the 'commandments for a Hebrew soldier on German soil' which includes:

Hate the butchers of your people - unto all generations.<sup>4</sup>

The novel is not wholly fantasy. Yehuda Bauer in his study of the Brichah movement (the underground organization that brought survivors to Palestine contravening the British decree) showed that it was responsible for a number of para-military executions of those Nazis who had escaped immediate justice.<sup>5</sup> In the novel, Kruk and his companions plan to rape and kill a German girl but at the last moment Kruk finds he cannot bring the scheme to fruition. First he blames the two thousand years of persecution that has made a coward of his 'delicate Jewish soul'. But by the end of the book Kruk thanks God that he did not destroy himself in Germany. To carry out revenge would only reduce him to the same level as the Nazis. It would also give the Holocaust a sense of closure. Revenge therefore facilitates forgetting. Kruk realizes that if he rejects Jewish history, then the word 'Jewish' has no meaning. Bartov's novel is very similar to Haim Hazaz's ground-breaking 1942

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<sup>1</sup> Hanoch Bartov, *The Brigade*, trans. David S. Segal, London: MacDonald, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> Bartov himself was in the Jewish Brigade.

<sup>3</sup> Bartov, *The Brigade*, pp. 117-8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah*, New York: Random House, 1970.

novella, *The Sermon*, where the character of Yudka, like Kruk, argues that by dissociating himself from the Diaspora he is denying his inheritance and identity.

As the Israeli characters in these novels meet survivors they begin to question their sabra identity and standard images of the Holocaust 'victims'. Uri uses the typical self-definition in *To Remember, To Forget*, when he states, 'I'm no Jew, I'm an Israeli - and the two are not synonymous.'<sup>1</sup> However, by the end of the novel he has learned humility. In *The Brigade*, Kruk meets a distant relative, Krochmal, who survived the camps working in the crematoria: 'More than anything else I was filled with revulsion, at the thought of being connected with him.'<sup>2</sup> But through his experiences, Kruk learns charity, understanding and humanity.

The portrayal of the Holocaust victim in all these novels contests the supposition that Israeli identity began in 1948. Instead, their authors propose that there is much that modern day sabras have rejected to their own detriment. The sabra identity is revealed to be a 'ready to wear' construct as Aharon Megged's 1965 novel, *Living on the Dead*, illustrates.<sup>3</sup> A struggling Israeli writer by the name of Jonas Rabinowitch has been commissioned to write a biography on the War of Independence hero, Abrasha Davidov. Jonas finds it impossible to write the book he envisages as everyone he interviews has an idealized image of Davidov. The man is not only a hero but a national monument. Only Davidov's widow tells Jonas the truth about her husband - his violence, cowardice and pettiness:

But why should I tell you? In any case you won't write it. What kind of book will it be if you write the truth I know? A black book. The Jewish people don't need a black book about Davidov. They need heroic legends.<sup>4</sup>

Another theme explored by these writers, as Shamir had done in *The Heir*, is the materialism of Jewish society and, more importantly, the moral consequences of accepting reparations money. Haim Gouri, who wrote a diary on the Eichmann Trial and translated Elie Wiesel into Hebrew, worked in a displaced persons' camp with survivors. *The Chocolate Deal* was his first novel published in 1965.<sup>5</sup> The story centres around a survivor, Rubi Krauss, who blackmails an ex-SS doctor in order to make a financial killing. He threatens to reveal Doctor Hoffman's identity unless the former Nazi makes an official statement to the press about the dangerous and pacifying effects of the American military

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<sup>1</sup> Amotz, *To Remember, To Forget*, p. 387.

<sup>2</sup> Bartov, *The Brigade*, p. 160.

<sup>3</sup> Aharon Megged, *Living on the Dead*, trans. Misha Louvish, London: Jonathan Cape & McCall, 1970.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 249.

<sup>5</sup> Haim Gouri, *The Chocolate Deal*, trans. Seymour Simckes, New York: Holt Rinehardt & Winston, 1968.

chocolate distributed to the civilian population by the Allies to offset starvation. Krauss wants to lower the price of the chocolate on the market, buy it all up, have Hoffmann retract his statement and then re-sell the chocolate at an inflated price. Krauss will get his reparations by hook or by crook. This new obsession turns him into an ugly and shallow character. As with Shamir's Wolf Cohen, Krauss was intended to parallel the Israeli establishment in its handling of the reparations and armaments agreements with the Federal Republic. Aharon Megged in *Living on the Dead* summarizes:

The country is full of parasites. Everyone was getting rich without working. Making the money out of the land that good lads had shed their blood for. Lining their pockets with German reparations, flourishing over the ashes of martyrs. Rot setting in at the foundation. Living on the dead! The whole country! No wonder there was corruption everywhere, from top to bottom!<sup>1</sup>

Uri in *To Remember, To Forget*, has gone to Germany to claim reparations money so that he can buy a car and, more importantly, a house in an 'abandoned' Arab area. Like Shamir's Wolf Cohen, he becomes increasingly uneasy about accepting the money, 'More than once I saw myself as a whore, conscious and deliberate.'<sup>2</sup>

The loaded image of buying an Arab house with money intended to atone for racial crimes is symptomatic of another theme explored in the 1960s: Arabs as victims. Aharon Megged had first explored this in his 1959 novel *Fortunes of a Fool*. Now the same theme was taken up by other writers. In *To Remember, To Forget*, Uri becomes dimly aware that the Jews were not the only people to suffer persecution and dispossession under totalitarian regimes. East German and Arab refugees have also lost everything and had to start again. Alongside this comes the realization that perhaps the average Israeli is not that much different to the average Nazi. Uri has a sado-masochistic sexual encounter with a German girl called Erna:

The link of pain to pleasure was a new and shocking discovery. The fact that I enjoyed my sadistic behaviour as much as she did troubled me then and troubles me now.<sup>3</sup>

With this epiphany comes the attempt to 'undemonize' the image of the Nazi. Uri travels to Germany in a train compartment full of vociferous and loud-mouthed Germans. He begins to fantasize about what they would look like in their old SS uniforms. When the train finally pulls in at its destination, the 'Germans' are revealed to be a family of German Jews. Uri has some re-thinking of stereotypes to do. Similarly, once in Germany, he is plagued

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<sup>1</sup> Megged, *Living on the Dead*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Amotz, *To Remember, To Forget*, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 350.

by anti-Semitic phone calls which colour his attitude to all Germans. Again his assumptions are proved wrong. A fellow Israeli is making the calls as a practical joke.

But perhaps the most damning criticism in the book is the Israeli use of the 'guilt card' to achieve political ambitions. Amotz illustrates this through Uri who, in Germany, conceals his identity as a Diaspora Jew and describes himself instead as an 'Israeli'. However, when he is mugged on a dark street one night, his immediate response is to cry out to his German assailants that he is a Jew. The muggers immediately turn tail. To cry 'Jew' can be very useful sometimes.

Of all these novels, *To Remember, To Forget* is the strongest indictment of the Pioneer and Zionist treatment of both the survivors and the selective nature of Jewish history. Published a year after the Six Day War, it reflects the need of many Israelis to understand Holocaust victims after they themselves experienced encirclement from a unified Arab front which threatened their very existence.<sup>1</sup> As Abba Kovner wrote:

The average Sabra, in Kibbutz or in town feels himself to be a different sort of Jew from his brother in the Diaspora. Few are able to understand how the Jews of Europe could be slaughtered almost without a fight. Most feel more kinship with their ancestors of the Biblical period who lived in the land of Israel, than with their more recent forbears in Europe and the Middle East. Suddenly threatened with annihilation, they identified themselves with the Jews of the Hitler period.<sup>2</sup>

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### 3.3.a *Children of the Shadow*

An examination of Holocaust narratives and Israeli stereotypes also occurred on the stage but to a lesser extent. Ben Zion Tomer's 1962 play *Children of the Shadow* was awarded the National Council for Culture and Arts Prize and the Baratz Prize in 1963.<sup>3</sup> It ran for 206 performances to a total audience of 82,669 at the Habima.<sup>4</sup> So successful was the production that it toured Canada and played in New York in 1964. In 1967 it was screened on Israeli television.

Tomer was born in Poland in 1928 and then fled to Siberia during the Second World War, arriving in Israel shortly thereafter at the age of fifteen. *Children of the Shadow* is an autobiographical drama dealing with the effects of the Holocaust on a young survivor, Yosele, who settles in Palestine trying to forget the past, the parents he left in Poland and

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<sup>1</sup> Nasser had managed to call upon the military aid of Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Algeria. Unlike the Suez crisis, Israel now stood alone. The Western allies refused military aid. Despite the odds, Moshe Day'an and the army smashed the Arab forces but the experience changed Israeli attitudes toward their Holocaust cousins and their own military might.

<sup>2</sup> Kovner/Oz, *The Seventh Day: Soldiers Talk about The Six Day War*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ben Zion Tomer, *Children of the Shadow*, trans. Hillel Halkin with an introduction by Haim Shoham, Tel Aviv: Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 1982.

<sup>4</sup> Levy, *The Habima*, p. 203.

his true identity. This is symbolized by his change of name from Yosele to the Israeli 'Yoram'. Growing up on a Kibbutz, Yoram becomes a Zionist fanatic in the attempt to eradicate his past. In particular he emulates his sabra friend, Dubi:

And when I came to this land and it fed me from the tree of forgetfulness, I burned my louse-infected clothes along with myself. Along with Yosele. And Esther. And my parents. And when I was through being disinfected, I was a new man, a superman like Dubi, by the name of Yoram.<sup>1</sup>

Yoram wants to be more superhuman than Dubi, the head of the Kibbutz soccer team and community *Wunderkind*. This urge manifests itself in Yoram's 'theft' of Dubi's first girlfriend, Naomi, 'the queen of the Kibbutz', and then his second, Nurit.

It is only when Yoram leaves the Kibbutz and settles down with Nurit that he comes into contact with other Holocaust survivors and his long-suppressed memories emerge. He continues to deny his true past to other survivors including a character known as 'the balloon seller', a waiter who has set up a seaside café with German reparation money, and a mysterious beggar, Doctor Sigmund Rabinowitz, later revealed to have been a collaborator and Yoram's brother-in-law. Yoram's dead sister, Esther, was his wife. As head of the Judenrat, Sigmund had failed to save her and their child from deportation. Wracked with guilt he feigns madness and longs to be a dog.

The web of lies Yoram has created to protect his true identity crumble when Berele, a survivor from Yoram's old home town, brings news that his family are alive and *en route* to Israel. Yoram must re-evaluate who he is and more importantly confess his true identity to his friends. However, he believes that if his true past, is revealed, he will become a social outcast. As Berele says, 'I've already noticed that it's only here that people are afraid to talk about these things.'<sup>2</sup>

In *Children of the Shadow*, the survivor is the protagonist to which all other characters act as foils. This arrangement of the dramatis personae is new on the Israeli stage:

Ben-Zion Tomer was the first to explore the central problem of the new reality then coming into being in the State of Israel, namely the problem of Israeli identity, both personal and collective.

Prior to *Children of the Shadow*, it was axiomatic among Israeli playwrights that the native-born, Hebrew-speaking sabra, together with his characteristic environment of the Kibbutz and the youth movement, was alone the legitimate representative of the fulfilment of the Zionist dream taking place in the young Jewish state - a fulfilment that, in its cultural assumptions and human products, considered itself both a negation of Jewish life in the Diaspora and an alternative to it.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tomer, *Children of the Shadow*, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 5-6.

Israeli society and Jewish culture have been stunted by this negation of the past. One critic at the première commented:

It points... at the root of sterility of modern Hebrew writing... The young generation of Israeli writers is culturally rootless. They have cut themselves off from the past of their people... disdaining all that comes from the Diaspora, particularly the shtetl, as degenerate. They see their past in the Bible with all its glamour of Jewish kingdoms and victorious wars, with heroes and prophet... Between the Bible and the present, there is one blank space.<sup>1</sup>

*Children of the Shadow* was the first play on the Holocaust to achieve success on the Israeli stage since *Hannah Senesh*. However, despite its critique of contemporary Israeli society, the play is similar to many Holocaust plays of the 1950s with the burden of guilt falling upon the Holocaust survivor. Yoram's 'guilt' is threefold. First, he feels guilty because he believes he abandoned his parents in Poland. Second, he experiences guilt because, when they miraculously turn up alive, he is ashamed of them in front of his sabra friends - especially Nurit. Third, he feels guilty because he is not a 'first-class' survivor: he was part of a children's gang which stole food. Janek, his long-lost brother, on the other hand, suffers no guilt. He is a 'first-class survivor', a hero of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Yet Yoram's guilt is thrown into relief by Sigmund who survived because, as head of the Judenrat, he was responsible for selecting his own people to be deported from the ghetto. Sigmund, like Dr Auerbach in Shacham's 1954 *A New Reckoning*, is vilified by those who know his secret and Janek, (like Shacham's character of Ami) believes that a collaborator should be killed or, at the very least, made to suffer. For Janek, collaborators are only 'half-human' and 'at times they weren't any better than the Germans'.<sup>2</sup> However, Sigmund leaves a question in the audience's mind, challenging such assumptions:

I want you to understand that I was a human being, and the most terrible thing of all was that they [the Nazis] were human too.<sup>3</sup>

However, immediately after this statement, he asserts that there can be no forgiveness for what he did and the play ends. 'I was a human being': the use of the past tense is deliberate. Ben Zion Tomer simultaneously confirms and questions the hierarchy of survivorhood. The

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<sup>1</sup> Levy, *The Habima*, pp. 202-3.

<sup>2</sup> Tomer, *Children of the Shadow*, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

question of collaboration remained a sensitive and difficult issue to articulate without arousing strong and polarized passions.<sup>1</sup>

It is Nurit who is the play's voice of reason. As Yoram's wife, she tries to understand him and his past despite his deceit. She also endeavours to welcome his family into the house. Crucially, she tells Yoram that she is glad that he never quite became the sabra superman that he had initially emulated. In her mind she had rejected Dubi long before Yoram made an approach to her. As a representative of an average Israeli girl, the audience is asked to identify with her perspective. Dubi is too manipulative and Yoram too emotionally disturbed to be the character an Israeli audience can identify with.

Stylistically, *Children of the Shadow* (similar to German writing in the 1960s) reflects the popularity of absurdist techniques in dealing with a subject that is contradictory, complex and, perhaps, unrepresentable. In particular, the play shares many affinities with Beckett's *Endgame*. For example, Sigmund and the Balloon Seller share exchanges of dialogue reminiscent of Hamm and Clov. Using verbiage to cover loneliness and lack of meaning, their conversations have a vaudeville piquancy. Sigmund has a stuffed dog like Hamm which he drags around with him. He enters and exits from the ocean. The seaside setting is desolate, even deserted, despite the presence of a café and promenade. A party scene contains fantastic characters such as 'Guilty Feeling' and the play, whilst being in the main naturalistic, has an aura of 'unworldliness'. This permits a degree of emotional distance both from the Holocaust and Tomer's critique of Zionist identity.

Likewise Aharon Megged's 1967 play *The High Season* marries absurdist techniques with biblical history. The hero Job is a remnant of the Jewish people after the Holocaust. Job receives reparations from Germany and forgets all the former wrongs done to him. Megged's message, like Shamir's and Tomer's, argues Emanuel Levy, is a warning against forgetting and, more importantly, against abusing the past for self-serving ends.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.3.b. *Uncle Arthur*

Danny Horowitz's *Uncle Arthur*, based on an earlier, unperformed play by G. Dagan entitled *Chazura*, does not employ absurdist techniques as such but, like the absurdist genre, is self-consciously theatrical. It was first performed as a rehearsed reading at Tel Aviv University on 25 May 1967 by Danny Ashkenazi. The play is a monologue for one actor and four puppets - each of which represents an individual who survived the

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<sup>1</sup> This can be seen by the reception of a similar play in 1966. Clara Rosenfeld's *Itzik Wittenberg* focused on the leader of the Vilna underground movement as a means to explore the question of collaboration. It was a financial and critical failure.

<sup>2</sup> Levy, *The Habima*, p. 209.

Holocaust. Horowitz thus circumvents the sensitive issue of representing the Holocaust on stage. The play opens with the narrator relating the story. By revealing the plot at the beginning, the suspense and pathos are removed and the audience's critical, or in this case, self-critical faculties are brought into play. Yet despite these 'precautions' to prevent the audience's emotional engagement, the play is deeply moving. The style of direct address, far from alienating the audience, does much to increase the intimacy of the piece by directly implicating the spectator in the story-telling process. It also emphasizes the 'theatricality' of the structure.

The narrator, Peter Stone (né Stein), is a former inmate of Terezin and Auschwitz turned playwright. He tells the audience about a play he has written about how he and his friends, Karl, Eddy and Martha, booked a room in a hotel somewhere in Europe to have a party for their relative 'Uncle Arthur', whom they have not seen in many years. Arthur had fled Prague at the beginning of the war and then settled in America, whereas Peter and his friends had been interned.

My play is a very simple one. It's about Uncle Arthur. How Peter Stone has invited some of his friends to a party and how they all prepared a little surprise for Uncle Arthur. How they frightened him. It was Uncle Arthur who always said: 'How could people just walk into those gas chambers? It's hard to understand what happened there. I know who the Nazis were, still it's hard to understand.'<sup>1</sup>

The four survivors play an elaborate hoax on Arthur in order to make him understand how people walked like 'sheep' to their own destruction. One of them interrupts the party dressed as an SS officer. Ordering them to strip, the 'SS officer' demands that they hand over their passports. The idea behind this 'game' is to create the physical conditions of life in a totalitarian regime. Arthur must feel the 'past' physically if he is to understand. When the hoax is revealed to a silent and naked Arthur, he leaves: 'But uncle Arthur could not feel what we wanted him to feel. Naturally.' He cannot admit the bond between himself and that of Holocaust victims. Horowitz's message to the audience is clear:

In Jerusalem once I met somebody from one of the underground movements in Palestine. He is a very important man in Israel now. I met him at a cocktail party. He says to me: 'It makes me feel awful to think that you went to your deaths like sheep to the slaughter.'

I said to him: 'I'm sorry that it makes you feel awful.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Danny Horowitz, *Uncle Arthur*, Tel Aviv: 1967, unpublished, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Horowitz highlights the same attitude at the opening of his play when Stone relates the reluctance of both the Ministry of Education and theatre managers to stage his play. All agree that the Holocaust is an important subject but Peter Stone's intentions are at variance with the Holocaust's public function in Israel: Stone's aim is to provoke understanding and empathy for the victims but in Israel the Holocaust is to act as a warning for future generations. As such, individual stories were unnecessary in the Zionist history of Jewish persecution .

Stone challenged the assertion that Zionism was the logical and sole heir of Jewish identity after the Holocaust. Karl returned to Germany and Eddy to Austria:

Eddy is a physician now. He always wanted to be a doctor. He did not come to Israel. Why would he? He lives in Austria.<sup>1</sup>

Horowitz's interest in the Holocaust is straightforward: how and why should the Holocaust be portrayed in the arts and why should it be remembered? Peter Stone divulges the motivation behind the play. A friend in Terezin, Wilhelm - a poet - used to scribble verses on bits of paper. Wilhelm then disappeared but when Peter arrived in Auschwitz there he was, still writing his poetry. This time he was not writing it on bits of paper as discovery would have resulted in death. Instead he wrote on his memory and then recited lines to his friends. Wilhelm died in the gas chambers. Peter can only remember two lines of his poetry. He thought about writing them down and lodging them at Yad Vashem museum but was dissatisfied by the thought of a man's life and work being remembered by two lines of poetry in an archive. That cannot be enough. Instead Stone wrote a play about the Holocaust so that people like Wilhelm should be remembered.

The use of puppets is perhaps the key to understanding the play. Purim plays in the Middle Ages were traditionally performed in the courtyards of synagogues with puppets.<sup>2</sup> It was only during the Renaissance that actors took over. Purim celebrates the deliverance of the Jews by Queen Esther. As Glenda Abramson writes, it is a festival where the emphasis is on 'healing'.<sup>3</sup> Horowitz wanted to encourage a 'healing' process to take place whereas the Zionist imperative was to keep the wound fresh in order to unite a people in a dangerous land. But Purim has another aspect: 'It is obligatory to eat, drink and be merry on Purim,' writes Rabbi S.M. Lehrmann.<sup>4</sup> Those who do not take part in the festivities, plays and masquerade, like Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, were considered foolish. Purim was

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Abramson, *Modern Hebrew Drama*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> S.M. Lehrmann and Simon Maurice, *A Guide to Hanukkah and Purim*, London: Jewish Chronicle Publications, 1958, p. 65.

the day of reversal and wise fools. Peter Stone stands outside the Jewish collective of Israel and offers his comment. Because his advice goes unheard by the theatre managements and education authorities, it is they who are the real fools.

### 3.3. Conclusion

Horowitz and Ben Zion Tomer tackled the representation of the Holocaust and the way it had been emplotted in Israel according to a Zionist narrative. On the stage, these subjects were still very sensitive. Significantly, *Uncle Arthur* would have to wait until the 1980s before it achieved critical acclaim. *Children of the Shadow* achieved success because its polemic was more subtle than that of *Uncle Arthur*. Tomer challenges stereotypes but ultimately upholds them. The collaborator, Sigmund, for instance, is neither integrated into society at the end of the play nor forgiven even though he is allowed to defend his case and, although Nurit is sympathetic to him, she does not get involved in his problems. Nurit is critical of both Dubi's and by implication, the sabras' forgetfulness and arrogance. But she berates Yoram for his emotional instability, neediness and hypocrisy. *Children of the Shadows*, therefore, challenged assumptions but did not necessarily demolish them.

The freedom with which the Holocaust and Israeli identity were discussed in novels stood in stark contrast. The stage was a public utility intended to serve the same social function as national monuments and days of remembrance. Yet the seeds for future theatrical enterprises touching on the Holocaust/Zionist conundrum are to be found in the novels and plays of the 1960s, especially *Uncle Arthur*. 'It was very theatrical' wrote Horowitz about the Holocaust 'in go people at one end and out comes smoke at the other'.<sup>1</sup> Horowitz and Tomer brought Israeli writing out of its naturalistic phase. They utilized theatricality to show a deeper truth and to touch their audiences without directly confronting them with the brutal horrors of the Holocaust.

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<sup>1</sup> Horowitz, *Uncle Arthur*, p. 2.

### 3. Conclusion

Throughout the 1960s writers in Israel and Germany were searching for a dramaturgical style that would enable them to communicate the Holocaust and achieve a point of emotional contact with their audiences, as well as encourage critical analysis of postwar narratives, images and identities. For example, Peter Weiss used documentary to explore the Holocaust. The passages of the trial he chose to dramatize implicate ordinary Germans in Nazi decision making. Weiss encouraged the audience to question themselves. Simultaneously, the choice of documents also achieves an emotional level through the story of Lillie Tofler and the stark recounting of daily life in Auschwitz. Ultimately, the play challenges the audience to be more analytic of the system into which they are born. The intentions of Hochhuth, Sperr and Walser were much the same. Only the techniques and dramatic styles differed. All were intent on focusing attention on the ordinary individual and encouraging critical and emotional response. The Frankfurt-Auschwitz and Eichmann trials had challenged the ways in which ordinary Germans had extricated themselves from atrocities. The trial also questioned the representation of Nazis as inhuman psychopaths in psychoanalysis and the arts. Only Hochhuth's 'Doctor' adhered to the demonized Nazi figure typical of early postwar writing. Hochhuth's other Nazis such as Salzer and the Auschwitz guard, Helga, are drawn in a more human manner:

One cannot console oneself with the idea that a camp like Auschwitz was run by the mentally deranged, or by criminal lunatics. They were normal fellow creatures who had their place of business here.<sup>1</sup>

Likewise in Israel, certain stereotypes were beginning to be challenged, namely the collaborator, the victim and the sabra. This was part of the larger meditation on the selective nature of Zionist history and its implications for modern Israeli identity. Again, dramatists searched for a style that would encourage a confrontation with these issues and achieve an emotional response to the past whilst promoting analytical consideration of previously held notions and narratives. None of the German or Israeli dramatists discussed opted for naturalism. Instead, 'speaking tubes', blank verse, fantastic or absurd characters and puppets convey the narrative. The Holocaust is related through words and aural signals (*Bells and Trains*) but never depicted visually. The only exception is Hochhuth's rendition of Auschwitz in Act Five of *The Representative*, which stands outside naturalism by its 'ghostly, dreamlike' appearance.<sup>2</sup> A visually realistic portrayal of the Holocaust would have

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<sup>1</sup> Hochhuth, *The Representative*, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

been too sensitive for audiences in Israel and Germany. Even talking about the camps in Shamir's *The Heir* caused outrage. Such sensitivity in Israel derived from both the nature of the audience (many were survivors or relatives of victims) and the agendas of the critics who separated Zionist history from individual memories. Writers knew that causing offence would not encourage discussion. Theatrical cajolery, games of illusion and reality, and comedy were persuasive, not confrontational nor condemnatory.

**CHAPTER 4**  
**ICONS AND ICONOCLASTS**  
**1968-1981**

**Introduction**

With the success of the Six Day War came a sense of historical closure. West Germans generally felt that the Israeli victory signalled the end of their obligation towards the survivors of the Holocaust and their descendants. The Israelis had won their land, reparations had been paid, the major war criminals had been brought to justice and diplomatic relations had been established between the two countries.

However, the 1970s saw the advent of a new form of organized, international terrorism which inadvertently resurrected old ghosts. Groups such as 'Black September' (part of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation - the PLO)<sup>1</sup> and the *Rote Armee Faktion* (The Red Army Faction- RAF- also known as The Baader-Meinhof Gang)<sup>2</sup> were linked by their Marxist ideology and methods of training. They ran amok in Israel, West Germany and other parts of the world where their objectives could be furthered. Their individual (though sometimes coinciding) programmes included the destruction of Israel and the removal of the legally elected government of West Germany. Of these two ambitions, the destruction of Israel was the more urgent.

For the Israelis, the territorial gains of the 1967 War meant the need to police former Arab-ruled enclaves, in particular those in the Gaza Strip and the Golan heights. For the first time, Israeli soldiers found themselves in the position of oppressors. Germany's young, anti-imperialist Lefties began to view the Arab minority as the 'new Jews' and the Israelis as the new Fascists. This was in stark contrast to the pro-Israeli support that West Germany expressed throughout the Six Day War.<sup>3</sup> After 1968 Germany's Left-wing groups and institutions (known collectively as The German New Left)<sup>4</sup> began to see Israel's existence, not as the product of Nazi genocide, but as an offshore satellite for the United States. Anti-Israeli protests were taken to extremes by the

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<sup>1</sup> The PLO, working for the creation of a Palestinian homeland, considered Israel to be an illegal institution and refused to recognize its right to exist. Black September resorted to terrorism.

<sup>2</sup> The RAF, an extremist mutation of the 1960s Extra-Parliamentary Opposition, viewed Israel as the imperialist creation and political puppet of the United States - the Palestinians being a victimized nation comparable, ironically, to Holocaust Jews.

<sup>3</sup> Bonn had remained neutral throughout the Six Day War but the German public's response to Israel's situation had been phenomenal. The Berlin Senate, for example, had sent 100,000 DM's worth of medical supplies (*Daily Telegraph*, 6 June 1967). The civic authorities in Frankfurt-am-Main had also donated 30,000 DM from its own budget (*Die Welt*, 7 June 1967). On the day of Israel's victory, *Der Spiegel* called the Israeli minister of defence, Moshe Day'an, 'Israel's Rommel' (*Der Spiegel*, 26 June 1967). *The Jerusalem Post* on 22 June 1967 reported that West German support during the Six Day War had done much to dispel fears of a resurgence of Nazism in central Europe. Israel at the end of 1967 broadcast midnight mass from Bethlehem in seven languages including, for the first time, German (*New York Times*, 31 December 1967).

<sup>4</sup> Horst Mewes, 'The New German Left', in *New German Critique*, Vol. 3 (Fall 1974), pp. 22-41; p. 25: 'The German New Left is either a direct offspring of the student protest movement, or has developed out of the new political and cultural climate created by the student protest during the sixties.'

RAF who saw themselves as socialist champions of democracy and destroyers of cultural imperialism. In the West German press, however, the RAF was seen as the modern embodiment of Nazism. At the other end of the political spectrum, neo-Nazi organizations had sprung up since the late 1960s. The National Partei Deutschland (NPD), in particular, had been gathering momentum. Extreme Left and extreme Right organizations became united in the minds of the German public and obvious historical analogies were pursued in the international press.

These parallels were obviously unwelcome: the RAF gave decent Germans a 'bad press'. They, naturally, wanted to distance themselves from the terrorist elements. A witch-hunt of radical Lefties by the police and the tabloid Springer press began.<sup>1</sup> The Bonn government had to be seen to be acting strongly against the terrorists to counter the image of a rising neo-Nazi Germany. The urgency with which the government sought to distance middle-class Germany from its terrorist children can be seen in the amount of money lavished on a special maximum security jail, Stammheim (the most technically secure and expensive in Europe) which was erected for the members of the captured gang and a new court-house built on an adjacent potato field.<sup>2</sup> Against the hysterical tenor of the politicians and press, stood Heinrich Böll. In *Der Spiegel* he demanded that the terrorists be given due legal process and be treated as political prisoners, not criminals. He condemned the sensationalism of the tabloid press and the mob mentality of the German public. His 1974 novel, *Die Verlorene Ehre von Katharina Blum* (*The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*) denounced police brutality, the sensation mongering Right-wing press and the loss of personal privacy in an increasingly totalitarian state posing as a democracy.<sup>3</sup> The director and actor, Maximilian Schnell also protested against what he saw as an increasingly authoritarian police-state. He believed the general hysteria resulted from West Germany's need to appear irreproachable in terms of how former Nazis had been pursued and how young terrorists were being dealt with. His film *Der Fussgänger* (*The Pedestrian*, 1973), tells the story of how an industrialist, wrongly accused of Nazi crimes, is mercilessly hounded by the press who consider him guilty before he is even brought to trial.

The terrorists certainly did not see themselves as a modern manifestation of Nazism, rather the opposite. When one young terrorist was confronted by a Holocaust survivor during the Entebbe hijacking, he proceeded to explain to the old man that there was absolutely no connection, ideologically, between his actions and those of the Nazis.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Demetz, *After the Fires*, pp. 92-3.

<sup>2</sup> Stefan Aust, *The Baader-Meinhof Group. Inside the Story of a Phenomenon*, trans. Anthea Bell, London: The Bodley Head, 1987, p. 295.

<sup>3</sup> Heinrich Böll, *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*, trans. Ulrike Hanna Meinhof and Ruth Rath, London: Nelson and Sons, 1980.

<sup>4</sup> Jillian Becker, *Hitler's Children - the Story of the Baader-Meinhof Gang*, London: The Bodley Head, 1977, p. 18.

As the historian Walter Laqueur noted, the anxiety over the RAF's political objectives (supposedly, Communist revolution) was totally misplaced:

The terrorists wanted to say something, but they found themselves incapable of doing so - perhaps they had nothing to say and this made them all the more angry.<sup>1</sup>

The result was that a band of hippie bank robbers and urban terrorists were treated with more credit than they deserved both in the press and in the courtroom.

The need to distance oneself from the terrorist element had its historical precedent: the postwar division between the Nazis and the ordinary Germans in the press and the arts. West Germans, sensitive to international opinion, did not want the past raked up again but the sense of historical repetition brought a resurgence of interest in Hitler and the Third Reich. The urge to differentiate the decent majority from the 'evil' few manifested itself in 1970s war literature where the Nazis were again demonized. Thus, there was a return to immediate postwar literary themes and structures.

However, certain artists and observers believed that the current parallels being drawn between the Nazis and the RAF were outdated, reactionary, false and arose from an undiscussed guilt-complex that had its roots in the war years. Such thinking, they argued, was detrimental to a real coming to terms with the past. History had been filtered in a politically subjective manner that had not addressed the real issue of German anti-Semitism. In addition, the current analogies prevented a realistic appraisal of the contemporary situation. They also hindered a way forward to finding a solution. The use of the past was crippling the present. As Martin Walser stated, 'Only when we can overcome Auschwitz can we return to national tasks.'<sup>2</sup>

In Israel too, writers began to challenge narratives which, they argued, prevented national development. Danny Horowitz protested that it was impossible for the individual to have any identity of his/her own in a society that was so consciously fabricated and organized by the establishment's reaction to events in Europe thirty years earlier. Horowitz believed that the Holocaust, as processed through the Zionist filter in schools, the armed forces, youth movements and national holidays, was desecrating the memory of its victims by utilizing their suffering for political ends. He objected to the way in which the Holocaust was called upon to shape public responses which did not clarify contemporary problems or achieve satisfactory solutions.

The way in which these writers, both in Israel and West Germany, challenged narratives of 'official' history was by utilizing their very 'theatricality', revealing the fabricated nature of society and politics. By forcing a critical distance between the object and viewer and by drawing attention to the fact that their own works were mere artifices,

<sup>1</sup> Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987, p. 238. And, pp. 236-7, Laqueur points out that the RAF was not an ideological movement but 'eclecticists borrowing certain concepts from various doctrines, including the Leninist theory of imperialism'.

<sup>2</sup> Rabinbach/Zipes, *Germans And Jews Since The Holocaust*, p. 11.

they hoped to highlight how cultural suppositions had been consciously designed for ulterior motives. They demanded that the spectator question the hidden agendas behind the images and narratives with which they were being presented. These writers sought to shatter national 'myths' by iconoclastic methods. They found little success or even, as in the case of the German film maker/playwright Rainer Werner Fassbinder and the Israeli writer Hanoch Levin, had their works banned or closed.

#### 4.1. The Federal Republic

##### *Introduction*

The 1970s was a period of escalating racism. The West German state faced mounting economic problems from 1973 onwards after the Middle Eastern Oil crisis sparked off by Anwar Sadat's new government in Egypt.<sup>1</sup> After years of reaping the fruits of an expanding economy, West Germany's citizens were confused and angry. The presence of thousands of *Gastarbeiter* aggravated both unemployment figures and racial tension. Incidents of racial violence were reported in the press with the rise of neo-Nazi organizations finding ready-made historical parallels. These analogies were also found in the arts. For example, Heinrich Böll's 1971 novel *Gruppenbild mit Dame (Group Portrait with a Lady)* charting the course of, as the author told his editor, a woman who bears the burden of German history between 1922 and 1970, omits the Holocaust but parallels racism against Russian POWs in the 1940s and Turks in 1970s.<sup>2</sup>

There were also cases of anti-Semitism. In 1970 a Jewish old-age home was bombed in Munich. The actions of the RAF left eleven Israeli athletes dead at the Munich Olympic Games in 1972. More macabre was the 'selection' of Jewish passengers as hostages by German terrorists in the Entebbe hijacking of 1976. The fact that one of those 'selected' was a Holocaust survivor received particular press coverage.<sup>3</sup>

Since 1948, successive German governments had sought an all-embracing symbol which would signal that the past had been forgiven if not forgotten. Contemporary terrorism and anti-Semitism only raised the spectre of the past once again. Golda Meir, Israel's new Prime Minister, did not diffuse matters when she spoke of the two countries' 'special relationship' and Germany's natural 'debt'.<sup>4</sup> The Germans, frustrated at playing the role of 'the eternal penitent', found their hopes of release from this moral bondage thwarted. This was especially true of the younger generation who bore none of their parents' guilt or shame. Unable to shoulder the responsibility towards the Jews that their parents were reluctant to take up, they found themselves trapped in an ethical cul-de-sac. Detlev Claussen argues that the only course of action left open to them was to re-direct the anger they felt at their parents' generation and the frustration of being forced into an apologetic stance for being German at all.<sup>5</sup> They diverted this energy against the root of the cause: the Jews - as embodied collectively by the Israelis - and turned the former victims into oppressors. In other words the Israelis had to be removed from the pedestal on which the Germans themselves had placed them because of their own philo-Semitism.

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<sup>1</sup> Demetz, *After the Fires*, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> Heinrich Böll, *Group Portrait With A Lady*, trans. Leila Vennewitz, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Becker, *Hitler's Children*, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Lavy, *Development of Relations Between Germany and Israel*, p.127.

<sup>5</sup> Detlev Claussen 'In The House Of The Hangman', in Rabinbach/Zipes, *Germans and Jews since the Holocaust*, pp. 50-62.

Both philo and anti-Semitism objectify rather than incorporate Jews into the community. The Jews had thus acquired the mantle of 'special' rather than 'equal' and they had always been expected to behave as such. As Jack Zipes writes:

Jews have been expected to be superhuman since 1948. They have been expected to create miracles in the desert, to defend themselves, conquer all enemies, and remain pure and democratic. The fact that Israel has shown... that it can be as callous, ruthless and 'imperialist' as any other state has allowed critics and even admirers to vent their anti-Semitism.<sup>1</sup>

Germany's young Lefties transferred their wholehearted and uncritical support for the Israelis to the Arab Palestinians - the new oppressed, the 'new Jews'. The Palestinians were objectified as defenceless victims who bore none of the responsibility for the current state of affairs. Observers believed the German Left's anti-Zionism was merely anti-Semitism by a new name. Their sympathy for the Palestinians may have had its moral heart in the right place but the motives for its existence were misguided:

Here lies the root of that endless evil which wishes that the victims should no longer be victims, but victimizers instead. From the sense of guilt comes false consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

Decline in support for the Israelis can be gauged by Brandt's exchange of the three Palestinian terrorists responsible for the Munich Olympic murders for twenty civilian hostages aboard a hijacked Lufthansa plane in 1972. Golda Meir condemned Brandt's decision and Israeli students demonstrated in Jerusalem with placards reading 'Hitler murdered Jews, Brandt protects Jew murderers.'<sup>3</sup> West German support for Israel during the 1973 Yom Kippur War was far more mute than it had been in 1967. The new German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, responded to Golda Meir's warnings of impending Israeli destruction at the hands of the Arabs by publicly stating that all peoples had the right to co-exist in Israel. Whereas Brandt had usually been more diplomatic in his handling of relations between the two countries, Schmidt was straightforward and critical. As Michael Wolffsohn wrote, Meir's government had to deal with a more candid style of diplomacy from West Germany, one 'without the symbolism of atonement'.<sup>4</sup>

The actions of the RAF and the plight of the Palestinians coincided with a literary and filmic trend which emanated from Britain and the United States. Artistically, the 1970s and early 1980s have been dubbed the 'Hitler Wave'.<sup>5</sup> Books such as Beryl Bainbridge's *Young Adolf* (1979), George Steiner's *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.* (1982) and films such as *Marathon Man* (John Schlesinger, 1976), and Ira Levin's *The Boys from Brazil* (Franklin Schaffner, 1978) were symptomatic of a wave of pulp fiction

<sup>1</sup> Jack Zipes, 'The Vicissitudes of Being Jewish in West Germany', in Rabinbach/Zipes, *Germans and Jews Since the Holocaust*, pp. 27-49; p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Detlev Claussen 'In The House Of The Hangman', p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> *Der Spiegel* (6 November 1972.)

<sup>4</sup> Michael Wolffsohn, *Eternal Guilt? Forty Years of German Jewish Israeli Relations*, trans. by Douglas Bokovy, New York: Columbia University Press 1993, p. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *Imagining Hitler*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

and action thriller movies. Bruce McCall in *Esquire Magazine* satirized the trend with an article entitled 'The Hitler Formula: Out Of The Ashes of World War Two and Onto The Best Seller List In Fourteen Easy Steps'.<sup>1</sup> An 'extract' from a spoof Hitler novel, Ian Frazier's *The Stuttgart Folders*, appeared around the same time in *The New Yorker* with the same satirical aim. The opening of *The Stuttgart Folders* involves a fictional conversation between Hitler and Himmler. They dismiss the traditionally accepted motive of world domination behind their *Blitzkrieg* and reveal their true ambition: 'The Third Reich, in the person of its Führer, Adolf Hitler, shall become the greatest plot device the world has ever known.'<sup>2</sup> Narratives involving Nazis who were not only still alive and well (as in the case of Lawrence Olivier's 'dentist' in *Marathon Man*) but bent on world domination (Gregory Peck as Doctor Mengele in *The Boys from Brazil*) were plentiful. Historical figures were set in a contemporary environment which neatly coincided with the rise of neo-Nazi organizations and the RAF. To the historically uneducated, this picture appeared plausible, especially after evidence emerged indicating that various terrorist organizations trained together and shared common aims: the RAF, Black September and the IRA (Irish Republican Army), for example. In the press, these organizations were linked with neo-Nazi groups. The possibility of an international terrorist cabal played on peoples' fears and fantasies. Such fancies had little to do with reality, historical or contemporary. Josef Mengele, for instance, became an almost folkloric figure in the 1970s with stories circulating that he was continuing his medical experiments in the South American rainforests. He was periodically 'sighted' by eyewitnesses. As Alvin H. Rosenfeld noted, Hitler and the Nazis became 'a kind of silly-putty' with the result that the original source material lost all shape and historical 'reality' in the imagination of the public.<sup>3</sup>

The most disturbing aspect of the Hitler Wave was that the crimes of the Nazis were stressed in a ghoulish manner for salacious thrills but the historical victims were minimized or removed. Erotic fantasies and gorish medical experiments went hand in hand with a cult-like equation of Hitler with the Holocaust. The circle of guilt was tightly drawn around the Führer and a handful of madmen.<sup>4</sup>

In Germany, the Hitler Wave found expression in a series of new books on the leader of the Third Reich. Joachim Fest's 1973 *Hitler, Eine Biographie* (published in English as *Hitler*) devotes two pages to the Final Solution which, the author argues, the German people knew nothing of until 'liberation'.<sup>5</sup> The book was turned into a film,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.

<sup>4</sup> Zipes, 'The Vicissitudes of Being Jewish in West Germany', p. 36. It became fashionable for German teenagers to wear Nazi memorabilia. The Berlin flea-markets especially sold Nazi armbands, Iron Crosses, and yellow Stars of Davids at inflated prices. There was a boom in the demand for Nazi relics. Prices for original editions of *Mein Kampf* rocketed.

<sup>5</sup> Fest, *Hitler*, p. 272.

*Hitler: A Career*, in 1977. As Saul Friedlander, a Holocaust survivor and literary critic, noted at the time:

A few moths ago I saw Joachim Fest's film, *Hitler, A Career*, in a movie theatre in Munich. The dazzling rise, the titanic energy, the Luciferan fall: it was all there. As for the extermination of the Jews a few words in passing, not more.<sup>1</sup>

Fest, a noted historian and the editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, scored a massive success both with his book, which became an immediate bestseller, and the film. Helmut Diwald's 1978 *Geschichte der Deutschen*<sup>2</sup> (*History of the Germans*, 1979) also focused on Hitler and his immediate entourage, making little reference to the Holocaust. Diwald, a medievalist, wrote that there had been no extermination camps in Germany, and did not point out that they had been established by Germans in other areas of Europe.

The honing of attention around Hitler and the continuing demonization of the Nazis resulted in the ordinary masses being presented as the victims of an apocalyptic tyrant. In literature, films and theatre there followed a return to immediate postwar artistic themes and images: mad generals and innocent soldiers; German resistance fighters; a devil-possessed *Heimat* and a nullification of the Jewish image. Joachim Fest focused solely on the charismatic Führer by whom a nation was enthralled and manipulated. Ordinary Wehrmacht and SS soldiers were portrayed as innocent victims as in Gerlind Reinshagen's 1975 play *Sonntagskinder* (*Sunday's Children*).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, German victimhood found expression in Günter Lothar's 1973 novel set on a German U-boat, *Das Boot*, which was made into a television epic in 1982.<sup>4</sup> This re-entrenchment was accompanied by similar retrogression in structure, specifically a return to a child-narrator's point of view in order to avoid complex analysis and to emphasize German victimhood. *Sunday's Children* is related from the perspective of a group of German adolescents. Similarly, Siegfried Lenz's novel *Die Deutschstunde* (*The German Lesson*) is narrated through the eyes of a teenager, Siggie Jepson, who tries to come to terms with his father's obsessive and dogmatic need to do his duty as the village policeman during and after the war.<sup>5</sup> The 1970s saw the rise of *Väterliteratur*: books and films that dealt with the younger generation's coming to terms with their parents' actions during the war. The narratives were usually set within small-town communities and centred on a single family. *The German Lesson*, *Heimat*, and *Sunday's Children* fall into this category. As in the latter example, female writers occasionally chose to focus on mothers rather than father-figures, for instance, Karin Struck's *Die Mutter* (*The Mother*, 1975) and Helka Sanders-Brahms's *Deutschland, bleiche*

<sup>1</sup> Rosenfeld, *Imagining Hitler*, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> Helmut Diwald, *Geschichte der Deutschen*, Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp, 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Gerlind Reinshagen, *Sunday's Children*, trans. Anthony Vivis and Tinch Minter, London: Rosica Colin Ltd, 1988. All quotes are from the folio edition available through the Goethe Institute.

<sup>4</sup> Wolfgang Petersen filmed *Das Boot* in 1982.

<sup>5</sup> Siegfried Lenz, *The German Lesson*, trans. Ernst Kaiser & Eithene Wilkins, New York: Hill and Wang, 1972.

*Mutter* (Germany, *Pale Mother*, 1979). *Väterliteratur* concentrates on German victimhood and eschews the Jewish narrative. In *Germany, Pale Mother*, the mother-figure, Lene, ravaged by the war and postwar poverty, gasses herself at the end of the film.

However, from the mid 1970s onwards a new generation of West German film makers and writers challenged both this re-entrenchment and the historical narratives which had emerged over the previous thirty years. The 1970s was the age of new German cinema with young, alternative directors such as Wim Wenders, Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff and, particularly, Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Hans Jürgen Syberberg. The weapons they used were iconoclasm, shock tactics and an overt use of 'theatricality'. By presenting the accepted images in an obviously theatrical manner, these directors drew attention to the fact that all representations and narratives were subjective constructs.

Yet, during this period the major artistic and commercial successes were not written or directed by West Germans. The 1970s in the Federal Republic proved a cultural wasteland for new writing. The German critic, Rolf Michaelis, wrote that Piscator's death in 1966 and Peter Weiss's *Viet Nam Diskurs* (*Vietnam Discourse*, 1968), marked the end of political theatre.<sup>1</sup> A desire emerged for light entertainment or philosophical pieces that were of an abstract and cerebrally untaxing nature.<sup>2</sup> New writers came from abroad. The Hungarian Jewish director George Tabori with his *Die Kannibalen* (*The Cannibals*) was the first writer to set a play entirely in a concentration camp on the German stage.<sup>3</sup> Thomas Bernhard, an Austrian playwright, also found success with his black comedies. Ostensibly about continuing Austrian anti-Semitism and a reluctance to investigate Austrian wartime involvement, Bernhard's plays had their greatest success in West Germany. Both these playwrights drew attention to the theatricality of their pieces encouraging a critical attitude in their audience. They wanted to present old subjects from fresh angles, to shock their audiences emotionally and to provoke questions, or even, in Bernhard's case, scandals. Their weapons, like those of Walser and Sperr, were comedy and black humour.

However the most important 'artistic' event in West Germany in the 1970s did not utilize 'theatrical' techniques or self-consciously identify itself as an artistic construct. Gerald Green's American mini series *Holocaust*, screened in January 1979, achieved what all the plays, books, documentaries and films had failed to do: a truly emotional and

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<sup>1</sup> Rolf Michaelis, 'From The Barricades Into The Ivory Tower. Setting Out, Ticking Over, Standing Still: The Confused Years. Theatre In The Federal Republic of Germany Between 1967 and 1982', in *Zentrum Bundesrepublik Deutschland Theater 1967-1982*, Manfred Winke, ed., Berlin: Publication Series of Germany, Centre of the International Theatre Institute, Vol. 2, 1983, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Creative directors superseded the playwrights. Peter Zadek's *Measure For Measure* in 1968 set the new trend: subjective remodelling of the classics. Zadek was followed by Peter Palitzsch, Claus Peymann, Peter Stein and, in the latter part of the decade, Pina Bausch.

<sup>3</sup> George Tabori, *The Cannibals*, in *The Theatre of the Holocaust*, Robert Skloot, ed., Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1982, pp. 199-265.

national outpouring and a sincere attempt to re-investigate ordinary Germans' involvement in the events of 1933-45.

West German attempts to portray and investigate the Holocaust can, therefore, be divided into three categories: re-entrenchment; iconoclasm; voices from across the border.

#### 4.1.a. Re-entrenchment

##### i. West Germany

'It's almost like an ancient Greek tragedy', comments Rodewald, one of the characters in Gerlind Reinshagen's *Sunday's Children* about the decimation of men in his family.<sup>1</sup> The tone is set: the tragic victims of the war are the ordinary Germans. Set in an average German town, Reinshagen's play centres on a collection of middle-class and apolitical families who react to the events of the war in various ways or, rather, are the passive recipients of various blows which the war deals to them. Some, such as Herr Oswin, a 'little man', profit from the war. He rises from the position of a lowly book-keeper to deputy of the regional Nazi headquarters. Others become victims through their misguided patriotism, for instance, Ludwig Woellmer who signs up only to be killed in France. The narrative focuses on German suffering and death in an expressionist manner reminiscent of Wolfgang Borchert. For instance, a horribly scarred infantryman known simply as 'Death's head' terrorizes a young girl; war is presented as a universal and inevitable phenomenon in which ordinary people, especially children, are sacrificed. The Sunday's children of the title are the youth of the town, the young soldiers and the brainwashed schoolchildren. Nolle, for instance, is a young man regarded by most of the girls as the 'catch of the town'. He becomes obsessed with Hitler's dream of the Third Reich and duly goes off to the front. He returns paralysed, addicted to painkillers, and delirious, but still pursues his duty to the Fatherland. Gradually his condition deteriorates until at the end of the play he, symbolically, goes blind. But the main focus falls on Elsie Woellmer, Ludwig's daughter. She is presented as a German Anne Frank and through her eyes we see the destruction and the whitewashing. Crippled by indoctrination and limited by her age, she can offer the spectator no political analysis. At the end of the play, the pressure to conform and the cumulative grief manifest themselves in her sudden attack of madness. Elsie is the real victim of the war - a girl who was once 'so full of expectation, so beautiful from within'.<sup>2</sup>

The responsibility for war and atrocity lies with those in power. As Nolle's mother, Frau Bellius, argues:

They left the wounded where they lay. Why? Because the strategy was imbecilic, the relief forces were wrongly deployed, because those ignoramuses... oh no, we must say nothing.<sup>3</sup>

Fear stops her from openly criticizing the government she elected. The possibility of resistance to the regime is slim. This is seen in the exchanges of two young men - Konradi

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<sup>1</sup> Reinshagen, *Sunday's Children*, p. 63. The play was first produced in the 1975-6 season at the Stuttgarter Staats Theater.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67-8.

and Metzenthin. Konradi, a local schoolteacher and a patriot, enlists for the right moral reasons in the parachute regiment. He returns from the eastern front with tales of atrocities and he endeavours to awaken his fellow citizens, in particular his former pupils, to the reality of war. On the other hand, Metzenthin is a mildly pacifist youth whose father, injured in the last war, went mad and eventually died from his wounds. While Konradi fights at the front, Metzenthin stays in the town and pursues a relationship with Elsie, mocking Nazi fanatics. Metzenthin's sanguine comments serve to undercut Nolle's patriotism but his own inaction and apathy do little to distance himself from the butt of his jokes. Metzenthin is a survivor not an activist. When he is confronted by Konradi's not too coherent revelations about 'labour camps', he convinces himself that his former friend is either lying or suffering from shell-shock. If he accepted the truth, Metzenthin would have to do something. Turning his anger against the former schoolteacher, Metzenthin denounces Konradi to Herr Oswin on the pretext of protecting the schoolchildren against the teacher's lies. Eventually Metzenthin understands the truth of the situation when he is confronted with Nolle's pedantic duty to the Fatherland. Nolle sits in his wheelchair on the outskirts of the town on night-watch even though he is paralysed and half blind. Armed with a gun, he fulfils his duty to the Führer:

We live as long as we are useful to the nation. That's a law of nature... One does one's duty.<sup>1</sup>

Horrified at seeing the logical extension of himself in Nolle, Metzenthin replies, more to himself than to the paraplegic:

But the problem is... facing the consequences of your mistakes; admitting: 'Yes, I was mistaken.' Facing the consequences of continuing to... trail around in a futile way just because you've invested *so much* in it.<sup>2</sup>

After this epiphany, Metzenthin runs out into the blitz as the Allies advance. His obsession with the poet Heinrich von Kleist suggests that his death was suicide.

Metzenthin's useless death highlights a basic paradox in the script. Metzenthin chooses death rather than active resistance. Furthermore, whilst spectators are asked to examine the decisions they took during the war (whether they made it easier for the regime to succeed) resistance is shown to be futile. Konradi and his girlfriend Inka are shot for underground activities, although they die before they accomplish anything and their deaths do not affect the attitudes of those around them. Inka's mother, Frau Bellius, for instance, disowns her dead daughter as a traitor.

Elsie sees the real state of affairs. Only children and fools, such as her institutionalized Uncle Brummi, can see the truth:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

'I'd rather be crazy' Uncle Brummi used to say, 'than grown up'. He was an eternal child in every way.<sup>1</sup>

While Elsie's mother and Frau Bellius drink tea with General Bellius, Elsie goes mad and attacks the General with a pair of scissors. For her, the General represents the decision makers responsible for her losses. *Sunday's Children* is about mourning, grief and loss. As such, it is similar to the works of Wolfgang Borchert and the young Heinrich Böll which dwelled on German victimhood. Reinshagen's ordinary Germans are casualties twice over: of the Allies and of their own totalitarian regime. In addition, they have little political awareness, and the motives behind their acceptance of the regime are never really explored.

The Holocaust and the Jewish question are not touched on. Only one camp inmate is encountered by Elsie and her friends: a Polish POW. His presence serves to highlight the children's Nazi indoctrination. They nickname him 'Fido' and throw him a piece of bread. He never utters a word and disappears as quickly as he appeared, never to be referred to again.

## ii. East Germany

The re-entrenchment taking place in West German narrative structures can perhaps be best gauged by developments in East German publishing. Two novels appeared in this period which sought to address German responsibility and Jewish victimhood during the war. Developments in literature overtook those of the stage as theatre audiences declined throughout the 1970s. The main problem was the paucity of new scripts stemming from the fact that Henschel, the state publishing company, held the monopoly. It alone was responsible for circulating new scripts to theatre managements and so many plays never reached the theatres because they never got through Henschel. Consequently, as Anthony Meech wrote, most theatres would simultaneously stage the same new play.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the existence of ensemble companies, where each member was guaranteed a job for life, led to theatrical stagnation.

It has long been taken for granted that official Communist narratives of the war years did not include the Jewish tragedy. 'While West Germans have dealt almost obsessively with the need to explain, rebuke, apologise for the past,' wrote Julian Hilton, 'the East Germans have written unencumbered by the past.'<sup>3</sup> But in 1969 Jurek Becker, a German-Jewish author, published his novel *Jakob der Lügner* (*Jacob The Liar*) which

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Meech, 'A New definition of *Eingreifendes Theater*. Some Recent Productions in the Theatre of the GDR', in W.G. Sebald, *A Radical Stage. Theatre in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s*, Oxford/New York/Hamburg: Berg, 1988, pp. 119-23, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> Julian Hilton, 'Back to the Future - Volker Braun and the German Theatrical Tradition', in Sebald, *A Radical Stage*, pp. 124-44; p. 126.

became an immediate bestseller.<sup>1</sup> Set in the Lodz ghetto, Becker does not portray the Jews as victims or Communist heroes but as ordinary people trying to survive under monstrous conditions. In 1974 *Jacob the Liar* was made into a film and received a Hollywood Academy Award nomination for best foreign film.

Another writer who appeared as something of an anomaly was Christa Wolf. At about the same time as Reinshagen's *Sunday's Children*, Wolf wrote her semi-autobiographical novel *Kindheitsmuster (A Model Childhood)*. Wolf's novel displays many affinities with Reinshagen's play. Both stories centre on a little girl's point of view. Both explore the indoctrination process within the Nazi state and especially within the Nazi schoolroom. Both draw a picture of recurring and universal war. Wolf, however, is more politically motivated than her West German counterpart and, as a result, her work is more provocative.

The appearance of Wolf's novel was facilitated by the premiership of Erich Honecker who replaced Walter Ulbricht in 1971. For five brief years there was considerable relaxation in the arts and an abandonment of social realism as the official ideology. Honecker stated that the Party was willing to develop a 'full understanding of the creative search for new forms'.<sup>2</sup> Nothing was said of political ideology.<sup>3</sup> Born in 1929, Christa Wolf began her literary career as an early adherent to Stalinist orthodoxy, politically, and socialist realism, artistically. Honecker's more liberal policies enabled her to travel both to the Soviet Union and the United States where she taught as writer in residence at Oberlin College in 1974.

*A Model Childhood* is a multi-narrative novel: Nelly's tale of the war years as a child; the story of the adult Nelly taking her daughter, Lenka, on a visit to her birthplace in another part of Germany on 10 June 1971; and contemporary political reflections of the author. Of particular interest is the paralleling of Nelly and Lenka's childhoods. Their education and character formation are defined by political structures, the use of 'official' language affecting both individual and group morality. Linked to language, is the question of memory, learning and education. Adult Nelly's memories of the war years remain complicated by her linguistic education:

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<sup>1</sup> Jurek Becker, *Jacob The Liar*, trans. Melvin Kornfield, New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1975.

<sup>2</sup> Demetz, *After the Fires: Recent Writing in the Germanies, Austria and Switzerland*, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 142-8: In 1976 the fragile combination of political control and a small measure of literary spontaneity was destroyed almost overnight, when the authorities resolved to deprive the poet and ballad-singer Wolf Biermann of his GDR citizenship and thus exile him to the West. His father had been arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Auschwitz. Biermann had worked briefly at the Berliner Ensemble as an assistant after Brecht's death. He tried to establish the Berlin Workers' and Students' Theatre but was prevented by the authorities. In the early 1960s he began performing his own songs and poems but by 1963 the nature of his works had led to him being banned from performing in public, publishing and even travelling. In November 1976 his citizenship was withdrawn and he was exiled to the West. Thus in 1976 this brief respite was shattered. A steady stream of artists and intellectuals began to flee to the West. Between 1976 and 1981 it is estimated that over 300 artists crossed the border. The result was that the artistic milieu of both East and West Germany changed irreversibly.

Avoid certain memories. Don't speak about them. Suppress words, sentences, whole chains of thought, that might give rise to remembering. Don't ask your contemporaries certain questions. Because it is unbearable to think of the tiny word 'I' in connection with the word 'Auschwitz'. 'I' is in the past condition. I would have. I might have. I could have.<sup>1</sup>

Memory is the key theme: it is determined by official narratives and official vocabulary: Fascism, Communism, heroism, resistance, sacrifice. Nelly the child living under National Socialism, and the child Lenka living under Communism know very little about Adolf Hitler because of the vocabulary available to them. For most East Germans this historical gap is welcomed and encouraged. As the adult Nelly explains at the opening:

What is past is not dead... it is not even past. We cut ourselves off from it; we pretend to be strangers.<sup>2</sup>

Wolf challenges what she regards to be political myth. She is particularly interested in the narrative, perpetuated since the Russians entered Berlin, that the average German was 'liberated' from the Nazis and that the true Germany, embodied in the Communist Resistance, finds its direct descendants in the contemporary German Communist Party. The adult Nelly eventually sees this narrative as a tendentious and politically motivated version of events. Wolf asks her readers to accept that they, like her and her parents' generation, provided the foundation and support for Hitler. She asks the readers to examine how their own unthinking political orthodoxy and apathy upheld a tyrannical regime. The foreign critics interpreted the book as a double indictment of National Socialism and Communism. In the book Wolf warns that those who do not remember the past are doomed to repeat it - the inference being that the German people failed to resist Nazism as they do now Communism.

Wolf's children attempt to analyse the political situation, particularly their part in the state of affairs. They grasp the imperative of political responsibility. Reinshagen's characters, on the other hand, remain politically unaware and impotent. Whereas the children of Reinshagen's play commit suicide, go mad or are crippled, Nelly the child and especially Nelly the mother try to decipher their own identities. More importantly, Nelly sets out to educate her daughter, Lenka, to be an analytic and active individual.

It is the third strand of the narrative that reflects Wolf's own Communist beliefs. Her collection of political reflections (1972-5) can be interpreted as a political diatribe against American foreign policy and, particularly, covert CIA actions in South America and Indochina. Events in Chile and Vietnam form the bulk of the narrator's reflections. Russian treatment of Jews, dissidents, or Polish Solidarity members, for example, are not mentioned. Whether this is because of self-censorship (Wolf's book would have been

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<sup>1</sup> Wolf, *A Model Childhood*, pp. 229-30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

otherwise unpublishable in East Germany) or ardent political belief, these impressions are included to draw attention to historical analogy:

Monday, July 1, 1974. General Pinochet had appointed himself supreme leader of the nation. The names of the four recently murdered Chileans were in yesterday's newspapers... Forty years ago, people in other countries and continents would fold newspapers and put them down next to their breakfast cups when they read German names in them. You have to think of this action while you're folding yesterday's newspaper and sticking it in the newspaper rack. It was yesterday that the 69 year old mother of Martin Luther King Junior was murdered in a Church.<sup>1</sup>

Such a universalist approach may dilute historical reality but Wolf's intention was to provoke political vigilance in much the same manner as Günter Eich had done in the 1950s. She demands that the reader's attention be focused on the self: what could I have done? What should I do now?

#### 4. 1.b. West German Iconoclasts

##### *Hitler: A Film From Germany*

One year after the release of Joachim Fest's *Hitler: A Career*, a seven-hour epic played in the art houses of West Germany. Hans Jurgen Syberberg's *Hitler: Ein Film aus Deutschland (Hitler: A Film From Germany)* appeared as a counter-argument to Fest's picture of a devil-possessed *Heimat*. Although it only played in theatres, museums and smaller cinemas,<sup>2</sup> it was screened on West German television in 1979 (as the result of the success of Gerald Green's mini-series *Holocaust*) and taken up for international distribution by Frances Ford Coppola.

*Hitler: A Film From Germany* is a theatre 'spectacle' presented in a film studio. A circus ringmaster opens Syberberg's Mélièsque movie by telling the audience that they are about to witness the greatest story ever told and he flings a challenge at them: 'Taboos! This show's about taboos!'<sup>3</sup> Syberberg, like Wolf, sets out to question historical narratives. He is particularly interested in versions of history perpetuated on a visual level through imagery. Syberberg presents a spectrum of 'representations' of Hitler, from Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* to Peter Lorre's murderer in Fritz Lang's *M*. The film attacks the way in which the Holocaust has become mass entertainment through the Hitler Wave. Like Ian Frazier in the spoof *Stuttgart Folders*, Syberberg's ringmaster satirizes Hitler as the greatest literary protagonist who has provided:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 276-7.

<sup>2</sup> Kaes, *From Heimat to Hitler*, p.41. Critics condemned the film as anti-Semitic. As a result, Syberberg only released one copy of the film in West Germany.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Endless material for monologues, monoplays and tragedies on celluloid. Dances of death, dialogues of the dead, conversations in the kingdom of the dead, one hundred years afterwards, a thousand years, millions. Passion, oratories. Who knows?<sup>1</sup>

Syberberg criticizes the *Betriebsunfall* theory of Hitler as an 'accident in the works'. Unlike Fest, Syberberg thrusts the responsibility for Hitler and National Socialism directly on his own people. 'This film is about the people who elected him... It's about Hitler inside us... Brother Hitler!' barks the ringmaster, echoing Thomas Mann's sentiment thirty years before. Hitler was no 'accident in the works'. He was the logical culmination of German political and cultural identity, especially German romanticism and irrationalism. The central image for the publicity to the film was Hitler rising from Wagner's grave.

To underscore his point, Syberberg concentrates the bulk of the film on the 'little people'. Wartime recollections from Himmler's masseur, Hitler's valet and film projectionist reveal how they submitted to and participated in the regime - how Hitler gave a chance for 'everybody to be somebody'. Syberberg, portrays the inner sanctum of the Reichskabinet in the most theatrical of ways: as puppets, the inference being that, like the puppeteers on screen, ordinary people pulled the strings of Goebbels, Hitler, Eichmann and the others.<sup>2</sup> By focusing on the nature of imagery itself, spectators are expected to question and re-evaluate the images they have grown up with. The audience is constantly reminded that they are watching a theatrical construct and, therefore, that their own perceived reality is itself a construct.

Syberberg's employment of 'theatricality' arises from his passion for Georges Méliès and Bertolt Brecht. In 1952 Brecht allowed the eighteen-year old Syberberg to film some of his rehearsals.<sup>3</sup> By 'theatricalizing' *Hitler: A Film From Germany* with puppets, backdrops, sweeps of curtain and heavy makeup, Syberberg forces a critical distance between the audience and the imagery with which it is familiar. The film and, subsequently, the spectator question the way in which World War Two and the Holocaust have been recorded and interpreted and how interpretations of history affect the present.

The narrator announces that no atrocities will be shown since such images are 'pornographic':

To stimulate atrocity convincingly is to risk making the audience passive, reinforcing witless stereotypes, confirming distance and creating fascination... The display of atrocity in the form of photographic evidence risks being tacitly pornographic. Rather than devise a spectacle in the past tense, either by attempting to simulate 'unrepeatable reality' (Syberberg's phrase) or by showing it in

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Jürgen Syberberg, *Hitler: ein Film aus Deutschland*, trans. Joachim Nuegroschel, Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1982, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Corrigan, 'New German Film. The Displaced Image', in *New German Filmmakers from Oberhausen through the 1970s*, Klaus Phillips, ed., New York: Friedrich Ungar Publishing Co., 1984, p.150, quoting Syberberg from Syberberg, *Filmsbuch*, Munich: Nymphenburger, 1976, p. 61: 'The marionettes elucidate the fact that it is we who have given life and movement to Hitler.'

<sup>3</sup> Kaes, *From Heimat to Hitler*, pp. 42-3. Syberberg was born in the eastern sector but in 1953 fled to West Germany.

a photographic document, he proposes a spectacle in the present tense, 'adventures in the head.' Reality can only be grasped indirectly - seen reflected in a mirror, staged in the theatre of the mind.<sup>1</sup>

Syberberg presents the spectator with the repercussions of German actions in a less blatant and brutal manner than photographic evidence: sound recordings of liberation footage and witnesses' statements. These sound bites, as with radio drama, make these sections of the film particularly intimate, compelling and moving. As Renate Usmiani noted about the power of German postwar radio drama, sound is a confessional not a confrontational medium.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, by creating history in the present tense through fragments of memory and universal images, Syberberg has given visual form to *Jetztzeit* and collective memory. Syberberg is interested in how the present has been crippled by the way in which the past has been emplotted and insufficiently mourned. German schoolchildren, he argues, learned about the Holocaust through statistics only:

The film is a work of *Trauerarbeit*, which the ancients called tragedy... We must accept the sinister things of which we are made. Accept them in the therapeutic process of art, as a method of overcoming and acknowledging the guilt and ourselves... The issue is to mourn through art.<sup>3</sup>

Finally Syberberg attacks the German Left's stance on the Israeli-Arab situation. It was a misdirected philo-Semitism, he argues, that imploded on itself to create the wave of pro-Palestinian support. It also created a 'special' relationship between the two countries which was based on guilt and manipulation rather than a real integration of the past. There must come a time when each side has to let go of the other. As the narrator states, 'The brave Israeli nation, finally cleansed by the fire of our hell, can now do its own deeds.'<sup>4</sup> The final credits end with the caption, 'A projection into the black hole of the future.' This, argues Anton Kaes, makes the film a judgment on the history of human civilization.<sup>5</sup> Man is now living in a time when all human development has stopped because there is nothing more to be learned and no new ideology to be invented. Civilization is rotting from within because there is no forward momentum. In this respect, Syberberg, allies himself with Jean-François Lyotard who regards the Holocaust as the breaking point in the history of human progression.<sup>6</sup> Syberberg, in his film, is pointing to the demise of western civilization and the collapse of human evolution since the Holocaust:

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Sontag, introduction to *Hitler. A Film From Germany*, p. x.

<sup>2</sup> Renate Usmiani, 'The Invisible Theatre: The Rise of Radio Drama in Germany after 1945', in *Modern Drama*, Vol. 13 (1970-71), pp. 259-69; p. 259.

<sup>3</sup> Syberberg, *Hitler. A Film from Germany*, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>5</sup> Anton Kaes, 'Holocaust and the End of History: Postmodern Historiography in Cinema', in Saul Friedlander, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation*, London/Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982, pp. 206-22; p. 220.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *Political Writings*, trans. Bill Readings and Kevin Paul Geiman, London: University of California Press, 1993, pp. 8-10.

All crimes against humanity, including the extermination of the Indians, which incidentally this film also mentions, and the annihilation of the Jews, are mere symptoms of the fatal disease of the moribund west.<sup>1</sup>

Syberberg's film, therefore, is not just an indictment of German historical amnesia. *Hitler: A Film from Germany* focuses on universal questions as well as the the specific issue of Hitler and the Holocaust. Germany's handling of the Jews becomes part of the accumulation of human wreckage. Syberberg's own daughter, dressed in black, occasionally walks across the 'stage' representing Walter Benjamin's 'Angel of History'. Benjamin proposed how an angel, blown from Paradise by a storm, could only impotently view the detritus of mankind's violence as it was propelled blindly into the future.<sup>2</sup> Similarly Syberberg's daughter surveys the debris as it piles up. But at no time does Syberberg allow this message to detract from the central narrative of the Holocaust and the issue of German culpability. He succeeds in addressing the Holocaust as a unique event whilst setting it in the context of human history.

#### *Rainer Werner Fassbinder*

Fassbinder's concern was the lost opportunity that presented itself at the end of the war to create a truly egalitarian society: 'Our fathers had the chance to found a state that would have been the most humane and freest ever.'<sup>3</sup> Instead, the Federal Republic pursued a policy of denial, throwing all its efforts into financial gain :

We didn't learn much about German history in Germany... Our democracy was decreed from the Western occupation zone; we didn't fight it for ourselves. Old ways of thinking have had the opportunity to seep through the cracks, without a swastika of course, but with old methods of education. The problem is the corrupting influence of money.<sup>4</sup>

Fassbinder's 1978 film, *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (*The Marriage of Maria Braun*) is an attack on the soulless monetary aspirations of the new Federal Republic (1945-55). This is personified by Maria who makes a loveless marriage for financial gain. Her family, like many other German families at that time, withdraw from political involvement. Fassbinder illustrates this by using one of Adenauer's recorded statements in which he rejected West German re-armament. Fassbinder slots this speech into a scene where Maria's family sit around the dinner-table, commenting on the potato salad rather than on contemporary events as Adenauer's words blare out from the radio. Instead of drawing lessons from their wartime experiences, Fassbinder argues that the German people withdrew into apolitical apathy and materialism.

<sup>1</sup> Kaes, 'Holocaust and the End of History', p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, London: Fontana, 1973, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (12 June 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Rainer Werner Fassbinder in *Film Korrespondenz*, translated in Kaes, *From Heimat to Hitler*, p. 81.

Fassbinder seeks to reveal a continuity between Nazi Germany and the Federal Republic. At the end of the film black and white negatives of all the West German Chancellors appear one after the other. These images from the Federal Republic echo the initial image of the film: a portrait of Hitler falling from the wall of Maria's house during a mortar attack. Significantly, the only Chancellor absent from this 'roll of honour' is Willi Brandt.

More crucial and tendentious is Fassbinder's 1975 play *Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod* (*The Garbage, The City and Death*) which the author tried to film in 1976 under the title *Schatten der Engel* (*Shadow Of The Angels*).<sup>1</sup> The play is based partly on Gerhard Zwerenz's 1973 novel, *Die Erde ist unbewohnbar wie der Mond* (*The Earth is Uninhabitable Like The Moon*) and property scandals that occurred in Frankfurt-am-Main where the story is set. The plot centres on a prostitute, Lily, whose father is a Nazi turned drag artist married to a cripple. Lily is picked up by an immensely wealthy Jewish property speculator, known simply as 'The Rich Jew'. He wants Lily to be his companion, but she wants only to die. He therefore strangles her and dumps her body on some waste ground outside the city. The police arrest Lily's pimp. Although innocent, he is thrown from a top floor window by the corrupt Frankfurt police who do not want to appear anti-Semitic by arresting a Jew.

Fassbinder had specifically chosen Frankfurt, the banking capital of Germany, as the setting for his play as it embodied the German capitalist principle at its worst. The play is about the venal influences of money, and police corruption. However, the critics faced with a money-hungry and murderous Jew saw the play as anti-Semitic. Fassbinder's intention was to show how capitalism is about the survival of the fittest - a strategy which naturally involves corruption and crime. Fassbinder was actually attacking anti-Semitism by highlighting German philo-Semitism. The fact that people turn a blind eye to the Rich Jew's criminal dealings, he argued, said more about their own bad conscience than the Jew's activities.

Public protest caused rehearsals of the play to be abandoned in Frankfurt in 1975 and when another theatre company attempted to stage it in the early 80s, members of Frankfurt's Jewish community occupied the stage.<sup>2</sup> Even Fassbinder's close Jewish friends thought the play anti-Semitic.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, Fassbinder believed that only by shattering the philo-Semitic portrayal of the Jew, could the subject of anti-Semitism be really forced into the open and a liberation from the old taboos ensue. Only when the Jew as villain takes centre-stage, will Germany have faced up to its past and dealt with it meaningfully. The

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<sup>1</sup> The film was eventually filmed by the Swiss director Daniel Schmidt.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Skloot, *The Darkness We Carry. The Drama of the Holocaust*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, pp. 105-6.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Zadek felt the play was anti-Semitic, yet believed that it should be staged. See Denis Calandra, 'Politicized Theatre: The Case of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Garbage, The City and Death*', in *Modern Drama* (31 September 1988), pp. 420-8, p. 424.

real problem was that Germans felt the eyes of the world and the burden of the past still upon them. Maintaining a respectable international profile was very important, especially in the current political climate with the RAF creating such a 'bad press'.

Syberberg and Fassbinder highlighted how national identities and narratives were housed in, and perpetuated in popular consciousness, by images. The use of theatricality - in other words 'theatricalizing' these images - was not new. An iconoclastic approach can be first detected in the work of George Tabori and Thomas Bernhard.

#### 4.1.c. *Voices From Across The Border*

##### *George Tabori*

George Tabori was born in Budapest in 1914. His father, Cornelius, died in Auschwitz but his mother, Elsa, escaped deportation. Tabori, who had learned Brooklyn Yiddish and Texas English from an American cousin when he was fifteen, had moved to London in 1936. Over the following ten years he worked as a correspondent for the BBC in Bulgaria, Turkey, Jerusalem, Cairo and London. In 1947 he went to Hollywood where he worked as a script-writer for MGM and Warner Brothers, winning a British Academy Award for best script with Hitchcock's 1952 film *I Confess*. It was in Hollywood that he met Bertolt Brecht, the two becoming great friends. Tabori translated many of Brecht's plays and poems into English. The Hungarian admitted that Brecht was his greatest influence, as was another writer who had lived a life of exile: Samuel Beckett.

In 1967 Tabori wrote *Die Kannibalen (The Cannibals)*. Subtitled, 'Being the extraordinary tale of a dinner party as told by the sons of those who attended the feast and the two survivors by whose courtesy the facts are known', the play is set in Auschwitz and tells the story of how a group of starving inmates argue over whether they should eat the corpse of their dead comrade, Puffi Pinkus. Tabori and his colleague, Martin Fried, directed the world première of *The Cannibals* in New York in 1968 where it was received unfavourably. In 1969 they staged the play at the Schiller Theater in West Berlin. The response was quite different. Tabori was lauded as a playwright of genius and his work received many accolades.

The influence of Brecht's dialectical theatre and the existentialist philosophy of the absurd and Beckett locate *The Cannibals* at the apex of an approach initiated by Martin Walser and Martin Sperr. In particular, *The Cannibals* shares many affinities with Walser's *Der Swarze Swan*. For example, Walser's protagonist, Rudi, pretending to be mad, seeks to uncover the truth by staging a play with the inmates of an asylum. As such, *Der Swarze Swan*, like *The Cannibals*, has another point of influence: Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. Both plays, for example, are structured on the same dramaturgical foundations as Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade*: madness, sadism and crazed inmates acting out scenes and songs. A film version of the 1969 production of *The Cannibals* brings this vividly home. The physical condition of the prisoners is continually stressed by their drooling, howling and masturbating. In this way, Tabori manages to convey something of the insanity of Auschwitz, where life defied logic and death was arbitrary.

Tabori believes that the source of a joke is always found in a catastrophe. He uses shock tactics, grotesque clowning and sickening irony to bring a fresh perspective to the Holocaust and create an emotional response. For him (as with Yehuda Amichai in *Bells and Trains*), memory is only possible when the senses are involved. Therefore the script

concentrates on the inmates' hunger, dysentery, sexual needs, taste, sense of smell. The men are represented, in one character's words, as 'a string of bowels connected by two holes'. This focus on the body is also intended to embarrass the audience. Only discomfort can provoke catharsis, argues Tabori, echoing Walser and Sperr, and he enjoins theatre practitioners to follow the example of the Greeks - to create a ritual through which a society can remember painful events and achieve spiritual purgation.

*The Cannibals* was the first play on the German stage to be set entirely in a concentration camp. The play is set in 'the white room'. The actors enter and choose their costumes from a pile of clothes at the back of the stage and then dress in front of the audience. As in *Hitler: A Film From Germany*, theatricality is stressed. The story is performed by actors playing the sons of survivors and these sons act out their father's actions in the barracks of Auschwitz. At regular intervals the 'sons' break out of their role and address the audience directly about their fathers. The actors play additional characters and objects in the story, including God and the Auschwitz showers. This distancing allows clarification of the moral issues. The central question is what price is morally acceptable to pay for physical survival. The heart of the drama is found in the character of 'Uncle', based on Tabori's father, who argues that cannibalism is morally unacceptable. To behave like animals, states Uncle, is to acquiesce to the Nazis and puts the victims on the same level as the oppressors: 'But if, God forbid, you ever become like them, that is the time to hang yourselves.'<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Uncle's comrade Glatz argues that 'Under the circumstances the only moral thing is to keep breathing.'<sup>2</sup> The author gives no clear indication as to the moral rights and wrongs, only the dilemma. Uncle himself is no paragon of virtue. He eats the bread of the dead Puffi, who was killed in the struggle to obtain the morsel in the first place. By portraying Jews, gypsies and other prisoners in the barracks in such an ambiguous manner, Tabori does not fall into the trap of misdirected political correctness. Jewish himself, Tabori has the licence to be politically contentious whereas many German writers felt that they could not. The most important factor in the portrayal of the inmates is that they are not objectified victims. At the end, within the confines of their world, the prisoners assume responsibility. Having rejected the stewed pieces of Puffi, they are faced with a further twist of fate. SS Schrekinger, having discovered the meal, forces another choice in the prisoners: either eat Puffi or go to the gas chambers. All but two refuse and are gassed. Tabori does not wholly condemn the two who agree to eat the body. One of them was only twelve years old at the time.

The moral dilemma highlights the central theme of the play: after the death of God, the death of all morals. As Uncle says, 'If God is dead, everything is permissible.' A new code of ethical behaviour has to be established after the death of morality based on religious dogma. The play is essentially Jewish-existentialist. Man cannot look to God

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<sup>1</sup> Georg Tabori, *The Cannibals*, in Skloot, *Theatre of the Holocaust*, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

any more. As the character of 'God' says to Uncle, who self-righteously refuses to eat a mouthful of Puffi: 'I give you five to one that you will join the meal/ and what's worse, you will ask for a second helping.'<sup>1</sup> Responsibility must now fall on Man. The question is, how does mankind respond to that responsibility? Tabori is hopeful that mankind is mature enough to shoulder this burden. SS Schreckinger's statement, 'there is a Führer in the arsehole of the best of us', is repudiated by the majority's collective refusal to proceed with the meal.<sup>2</sup>

### *Thomas Bernhard*

Another 'foreign' writer who found great success in Germany was the Austrian Thomas Bernhard. I put foreign in quotation marks because, according to Bernhard, there is little to separate Austria and Germany when it comes to their respective roles in the Third Reich and the Holocaust. Like Tabori, Bernhard uses 'theatricality' to drive home his message and startle the audience. However, in Bernhard's plays, it is the audience itself which is the main subject and participant in his theatrical and political vision.

Born in 1931, Bernhard dropped out of school and worked as a grocery assistant. Dogged by bronchial problems all his life, he eventually studied music and acting at the Vienna Academy and the prestigious Salzburg Mozarteum where he wrote a paper on Artaud and Brecht. As with Tabori, the influence of both, especially Artaud, is manifest in Bernhard's writing. His first play, *Ein Fest für Boris* (*A Feast For Boris*, 1967) is set in an asylum for legless cripples and paraplegics.<sup>3</sup> Possibly because his own imminent end haunted him,<sup>4</sup> the main subject of Bernhard's plays is death and disease:

According to Thomas Bernhard life itself is a disease only curable by death. Cripples and madmen merely exhibit more plainly and therefore perhaps more frankly, what all men suffer from beneath the surface. Thomas Bernhard's recognition of the omnipresence of death has provided the background for all his dramatic works. All persons carry their mortality within them every moment of their lives.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 262. Confrontational in style and black in its use of comedy, *The Cannibals*, was only Tabori's first play dealing with the Holocaust. From the early 1970s he has continued to work in Germany and Austria. His less savage 1973 radio and theatre play *My Mother's Courage*, based on his earlier novel of the same title, tells the true story of how his mother, Else, escaped deportation to Auschwitz. A German/British co-production was filmed in 1987. However, irony, tastelessness and, increasingly, farce become his favourite weapons in the 1980s and 1990s with *Mein Kampf* (1987) and *Weissman und Rotgeschichte* (*Red Man and White Face*) in 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Bernhard, 'A Feast for Boris' in *Histrionics*, trans. Peter Jansen & Kenneth Northcott, London: Quartet Books, 1991, pp. 7-71.

<sup>4</sup> *Atemloss*, the programme for the Frankfurt-am-Main Schauspielhaus production of his last play *Heldenplatz* (winter season 1995/96). An attack of pleurisy in 1948 marked the beginning of a series of pulmonary disorders that caused him to be confined in a sanatorium until 1951. From then until his death in 1989, he suffered from a disease resembling tuberculosis.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Esslin, 'A Drama of Disease and Derision: The Plays of Thomas Bernhard', in *Modern Drama*, Vol. 23 (1980), pp. 367-84; p. 377.

Such a philosophy links Bernhard not only to Artaud but to Tabori's other influence - Beckett. Both are concerned with the cruelty of existence and the ultimate cruelty itself - non-existence.

One structural parallel with Beckett can be seen in the repetition of speech and syntax and the absence of dramatic 'action' in the traditional sense. Bernhard's characters occupy the stage, merely passing time with words and clichés, before the inevitable happens. Bernhard's use of linguistic repetition and inversion can perhaps also be traced back to his musical education: the dialogue is written in free verse and his acts are called 'movements'.

Bernhard wrote two plays in the 1970s which deal with the war and the Holocaust: *Die Jagdgesellschaft* (*The Hunting Party*, 1974) and *Vor dem Ruhestand. Eine Komödie der Deutschen Seele* (*Eve of Retirement: A Comedy of the German Soul*, 1979). They were aimed specifically at the Austrian's collective denial of their National Socialist past. As Christabel Bielenberg noted in her wartime recollections, Austria's incorporation into the Reich, known as 'the rape of Austria' was in fact a popularly backed move within Austria: 'Rape, my hat, the whole place was *en fête*.'<sup>1</sup> The event was marked by cheering crowds and enthusiastic saluting. It was seen as Hitler's homecoming and Austria's return into the fold of the German Reich. The myth of the 'rape of Austria' provided an excellent moral and psychological alibi for the Austrians who placed the onus for the Holocaust on the German nation. Denial is Bernhard's main theme. The reabsorption of former Nazis in Austrian government - national and local - was more endemic than in Germany because there never had been extensive de-nazification after the war. Bernhard always uses the word 'German' when referring to 'Austrian'. There is only one *Heimat*, one 'Fatherland'. Bernhard touches a raw nerve in his Austrian audiences by utilizing symbolism and key words which link Austria to its National Socialist past. Bernhard's audience, Austrian society itself, plays the key role in a huge theatrical frame-up. *The Hunting Party*, for example, relies on a delicate framework of symbolism which suggests that the protagonists share guilty secrets. For example, there is a need for 'silence'; continuous snow covers everything up and 'hunts' in Poland are still very popular. The General, wracked with guilt and now in hiding, loves the princess because of the 'eye disease' which renders her blind. He is also fond of the servant's wife who had a thyroidectomy that went wrong taking away her power of speech. One gets the sense that Bernhard is teasing his audience and making them the butt of his joke:

Bernhard's theatre thus does not merely seem to me to be basically comic in intention, but arguably the chief comic effect produced by it is that of the audience solemnly taking it as a tragedy. The person who is really amused by it, the one who has the best laugh, is the playwright himself... Bernhard's work is full of remarks displaying a burning hatred not only of the masses of humanity in general, but of the theatre audience in particular... the consumers of culture.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Christabel Bielenberg, *The Past is Myself*, London: Corgi Books, 1984, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Esslin, 'A Drama of Disease and Derision: The Plays of Thomas Bernhard', pp. 379-82.

It is the 'consumers of culture' that are the subject of his play, the conservative Austrians:

As such, Bernhard cannot be classed as a nihilist. Prankster would be more apt, for he has perfected a form of drama in which the audience is no longer a passive observer, but is the active subject and victim of a gigantic hoax.<sup>1</sup>

Or as the General in *The Hunting Party* says of 'the Writer':

Watch what you are saying  
 this gentleman  
 puts everything he sees onto the stage  
 think about  
 what you want to talk about  
 and what you rather wouldn't talk about  
 because it will appear  
 on stage  
 as something philosophical  
 on stage  
 which is nothing but impudence  
 This gentleman will turn you into an operetta<sup>2</sup>

And, indeed, the cast list of *The Hunting Party* reads like the cast list of a Viennese operetta: the General, the General's wife, the writer, the woodcutter, the ministers, the prince, the princess and the cook. As in most operetta, the story line is derivative. A General and his wife live in a vast house in the forest. A writer and some ministers have been invited. Two famous plays provide the story-line of *The Hunting Party*: *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Seagull*. As in *The Cherry Orchard*, the past is festering and must be cut down. The General and his wife lament the impending activities of the woodcutters who must set to work on trees that cover 'a terminal disease'. The General's wife (a mixture of Masha and Arkadina) enjoins the writer to play cards with her. In *The Seagull* (Act IV), Masha comments that the game of lotto is boring but at least it is something to do and the General's wife plays cards to 'pass the time'. At the end of *The Hunting Party*, paralleling the suicide of Kostya, the audience hears a gun shot and infers that the General has killed himself.

Bernhard's intertextual games have a twofold purpose: first, they act as a semiotic shorthand for the audience - cut down a forest and immediately connotations of a corrupt and passing society are brought to mind. Second, they emphasize that the play, like life and society, is artifice. This is especially true of Austrian society, argues Gitta Honneger, where national identity has become its own picture-postcard identikit: operetta, high Baroque art, cream cake and Arthur Schnitzler.<sup>3</sup> This culture has been consciously

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Eisner, 'Theatertheater/Theaterspiele. The Plays of Thomas Bernhard', in *Modern Drama* (30 March 1987), pp. 104-114; p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Bernhard, *The Hunting Party*, trans. Gitta Honneger, *Performing Arts Journal*, Vol. V, No. 1 (1980), New York, pp. 96-131; p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> Gitta Honneger, 'The Hunting Party', p. 98.

constructed to hide Austria's real identity as Germany's partner in the Final Solution. In *The Hunting Party* the General (inferred to be a war criminal hiding in the seclusion of the forest) is about to be removed from the government because his real history is on the verge of being discovered. It is not an ethical question of what an individual did during the war that is crucial but the possibility of his discovery. As the General's wife says:

For decades they exploited him  
he got them their positions  
now they come to force  
my husband to resign.<sup>1</sup>

Bernhard uses themes and techniques of the absurd to stress the hypocrisy of Austrian society. Modern Austria is built on historical corpses. Rituals reinforce forgetting. Social structures are shields. Language is an artifice which covers the truth. This is highlighted by Bernhard's use of verse in an archaic baroque form that goes against the natural flow of speech. The Austrians have retreated into a false identity and high culture to cover their barbaric past. Death and fear of retribution are the characters' central preoccupations. Like Beckett, Bernhard is concerned with 'the silence expanding towards/ insanity/ nothing', and the fact that everything Man preoccupies himself with in this life is merely 'passing the time/ nothing but passing the time' because 'we are dead/ everything is dead/ everything in us is dead/ everything is dead'.<sup>2</sup>

*Eve of Retirement: A Comedy of The German Soul* is more specific in its references to Austria's involvement in the war.<sup>3</sup> It was written a year after the Filbinger affair of 1978 in which the president of Baden-Württemberg was revealed to have sentenced a Wehrmacht soldier to death in May 1945 after the unconditional surrender. The soldier's 'crime' was an anti-Nazi remark. Upon his reluctant resignation, Filbinger stated that 'What was right in the Third Reich cannot be wrong today.'<sup>4</sup> The play was, therefore, hotly topical. Bernhard's story is about a contemporary Austrian judge, Rudolf Hoeller, formerly a concentration camp Kommandant, who after the war went underground and then resumed his life again, ten years later, as though nothing had happened. Like Filbinger, Judge Rudolf, is totally unrepentant: he longs for the day when he can wear his SS uniform again in public but for now he must hide his true past. Like the General in *The Hunting Party*, Rudolf insists on having a deaf-mute for his servant and seeks the seclusion of trees.

The action takes place on the day Rudolf annually celebrates Himmler's birthday with his two spinster sisters: Clara, a paraplegic who was crippled in the Allied advance

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<sup>1</sup> Bernhard, *The Hunting Party*, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 104, 119 respectively.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Bernhard, *Eve of Retirement. A Comedy of the German Soul*, trans. Janos Bruck London, n.d. Unpublished. Folio edition courtesy of the translator.

<sup>4</sup> Rolf Hochhuth discovered the story of Hans Filbinger, the Christian Democratic Union Minister President of Baden-Württemberg. At first Filbinger refused to resign and he had a surprising degree of popular support. Quote taken from Rabinbach/Zipes, *Germans And Jews Since The Holocaust - The Changing Situation In West Germany*, p. 211.

and Vera, his lover. As Vera and Rudolf agree, 'it's best to keep things in the family'. This annual ritual involves the Judge dressing up in his SS uniform and forcing Clara, to shave her head and wear the 'pyjamas' of a concentration camp internee. A former Communist, Clara must submit to the ritual games of master and victim. Vera and Rudolf refuse to send Clara away to a home as they cannot exist without their victim. They define their roles and identity solely in terms of the 'other', the persecuted. As in Sartre's *No Exit*, all three characters are joined together whether they like it or not in an endless ritual of sadism and need. Rudolf needs to humiliate Clara and threaten Vera. Clara needs both Rudolf and Vera to take care of her. Vera needs Rudolf's love which she can only attain by affirming his beliefs and providing for his needs. The rituals Vera and Rudolf maintain are 'rehearsals' for the 'better times' - when they will no longer have to keep their games or celebrations to themselves:

Vera: And the majority thinks exactly like we do  
 that the majority has gone into hiding is what is so awful  
 it's absurd  
 the majority thinks as we do and may only do so in secret  
 Even when they claim the opposite  
 they are still National Socialists<sup>1</sup>

Austria is a corrupt and decaying society. Former Nazis have infiltrated the entire country. In Act Three, Vera and her brother, looking through a scrapbook of his years as Kommandant, come across a picture of a the President of the Federal Republic in his Hitler Youth uniform. 'You see what becomes/ of nice little boys/ if they're diligent' says Vera lovingly.<sup>2</sup> Bernhard was possibly referring to Carl Carstens, former member of the Nazi Party who became president of the German Federal Republic in 1978. Rudolf and his colleagues at work are biding their time until National Socialism rises once again. Democracy, they believe, is a mistake, imposed on Austria by the Allies:

One day the Germans will realise  
 What the Americans did to them.<sup>3</sup>

Rudolf and Vera remain unrepentant and hopeful for the future. Clara continues to endure as a victim. Ironically, Rudolf suffers a heart attack at the end of the play and Vera is forced to call a Jewish doctor whilst telling Clara, the victim, that Rudolf's condition is all her fault. It is the persecutor's nature to require a victim. According to Bernhard, Austrian society will always need its victims because of its corrupt nature. Having no real identity of its own, except the tourist kitsch that Honneger describes, Austria can only achieve self-respect by denigrating the 'other'.

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<sup>1</sup> Bernhard, *Eve of Retirement*, p. 3.26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.23.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.11

*Holocaust*

Then in 1979 what only can be described as a national phenomenon took place. Where the critics, intellectuals, historians and artists had failed, a second-rate American television mini-series succeeded in arousing a truly emotional outpouring and re-assessment of the average German's role in the systematic extermination of non-Aryans. Gerald Green's *Holocaust* was screened by West German television on 22, 23, 25 and 26 January 1979 followed by national, live television debates. Westdeutscher Rundfunk's initial intention was to show the series jointly with all eight regional networks. However, four of the eight refused mainly on 'aesthetic grounds' and objected to 'historical inaccuracies': a German telephone had an American ring; Hitler youth were shown in winter uniforms in the summer; people walked into the gas chambers with their hair.<sup>1</sup> In addition, it had not proved successful when screened in the United States.

The reaction in West Germany was quite different. After the first broadcast on Monday 22, the television staff received more than 5000 telephone calls mainly of a confessional nature. Many callers offered evidence that they had known of, or participated in, the decimation of the Jews. Many calls were from young adults who wanted to speak about their parents' silence. An estimated twenty million Germans watched it, forty per cent of all households with a television.<sup>2</sup> In the weeks before and months after the broadcast West German newspapers and magazines were filled with articles about the Holocaust and its survivors. This television series had put the Holocaust back into the public arena. The series, as Jean Paul Bier wrote, 'destroyed a taboo and created a climate favourable to discussing in the family, at school, or at work, what until now, had been repressed'.<sup>3</sup>

So powerful was its effect that on 31 December 1979, when The Statute of Limitations for War Criminals was due to run out, *Holocaust* was mentioned in the parliamentary debate with the result that the Statute was extended indefinitely.<sup>4</sup> The Düsseldorf trial of former guards at Maidenek had been dragging on without much attention since 1974 but, when four of the eleven defendants were acquitted, there was considerable public outcry at the decision and the length of the trial.<sup>5</sup>

Although the series was not screened in East Germany, about seventy-five per cent of television sets in the East could receive Western television stations through a device that could be bought cheaply on the black market.<sup>6</sup> Westdeutscher Rundfunk received

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<sup>1</sup> Andrei S. Markovits and Christopher S. Allen, 'The German Conscience', in *The Jewish Frontier* (April 1979), pp. 13-17; p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Herf, 'The Holocaust Reception in West Germany, Right, Centre, and Left', in Rabinbach/Zipes, *Germans and Jews Since the Holocaust*, pp. 208-33; p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Paul Bier, 'The Holocaust, West Germany and Strategies of Oblivion, 1947-1979', in Rabinbach/Zipes, *Germans and Jews Since the Holocaust*, pp. 185-203; pp. 202-3.

<sup>4</sup> Herf, 'The Holocaust Reception in West Germany, Right, Centre, and Left', p. 226.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>6</sup> Demetz, *After the Fires*, p. 117.

impassioned telephone calls from the East with an emotional tone comparative to those made in the West.<sup>1</sup> It was screened six weeks later in Austria. Although the event was virtually ignored in the Austrian press, more phone calls per capita were made to the broadcasting station, ORF, than had been made to Westdeutscher Rundfunk. However, as if to confirm Thomas Bernhard's opinion about the Austrians, one fifth of callers, according to ORF, voiced opinions that were anti-Semitic.<sup>2</sup>

The seven hours of film footage, directed by Marvin J. Chomsky, centres on the parallel lives of three families: Erich and Marta Dorf; their former Jewish Doctor, Joseph Weiss and his wife Berta, with their children Rudi, Karl and Anna; Karl marries into the third family, the Helms - German Aryans.

The film starts at the wedding reception in 1935 of Karl Weiss and Inga Helm-Weiss (played by James Wood and Meryl Streep). Both parties are totally oblivious to the political ramifications of such a mixed marriage as are the majority of their relations. 1935 was the year the Nuremberg Laws were passed. The Weisses consider themselves 'proper Germans' even though Joseph originally came from Warsaw where his brother Moses still lives. Seated around the table at the reception are Inga's brother, in full-Wehrmacht uniform, and a distant relative - Heinz Müller - who sports a Nazi Party pin. Thus the story line is established and the audience can predict where it will all end.

The lives of the individual family members conveniently intersect with events across the entire geography of Europe at key moments in history: Inga's priest just happens to be Father Lichtenberg;<sup>3</sup> Moses participates in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; Rudi is travelling through the Russian countryside when he chances across the horrors of Babi-Yar<sup>4</sup> and Erich Dorf single-handedly creates the political programme of Nazi linguistic euphemism. 'Resettlement, gentleman please', he warns the verbally lax Eichmann and Himmler. There are also some moments of genuinely bad dialogue and acting, but *Holocaust* makes compelling and emotional viewing. Its improbable narrative, covering most issues and events, also made it a succinct educational tool.

What made the series such emotional viewing for a German audience was the point of view from which it was told: the spectators are forced to empathize with a Jewish family (the Weisses) and identify themselves in the Helms and the Dorfs. *Holocaust* is the story of how ordinary Germans responded to National Socialism, how they embraced the ideology or acquiesced to the system and how a few of them resisted. Despite the appearance of Heydrich, Himmler and Eichmann, the only image of Hitler is either in the intercut documentary footage or in the painted portraits that adorn the walls of Nazi

<sup>1</sup> Markovits/Allen, 'The German Conscience', p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Andrei S. Markovits & Rebecca S. Hayden, 'Holocaust, Before and After The Event. Reactions in West Germany and Austria', in Rabinbach/Zipes, *Germans and Jews Since the Holocaust*, pp. 234-57; p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> Monsignor Bernhard Lichtenberg of St Hedwig's Cathedral in Berlin had been sent to Dachau for publicly praying for the Jews.

<sup>4</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, pp. 202: A huge ravine outside Kiev where over 30, 000 Jews and Russian civilians were massacred with machine gun and then buried.

officialdom. The author of *Mein Kampf* is not necessary to the narrative of the Holocaust. The film charts the rise of the 'little man'; the ordinary German; the 'pen-pusher' and the apolitical.

This is seen most clearly in the character of Erich Dorf, and his ambitious wife, Marta. An unemployed but brilliant lawyer in 1935, Erich is only concerned with finding enough money to buy food to feed his family and secure the medicine to treat his wife's heart condition. Despite his dislike of the 'thuggish' Nazis, he accepts a lowly job as one of Heydrich's aids. Uncomfortable with the uniform and unable to do the Nazi salute convincingly, his concern for his family allows him to be pushed deeper and deeper into the Nazi maze. It is his brilliant lawyer's mind, his ability to be cold and objective that allows him to distance himself emotionally from his work and his ethical judgement while maintaining a normal family life. This is symbolically shown by Dorf's creativity in the department of political and moral euphemism. It is also shown in the elimination of his moral and emotional self regarding the fate of the Jews. As he explains to his colleagues at the Wannsee Conference, 'After you've killed ten Jews, it's easier to kill a hundred and then a thousand.' The other Nazis are rather reptilian in appearance with their clicking heels, oleaginous mien and bestial lusts: Heinz Müller (rapist); Heydrich (alcoholic); Eichmann (physically inadequate); Himmler (vampire-esque); Marta (Lady Macbeth). The Germans are portrayed as either ordinary people or monsters. Erich Dorf bridges the gulf to illustrate how one mutated.

The other main narrative thread is that of the Weiss family. Green forced a German audience to empathize with a Jewish perspective. Through the course of the film we witness how each family member (with the exception of Rudi) is murdered. Joseph Weiss is deported to Warsaw where he ends up with his brother, Moses, in the ghetto. His fifteen-year old daughter, Anna, remaining in Berlin, is gang raped by Nazis, has a breakdown, and is gassed by carbon monoxide in a 'clinic' having been sent there for 'special treatment'. Karl is the first to suffer. He is sent to Buchenwald in 1938 by the Gestapo for unspecified crimes. The fact that he married a beautiful Aryan woman is most likely the cause. He is then transferred to Terezin because of his artistic skills. The sham of the 'model' camp is revealed in all its hypocrisy. He is tortured for the discovery of 'political' sketches and deported to Auschwitz. This is not before his wife, Inga, follows him to Terezin, having asked to be denounced so that she can be reunited with him. She has had no word from him since 1938. The torture has left Karl's hands mutilated and unfit for work. On the verge of starvation in Auschwitz he grips a piece of charcoal in his stumps and sketches what he sees. He dies of starvation moments before liberation. Joseph and Berta's youngest son Rudi joins the partisans and marries a Czech girl who is shot in action. He, however, survives and emigrates to Palestine. All aspects of the Holocaust are neatly contained within this framework. However, it is Rudi's survival that causes one of the main representational problems.

Berta, Joseph and Karl repeatedly try to ignore the political changes, placing their faith in the true Germany - the Germany of Goethe, Schiller and Kant. Even the loss of Karl and Anna do not convince Berta and Joseph that the Nazi madness is here to stay. It is only when husband and wife are reunited in the Warsaw ghetto and learn of the true state of affairs in the 'labour camps' that they decide to participate in covert resistance. Moses actively takes part in the Uprising and dies a hero's death. Berta and Josef's repeated acquiescence only leads to further misery. They die separately in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Rudi, on the other hand, leaves Berlin at an early stage in order to do something. His fighting instincts and pragmatic philosophy help him to survive. To orthodox Jews and their point of view, little space is allocated. They are identified as victims and given footage only to emphasize their pathetic condition. Collaborators, especially the Jewish police in the Warsaw ghetto, are sketched with disdain. Morally, the film is clear in its attitude towards those who fought back and those who went like 'sheep to the slaughter'. Jewish identity after the war is linked to the creation of the state of Israel. Rudi decides to go to Palestine. It is the only possible way to begin life again. As a volunteer from the Israeli Settlement Group says scouting for survivors, 'We need fighters like you.' Interestingly enough Gerald Green cut this last scene from the German screen version. Aware of how the notion of Israel as a symbol of moral repayment for the Holocaust would be received by German audiences, he axed Rudi's departure into the sunset.<sup>1</sup>

The figures of Inga Helms (Meryl Streep) and Uncle Kurt Dorf (Robert Stephens) as 'good Germans' were intended to illustrate that choice was possible. Inga is raised to the level of a saint. Her selfless love for her husband leads her to endure repeated rape at the hands of her cousin, Heinz Müller, now the Kommandant of Buchenwald, to ensure her letters' safe arrival to Karl. Having voluntarily followed her husband to Terezin, she becomes pregnant and despite the threat of execution decides to go ahead with the pregnancy. She is the beautiful, courageous German victim. She is also one of the Germans who survive the war and will go on to create a better society - symbolized through the birth of her and Karl's son. Uncle Kurt Dorf, a civil engineer, ends up supervising the construction of roads in the immediate vicinity of Auschwitz using slave labour from the camp. Confronted with the truth of the situation in Auschwitz, he tries to do what he can to secure extra rations for those on his work detail, including Doctor Weiss. At the end of the war he goes to see Marta and her children to expose Erich's true nature. Kurt blames himself for not doing more to change the situation. He knew what was going on but stood by and now is bitterly ashamed. Kurt Dorf acted as an example for many ordinary Germans who had behaved in the same way.

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<sup>1</sup> Herf, 'The Holocaust Reception in West Germany, Right, Centre, and Left', p. 233.

However, instead of acting as exemplars of 'choice', Kurt Dorf and especially Inga Weiss also stood as representatives of the 'true' Germany in much the same manner as General Harras in *The Devil's General* or Kurt Gerstein in *The Representative*. Their 'realistic' characterization as *Germans* was in stark contrast to that of Himmler, Eichmann and Heydrich as demonic *Nazis*. As such, the heel-clicking Nazis stood outside the human race and the German nation in the same way that Zuckmayer's Schmidt-Lausitz and Hochhuth's Doctor had.

At the end of the 1970s, approximately 20,000 young people belonged to neo-Nazi groups.<sup>1</sup> This was disturbing evidence of the failure to discuss the past and the issue of anti-Semitism. For young people to believe that Germany's Jewish population (approximately 30,000) was a threat to national security illustrated that there was a misinformed generation out there. This also helps to explain why the British Right Wing historian, David Irving, became a best selling author in West Germany. He argued that Hitler had little, or no knowledge of the Final Solution. If Hitler himself was unaware as to what was happening on the various fronts, how could the average German be aware?

The anti-Semitic activity of Right-wing groups peaked on 18 January 1979 when a television transmitter in Koblenz was bombed a few days before the transmission of *Holocaust*.<sup>2</sup> That evening, a documentary, *The Final Solution*, was to be broadcast as background information. Half an hour later another bomb went off at a station in Münster.<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Herf argues that the broadcast of *Holocaust* and the discussions that followed did not affect the more deep-seated attitudes prevalent in Germany. The audience reacted in a superficial way. West Germans since the end of the war had learned that appearance was all important. How they reacted to certain events would be analysed on the international scene. Anti-Semitism was still a social problem in Germany. In 1979, for example, a German-Jewish schoolteacher in Berlin was subjected to anti-Semitic abuse in his own schoolroom. Outrage followed because the authorities dragged their heels in following up his complaint.<sup>4</sup>

In the week after the broadcast of *Holocaust*, a biweekly journal, *Pflasterstrand*, published in Frankfurt, issued a series of articles comparing various atrocities committed through the ages. 'Ten years ago, there was a second Auschwitz. It was called Vietnam', argued one of the pieces.<sup>5</sup> Andrei S. Markovits and Rebecca S. Hayden's critique of the reception of the television programme showed some startling conclusions. Of all the phone calls to the television networks and letters that appeared in the press, the most common complaint was that the film was unfair to Germans. Repeatedly, people

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>2</sup> Markovits/Hayden, 'Holocaust, Before and After The Event. Reactions in West Germany and Austria, in *Germans and Jews Since the Holocaust*', p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Herf, 'The Holocaust Reception in West Germany, Right, Centre, and Left', p. 210.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 222.

complained about the lack of attention given to the suffering of German POWs at the hands of the Russians, the expulsion of the Germans from the eastern parts of the former Reich. Another complaint was that Fascism was portrayed as a uniquely Teutonic quality. It was argued that the Germans should make a film for the Americans about the CIA, Vietnam and the decimation of the North American Indians.<sup>1</sup> One cinema in Frankfurt, after screening *Exodus* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*, presented a series of documentaries on the Palestinian situation maintaining that the established media had focused on the suffering of the Jews but not that of the Arabs.<sup>2</sup> Responses, therefore, acted on three levels to dilute the historical reality of the Holocaust. First, the call for political analogy to compare rather than contrast atrocities reduced the scale of Jewish decimation. Second, the responsibility for the Final Solution was placed in the hands of a few madmen. Third, empathy for the Jews during the war was reduced by comparing Israeli actions towards the Palestinians in the 1970s.

This kind of backlash, especially by the Left, caused one German-Jewish writer, Leah Fleischman, to write a book in 1980 entitled *Dies ist nicht mein Land (This is Not My Country)*. Disgusted with her contemporaries' historical amnesia and the Left's unwillingness to re-examine the issue of anti-Semitism, she emigrated to Israel in 1980. She was followed by another German-Jewish writer, Henryk Broder, the next year. In *Der Spiegel*, shortly before he left, Broder said that there was little to distance his German contemporaries from their parents' generation. He declared that the growing anti-Zionism in West Germany was really nothing more than a perverted expression of anti-Semitism:

There is plenty to criticize about Israel, but I ask myself why the suppression of the Palestinians by the Jews causes more commotion for example than the suppression of the Kurds by the Turks, Persians and Arabs.<sup>3</sup>

The television broadcast had its greatest impact on the young. *Holocaust* showed that many young people were genuinely ignorant of the Nazi period. There were demands that *Holocaust* be shown as part of the national curriculum. When the government printed 20,000 copies of a documentary brochure offering additional historical material, more than a quarter of a million Germans asked to receive copies by mail.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.1. Conclusion

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<sup>1</sup>Markovits/Hayden, 'Holocaust, Before and After The Event. Reactions in West Germany and Austria', p. 247; See also Markovits and Allen, 'The German Conscience' in *The Jewish Frontier* (April 1979), pp. 13-17.

<sup>2</sup>Herf, 'The Holocaust Reception in West Germany, Right, Centre, and Left', p. 226

<sup>3</sup>Translated by Jack Zipes, in Rabinbach/Zipes, *Germans and Jews Since the Holocaust*, pp. 44-5.

<sup>4</sup>Demetz, *After the Fires*, p. 29.

Writers in the 70s used motifs and characters reminiscent of immediate postwar writing. The expressionist character of 'Deaths Head' in Reinshagen's *Sunday's Children*, for example, and the innocent children and young soldiers destroyed by uncaring generals, share parallels with the writings of Borchert and early Böll. Even the iconoclasts incorporated postwar elements in their writing. The denouement of Fassbinder's *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, for example, is intended to illustrate the high price of historical amnesia. Maria absent-mindedly switches on the gas stove without igniting it while she searches for matches to light a cigarette. Maria and her lover are killed in the ensuing explosion. This ending emphasizes the link between Nazi Germany and the Federal Republic through the symbolism of forgotten gas. What remains forgotten will eventually rise to the surface and reek destruction. The choice of gas may be intended as ironic on Fassbinder's part but, like the suicide of Beckmann's parents by gas in Borchert's *The Man Outside* and the death of Lene in Sanders-Brahms's *Germany, Pale Mother*, there is also the inference that all parties involved in the war are united in death through common symbolism. This leads to a process of levelling by comparing similarities without contrasting crucial differences. *Sunday's Children* and *The Marriage of Maria Braun* showed that there was still a need to mourn German loss and destruction.

*The Cannibals* is also reminiscent of postwar drama, in particular *Dr Korczak and The Children*. Both seek to distance the characters from the audience through casting. In *The Cannibals*, the camp inmates are played by actors who play the sons of the interned men who during the course of the piece play the fathers, themselves and, as in *Dr Korczak*, inanimate objects. The characters are therefore twice removed: as actors in the theatre and as actors in their fathers' story. Tabori is concerned with more universal notions which derive from his interest in existentialist writers such as Beckett. Particularly, though, he is interested in Jewish identity after the death of God. What does it mean to be a secular Jew and what does the notion of a Godless universe mean for Jewish collective identity?

Bernhard was, to some extent, the only writer who implicated his audience in the guilt of a specific event. Ironically, he achieved this by re-working elements of classic texts. Bernhard's achievement can be found in the level of scandal he created. Obviously he had touched a raw nerve, forcing Austrians to reflect on what they would rather forget.

## 4. 2. *Israel* *Smashing the Idols*

### *Introduction*

1967 proved a watershed in Israeli political writing. As in Germany, the success of the Six Day War and the resultant re-evaluation of the Holocaust, brought a sense of closure on the past. Attention turned to the future. The Israelis now saw their country as an established state in the Middle East. Moreover, there was the prospect of securing long-term peace. As in Germany, plays concerning the Holocaust disappeared from the stage.

1967 was a crucial year in that theatre became concerned with redefining its identity after the introduction of television. As television was synonymous with 'entertainment', theatre managers and writers were forced to re-think the role of the stage in Israeli society. Yet television also triggered a cultural awakening. For the first time, many Israelis came into contact with the outside world through their television sets. Israelis started to reflect on their own identity and way of life in comparison to images of American and European lifestyles. Shosh Avigal writes that television proved crucial in Israeli self-definition in the 1970s as people began to scrutinize their country more critically.<sup>1</sup> Theatre, therefore, took on a new function of channelling emerging doubts about Israeli identity, the Zionist dream and the means of its realization.

These political doubts had begun with the recognition that the Six Day War, far from solving any problems, had created new ones. Logically, the seizure of former Egyptian and Syrian land should have given the Israelis some bargaining power over the Arabs to secure a satisfactory and lasting peace. However, the Arabs, especially the Egyptians, did not sue for peace. They were only interested in total victory. A stalemate ensued. America re-armed Israel and the Russians re-equipped the Egyptians.<sup>2</sup> In addition to this, Black September wanted to create a Palestinian homeland for the Arabs displaced by the past thirty years of Israeli military and police action. Black September opposed any government such as King Hussein's which recognized the legitimacy of Israel. Limited in number, Black September resorted to terrorism. Their first major action was in September 1970 when they highjacked four large passenger aircraft.

The Israelis not only felt a sense of Arab violence from without but this time the growing threat of terrorism from within. The fact that members of the RAF trained with Palestinians in their army camps did little to boost Israel's faith in either the Federal Republic or the West in general. Popular thinking therefore regressed into old archetypes of destruction. Arabs (Nazi collaborators) and RAF (German Nazis) seemed bent on the destruction of the Jews. The Prime Minister, Golda Meir, resorted to Nazi analogies in her

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Zvi, *Theater in Israel*, p.11.

<sup>2</sup> Vadney, *The World Since 1945*, p. 436. By March 1970 it was estimated that there were over 10,000 Russian advisers in Egypt with Soviet pilots flying for Nasser's airforce.

criticisms of Willi Brandt and Helmut Schmidt. This tactic was utilized during the 1973 Yom Kippur War when it was feared that Israel, fighting alone for the first time, might be defeated by the combined Arab forces who had launched an unprecedented lightning strike. Meir peppered her soundbites with Holocaust analogies hoping to appeal to the Western Alliance. However, whereas Chancellors Adenauer and Brandt had been hindered by a policy of philo-Semitism and pro-Zionism in their quest to re-establish Germany's standing in the world, Helmut Schmidt was less malleable. Intent on re-establishing the Arab trade links that had been severed or curtailed after the war, he became increasingly vocal in his criticisms of Israeli domestic and foreign policy, or remained mute. During the Yom Kippur war he maintained extreme neutrality by affirming that, in his opinion, all peoples had the right to live peaceably in Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

Israeli liberals took a progressive view of the situation. Several factors coincided. The Peace Now movement in Israel led by influential writers such as Amos Oz challenged Israel's aggressive military policy. The devastation suffered during the 1973 Yom Kippur War<sup>2</sup> with its ensuing war of attrition along the southern borders made people question the centrality of military might to Israeli identity and the imperative of sacrifice to the collective. The Oil Crisis also left Israel increasingly isolated in a Western Alliance that was intent on currying favour with the Arabs.

The victory of 1967 meant the policing of gained Arab territories and their hostile communities. Israeli identity began to mutate. With the deployment of troops to quash the terrorists and the civilians who shielded them, Israelis, for the first time in their history, found themselves in the position of the oppressor, not of the oppressed. This new found identity involuntarily gained a high international profile because of the pro-Arab feeling of the European Left. The result was that questions were raised about human rights in the international press. In many instances, the Israelis found themselves universally condemned. By oppressing the Palestinians, could figures such as Meir still invoke the Holocaust when suing for international backing? Were they victims in the Middle East or oppressors? A paradox emerged which progressive Israeli writers were quick to perceive. Their focus centred on the current spiritual state of the Jews who treated their fellow human beings in much the same manner as Hitler had treated his. It seemed as if the Jews had learned nothing positive from their experiences. As Aharon Appelfeld wrote in his 1978 novel *The Immortal Bartfuss*, 'I expect greatness of soul from people who underwent the Holocaust and... generosity.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wolffsohn, *Eternal Guilt?* p. 30: Even so, Schmidt allowed armaments from USA to be covertly diverted to Israel via West Germany.

<sup>2</sup> Slater, *Rabin of Israel*, p. 202: The war had cost Israel some \$9-\$10 billion leaving its citizens with heavy debts, soaring prices and runaway inflation. The human loss and suffering had been devastating: 2,526 Israelis had been killed with a further 7,500 wounded. These were the country's worst losses since the War of Independence.

<sup>3</sup> Aharon Appelfeld, *The Immortal Bartfuss*, trans. Jeffrey M. Green, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988, p. 107.

The specific subject of the Holocaust became increasingly entangled with the Palestinian question and the issue of national identity.<sup>1</sup> A degree of security came with Anwar Sadat's pro-peace policy resulting in the Camp David Accords of 1978,<sup>2</sup> but a new threat appeared on Israel's northern border. By the late 70s the PLO had established itself in the Lebanon causing the Israeli army to invade in 1978 and again in 1981. Military conflict showed no sign of abating; a 'solution' to the Palestinian problem remained elusive.

### *The Protest Movement*

#### *Hanoch Levin and Joshua Sobol*

The sense of disillusion with the Zionist dream first percolated into the theatre with Hanoch Levin's 1968 satirical cabaret, *You and I and The Next War*. It was performed in a student bar in Tel Aviv when Levin was twenty-four. In 1970 he wrote *Queen of the Bathtub*, staged by the Cameri just before it became the Municipal Theatre of Tel Aviv. Protest theatre had, therefore, graduated from the fringe to mainstream theatre. *Queen of the Bathtub* was a ferocious satire which attacked pioneer ideals, Zionism and the army. For some it was too radical and was forced to close after public protest. Another writer whose targets coincided with Levin's was Abraham B. Yehoshua. His *A Night in May*, staged in 1968 by the Bimot, attacked the false ideals fostered by the army and youth movements.<sup>3</sup>

But the dramatist who caused the biggest stir (and has to continued to do so until the present day) was Joshua Sobol. His *The Night of the Twentieth*, staged in 1976, was his first major play. The story takes place on a single night in October 1920 when a group of young settlers from Europe plan to take over a piece of land in Palestine. Sobol attacks the ideology of the settler generation and the creation and perpetuation of its 'legend' through

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Zvi, *Theater in Israel*, p. 7. The decline in the specific issue of Holocaust can also be traced to the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of Israeli society. There was really no single Israeli milieu. It was a mosaic of different communities. The percentage of Israelis that had either survived the Holocaust or Zionists who had come originally from Europe was comparatively small. By the 1970s the population of Israel was made up of people from 102 countries who spoke fifty-one different languages. Such a social geography did not deter Meir and her comrades from continuing to place the Holocaust at the centre of Israeli identity.

<sup>2</sup> Some political advances were made but the end result was that Israel became increasingly threatened from its northern borders. The entire PLO by the end of the decade had resorted to terrorism and were launching their attacks from the Lebanon. This turn of events began after Nasser's sudden death in September 1970 and the vice-president of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, became Prime-minister. Favouring a peace settlement he went directly to the Americans and started removing the Soviet officials from his government. By July 1972, virtually all Russian 'advisers' had been ordered out of Egypt. However, caught between his desire for peace and his army, Sadat had to secure results quickly and when the Israelis refused to come to the bargaining table he launched an all out war to force a settlement. The war launched jointly with Syria in October 1973 during Yom Kippur took the Israelis totally by surprise. By October 12 Meir launched an appeal to the Americans saying that the very survival of Israel was at stake and that she was willing to go to any lengths to ensure an Israeli victory, meaning that she was threatening to deploy atomic weapons unless America stepped in. Eventually a truce was achieved and special envoy Henry Kissinger began to lay the foundation for Jimmy Carter's Camp David Accords. Unconvinced of Carter's capabilities to bring peace, Sadat went to Jerusalem in 1977 and addressed the Knesset in person. By 1978 the Camp David Agreement had been signed and the two countries exchanged ambassadors early in 1980. Obviously the PLO saw this as a sell out and stepped up their terrorist campaign. In October 1981 Sadat was assassinated by Arabs.

<sup>3</sup> Abraham B Yehoshua, *A Night in May*, trans. Miriam Arad, Tel Aviv: Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 1974.

the youth movements: he consciously models the play on a 'Ken' discussion - a collective moral debate used by the youth movements.<sup>1</sup> Sobol sets up his pioneers to cut them down: he portrays them as juvenile clowns rather than national heroes. They are cowards, afraid of the humiliations of their own Diasporic past and terrified at the prospect of having to fight the Arabs. Their inferiority complexes lead to an excess of machismo behaviour. Sobol's intention was to strip the pioneer generation of its sacred aura.

Sobol raises the question of Jews as oppressors. One of the pioneers, Ephraim, comments on the question of removing Arab settlers: 'It's a case of natural selection. The strong and the pure stay.'<sup>2</sup> This Social-Darwinian remark serves to link Zionists and Nazis as persecutors and looters.

On the Israeli stage in general, discussion of the Palestinian situation was severely hindered by the lack of Arab characters. In 1972 the Israeli critic Michael Ohed asked whether anyone had seen an Arab represented on the Israeli stage.<sup>3</sup> Palestinian Arabs were conspicuous by their absence. This was due to their nullification within Israeli society and history. In 1969 Golda Meir had said:

There was no such thing as Palestinians. It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine, considering itself as a Palestinian people, and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist.<sup>4</sup>

In reality, British Foreign Office statistics indicate that there were 1,319, 434 Arabs in Palestine in 1947 compared to 589,341 Jews. After the War of Independence only 117,639 Arabs could be found within Israel, just over one eleventh of the original population.<sup>5</sup> In Israeli novels written by Jews a pattern emerged of Arab representation which was in direct opposition to Jewish images. Arabs were fanatics; Jews martyrs; Arabs were terrorists; Jews brave soldiers; Arabs were backward and nomadic; Jews were productive and cultivated the land; Arabs were murderous; Jews peaceful. On 30 June 1976 Adir Cohen, Chairman of the Department of Education at the University of Haifa, published a report in *Ha'aretz* on the representation of Arabs in Israeli Hebrew children's literature. He concluded:

The findings must cause concern for education in this country, because it was in this way that the image of the Jew was presented in anti-Semitic literature.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joshua Sobol, *The Night of the Twentieth*, trans. by Chanah Hoffman, Tel Aviv: Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 1978. Introduction by Gideon Ofrat, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Abramson, *Modern Israeli Drama*, p. 210.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times* (15 June 1969).

<sup>5</sup> Fouzi-el-Amir, *The Image of Arabs in Israel. Hebrew Commercial Children's Story Books*, University of Exeter: Ph.D. thesis, 1984, p. 80.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

Progressive Jewish writers in the 1970s tried to redress this, without much success. Dan Urian notes that there was a spate of Israeli plays using the metaphor of mixed love affairs. In this way, writers explored the theme of coexistence and mutual understanding. Significantly, none of these plays had happy endings.<sup>1</sup>

Sobol contradicts Meir's official history of Palestine as a wasteland populated by a scattering of nomadic Arab tribesmen until the civilizing Jews arrived. In *The Night of the Twentieth*, Sobol presents his pioneers as a band of would-be murderers. It is they who set out to dispossess another nation, namely the Palestinians. At the end of the play Sobol reverses 'official history'. Moshe, the son of a Galician tailor addresses the audience in an ironic tone:

And those who weren't here, this night of the twentieth of October, can tell legends later to their children about the things we believed in, and in whose name we went out to dispossess others. And to take possession of a land. And Time, like a child who does not know what he is doing, will play its games with us.<sup>2</sup>

### *Danny Horowitz*

Simon Levy notes that Israeli theatre, aware of its public function, has always been self-referential and self-consciously theatrical.<sup>3</sup> Danny Horowitz is no exception to this tradition. In his, *Cherli Ka Cherli*, produced by the Khan Theatre in Jerusalem in 1978, Horowitz focuses audience attention on the function of narratives in Israeli society, drawing parallels between Jews as oppressors and Arabs as the 'new Jews'. The play is structured around images and takes the format of a guided tour in a museum, with actors and dummies providing tableaux. The guide throws questions at the audience in an attempt to make them reassess the narratives with which they have grown up. For example, at Picture 1, he asks the spectators whether more Russian civilians were killed than Jews in the Second World War, challenging the Israeli tendency to assume the mantle of chief victim of the Nazi war machine.

As in his earlier play *Uncle Arthur*, Horowitz presents various Israeli archetypes to reveal them as outdated cultural icons. The central message of *Cherli Ka Cherli* is how the state, the army and education system have utilized the memory of Holocaust victims to further political causes. Gad Kaynar writes that the image in *Cherli Ka Cherli* crucial to Horowitz's polemic is picture 8: the famous photograph of the little boy with a flat cap and arms raised aloft as he is ordered out of a building in the Warsaw ghetto surrounded by armed Nazis.<sup>4</sup> The photograph is reproduced in every standard history of the Holocaust and

<sup>1</sup> Dan Urian, 'The Image of The Arab in Israeli Theatre: From Adversary To Lover', in *Small is Beautiful. Small Countries Theatre Conference*, Claude Schumacher and Derek Fogg, eds, Glasgow: Theatre Studies Publications, Glasgow University, 1990, pp. 127-34.

<sup>2</sup> Sobol, *The Night of the Twentieth*, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Simon Levy, 'Heroes of Their Consciousness: Self Referential Elements in Contemporary Israeli Drama', in Ben Zvi, *Theatre in Israel*, pp. 311-22; p. 311.

<sup>4</sup> Gad Kaynar, 'Get Out of The Picture, Kid in The Cap: On The Interaction and Reality Convention', in Ben Zvi, *Theatre in Israel*, pp. 285-301.

indeed in many Holocaust museums. The image acts on multiple levels: first the child epitomizes a helpless victim - the big black eyes, the arms aloft exposing his frail body in contrast to the threatening rifles about him. It has the same emotionally manipulative effect as pictures of wide-eyed, starving children in Africa on famine relief posters. Horowitz argues that the memory of this boy is being used to galvanize people into collective patterns of behaviour, and stresses this by accompanying the image with a song:

Get out of the picture!  
 Play some trick, run! Draw your gun  
 Roll out of the picture and threaten  
 Everyone so they'll never find you again  
 In the picture <sup>1</sup>

The ulterior motive for the perpetuation of the pain is revealed. According to the song, the unarmed inevitably become victims. Therefore, all Israelis must arm themselves and be willing to lay down their lives for the survival of the collective. Horowitz points out that if this tactic was carried out to its logical conclusion then there would be little to separate contemporary Israelis from their former oppressors in the quest for Jewish *Lebensraum*. In the play, he links Nazis and Israeli soldiers through army exercises accompanied by the repetition from either party of 'rechts, links, rechts, links...'

The subject of the play is the nature of the Israeli collective. Horowitz believes that it is impossible for any individual to have an identity of his own when identity has been so self-consciously created and perpetuated by the Israeli establishment:

The subject of the play is that we are constituted of so many social responsibilities and pressures that individuality becomes blurred, identity becomes collective... *Cherli Ka Cherli* was a protest against stereotypes. I used them, the 'postcards', the archetypes; but the whole play is a protest against them. I wanted something that I decided for myself, not something that was imposed on me by the Jewish nation, persecuted by the Holocaust and by wars. What am I really? I want to begin from the beginning and choose.<sup>2</sup>

Horowitz warns against uncritical adherence to political and social orthodoxy. He calls for individual self-definition rather than that imposed by a collective which can only unite a people through the misappropriation of historical suffering.

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<sup>1</sup> Danny Horowitz, *Cherli Ka Cherli*, trans. Karen Alkalay and Hannah Gut in ed. Herbert S. Joseph, *Modern Israeli Drama - An Anthology*, London/Toronto: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983, pp. 216-39; p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> 'Danny Horowitz. Interviewed by Karen Alkalay Gut', in Ben Zvi, *Theater in Israel*, pp. 349-54; pp. 350-3.

#### 4. 2. Conclusion

*The Night of the Twentieth* and *Cherli Ka Cherli* examine the inter-related issues of national identity, the Palestinian question and the Holocaust. All three were interdependent by the 1970s. By highlighting Jewish identity and historical and political narratives as subjective constructs, Sobol and Horowitz aimed to provoke critical re-evaluations of heritage and identity. But in the 1970s the Israel establishment as well as many of its citizens lacked the self-confidence to accept criticism. As late as 1979 the critic Glenda Abramson called for both Israeli society and its writers to be more self-critical:

When a society is mature it can face criticism. Israeli society dare not expose itself to honest criticism from the stage... Israeli writers must of necessity be afraid to shock the public, for shocking the public implies confronting real social problems.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Abramson, *Modern Israeli Drama*, p. 211.

#### 4. Conclusion

The impact of Gerald Green's *Holocaust* in the Germanies and Austria revealed that, after thirty years, the genocide of the Jews had still not been adequately addressed. This was the first film to create, in the words of the German historian, Heinz Höhne, 'national catharsis'. In *Der Spiegel*, he asserted that *Holocaust*:

accomplished what hundreds of books, plays, films and television programmes, thousands of documentaries, and all the concentration camp trials have failed to do in the more than three decades since the end of the war: to inform Germans about crimes against Jews committed in their name so that millions were emotionally touched and moved.<sup>1</sup>

The series stands as a testimony to the power of television and 'old-fashioned' empathy. Since 1945, German intellectuals and writers of the highest integrity had attempted to make their people confront the recent past and yet it was a soap opera with cardboard characterization, tears and realism (the Auschwitz scenes were shot at Mauthausen) which had brought the country near to a re-evaluation of its heritage:

*Holocaust* has shaken up post-Hitler Germany in a way that German intellectuals have been unable to do. No other film has ever made the Jews' road of suffering leading to the gas chambers so vivid... Only since and as a result of *Holocaust* does a majority of a nation know what lay behind the horrible and vacuous formula 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question'. They know because an American filmmaker had the courage to break with the paralysing dogma which has always condemned German filmmakers to failure: namely that mass murder must not be represented in art.<sup>2</sup>

German writers had successively sought to 'remove' the emotional aspect and play down the Jewish angle so that they could persuade both theatre managements and audiences to examine their country's history. Many such as Günter Eich and Ernst Schabel found they could risk an emotional response on the radio. The stage, as a public forum, was highly explosive. Peter Weiss had sought to lessen the emotion in his oratorio, *The Investigation*; Erwin Sylvanus and George Tabori hoped to distance the audience by Brechtian alienation techniques. Brecht's influence was paramount in the intellectual nature of German writing as was Group 47 and 61's dislike of irrational emotionalism. Displays of sentiment were synonymous with the art created by Hitler and Goebbels who aimed to provoke mass hysteria. Emotion could move an audience in an uncritical manner as though hypnotized. Brecht, Frisch and Dürrenmatt sought to educate people through parables, not move them to unthinking empathy.

Similarly, Frisch and Dürrenmatt's belief that it was no longer possible to articulate the known world in naturalistic terms with realistic characterization also denied an empathic response from the audience. Adorno's aphorism that to write poetry about Auschwitz was impossible, as well as the widely held supposition that the Holocaust was

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<sup>1</sup> Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat*, pp. 30-1.

<sup>2</sup> Herf, 'The Holocaust Reception in West Germany, Right, Centre, and Left', p. 217, quoting Höhne.

'unrepresentable', also deterred naturalistic portrayals. There was and still is the belief that an attempt to imagine and depict the Holocaust is necessarily reductivist and trivializes the event. Primo Levi argues that this argument is merely an excuse for 'mental laziness'.<sup>1</sup> If one wants to imagine, he asserts, one can. Yet the Holocaust remained unrepresented on the German stage. Rolf Hochhuth called for his rendition of Auschwitz in *The Representative* to be non-naturalistic and Tabori's Auschwitz is a stark white room.

Yet, what the German people needed, if *Holocaust* is an indicator, was an opportunity to witness the camps as functioning entities rather than half ruined and empty monuments as well as to give vent to their emotions. They needed to empathize with the victims and see the reality, not witness events depicted in veiled terms. They required a catharsis and it was television that delivered it, not the grand philosophizing reserved for the theatre. Only when the past had been confronted and catharsis achieved could there be a healthy progression to the future. As Martin Walser had stated, 'Only when we can overcome Auschwitz can we return to national tasks.'<sup>2</sup> Fassbinder, Tabori and Bernhard realized much the same. The selective nature of the Austrian-German war narrative prevented this confrontation and these writers aimed to reveal just how subjective history could be. *Holocaust's* main advantage was the medium: television, in many respects, is more powerful than the stage. People are more likely to risk emotional involvement in a fictional world in the security of their own living room rather than the public arena of a theatre. In addition, the attention given to television through other media (for example, television magazines) creates a shared experience for the community watching. Television can be just as much of a community 'event' as a live theatrical experience.

In Israel too, Horowitz aimed to highlight the selective nature of history. For him, the Zionist version of the Holocaust was not compatible with the individual voices of suffering. Horowitz may have been naïve when he stated that he wanted to go back to the roots of Jewish identity and choose who he was, rather than society indoctrinating him (for each individual is the product of his society) but if a person is not aware of the factors that shaped his life then he remains in a state of ignorance and is incapable of making balanced decisions. As Christa Wolf warned in *A Model Childhood*, he who does not know his past is doomed to repeat it.

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<sup>1</sup> Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Rabinbach/Zipes, *Germans And Jews Since The Holocaust*, p. 11.

## CHAPTER 5 1981-1989

### Introduction

In 1988 George Steiner again addressed the controversial question of the Holocaust's uniqueness - whether it was an event typical of Man's capacity for atrocity or whether it was the incomparable, atypical Event in human history. After contrasting the ontological roots of other historical slaughters and the numbers of dead involved, he concluded:

The presumed uniqueness of the Shoah has become vital to Judaism now. In numerous complex ways it underlies and underwrites certain essential aspects of the re-creation of nationhood in Israel, a re-creation whose uniqueness, whose transcendence of normal probability even in secular perceptions, subtly counterbalances that of the world of Auschwitz, of Bergen-Belsen. Climaxing - but also overshadowing - all previous presentations in the history of Jewish exclusion and suffering, the Shoah has given to that history a particularity of darkness, a seeming logic in which the sole categorical imperative is that of survival. The Shoah, the remembrance of Auschwitz, the haunting apprehension that, somewhere, somehow, the massacres could begin anew, is the cement of Jewish identity.<sup>1</sup>

The question of the Holocaust's uniqueness was never so important as during the 1980s. The controversial invasion of the Lebanon in 1982 heralded popular crises of identity and conscience as it became apparent that Israeli soldiers were fighting an aggressive war (unlike all previous 'defensive' campaigns) and shelling civilians. From the media's point of view, the Jews were persecuting an outnumbered people. Prime Minister Menachem Begin's rhetorical proclivity to speak of Arafat as the new Hitler was an attempt like Ben Gurion's many years before to gain national and international support. Begin, therefore, continued to resurrect the old archetypes of destruction as Ben Gurion and Meir had done: namely the Holocaust, whose 'uniqueness' should somehow give the Israelis *carte blanche* in the handling of the 'Palestinian problem'.

The question of the Holocaust's uniqueness was not just a secular concern: it was the crux of the orthodox Jewish faith. Emil L. Fackenheim had predicted in 1968 that it would take some time to reformulate the Bible and re-interpret God's Covenant with the Jewish nation after the Holocaust.<sup>2</sup> By the 1980s a plethora of religious writings appeared on this aspect of Judaism. Fackenheim published two further books<sup>3</sup> and Elie Wiesel's play, *The Trial of God*, placed Jewish suffering in a Messianic framework. In Wiesel's play God's ways are unfathomable and even the character of Satan argues that they are just. Mendel, a Purimspieler, paints a Jewish binary view of the world:

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<sup>1</sup> George Steiner, 'The Long Life of Metaphor: An Approach to the Shoah', in Berel Lang, ed., *Writing and the Holocaust*, New York/London: Holmes & Meier, 1988, pp. 154-71; p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> Emil L. Fackenheim, *Quest for Past and Future, Essays in Jewish Theology*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968.

<sup>3</sup> Emil L. Fackenheim, *To Mend the World. Foundations of Future Jewish Thought*, New York: Schocken Books, 1982; & *The Jewish Bible After the Holocaust*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990. Based on papers given in 1987.

God is closer to the Just struck by the whip than to the whip - God may punish whom He loves, but despise the instrument of punishment; He throws it in the garbage, whereas the Just will find his way to sanctuary.<sup>1</sup>

For orthodox Jews, the Holocaust was divine in origin and therefore unique. It was a signal of God's displeasure with the erring Jewish nation. However, if the Holocaust was not unique in this sacred sense, in other words man-made (like other man-made genocides) then not only is the Covenant in doubt but so is the creator's very existence. If God was absent during the Holocaust then, He is absent absolutely.

German observers, on the other hand, have nothing to gain by insisting that the Holocaust is an event of seismic proportions never before seen and never afterwards repeated. German historians and writers since the end of the war have had a vested interest in universalizing the Holocaust - portraying it as typical of man-made slaughters. Some, such as Günter Eich, did this to incite contemporary political awareness. Others, such as Hochhuth and Kipphardt, wanted to initiate a process of 'levelling' where parallels were intended to compare similarities rather than contrast crucial differences, thus diffusing the scale of specific German crimes. For Kipphardt, 'levelling' by analogy is the only possible route to national exculpation and the normalization of self-identity and international relations. Forty years after the end of the war, West Germany still sought normalization. The only other ways to 'overcome' the Holocaust was either to distance the majority of Germans from the Nazis, in other words, separate the murderers from the civilized (the Nazis were therefore portrayed as un-German, manifestations of evil) or by selective narrative (avoidance of the Jewish narrative and the death camps). However, such a normalization could only be achieved by conferring a sense of 'closure' on the Holocaust. In effect, 'closure' meant 'forgetting'. The 1980s offered some opportunities through which national leaders hoped that such a 'forgetting' could be achieved: 1985 was the fortieth anniversary of the end of the war; 1988 was the fiftieth anniversary of the Austrian Anschluss. Both anniversaries could be utilized to signify the end of one era and the beginning of another. The postwar atonement phase could be brought to an end by drawing a line in much the same manner as a statute of limitations is designed to bring issues of responsibility and guilt to a definitive close.

One way to 'close' the Holocaust narrative was to forget the victims entirely and concentrate on alternative narratives. The Hitler Wave in Germany, therefore, entered a new stage. Not only did the responsibility for the Final Solution fall on the Nazi élite, but the general population, instead of being portrayed as innocent dupes of National Socialism (as in Gerlind Reinshagen's *Sunday's Children*), now became tragic figures in a new European

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<sup>1</sup> Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God (as it was held on February 25 1649 in Shamgorod)*, trans. Marion Wiesel, New York: Schocken Books, 1986, p. 98. The play is based on a true incident that occurred in a concentration camp. Three rabbis decided to indict God for allowing his children to be murdered.

war narrative with the Soviets as the barbarian hordes hammering at the door of Western civilization. For example, in his 1983 play *Brother Eichmann*, Kipphardt made a tragic hero out of Adolf Eichmann, his fatal flaw being his patriotism and sense of duty.

In the search for alternative narratives with which to 'fill' the war years, German writers reinvestigated their own history. This move was partly a reflex reaction to Hollywood's portrayal of Germany in Gerald Green's *Holocaust* and also the sense of cathartic release which followed the series. For some, public reaction to *Holocaust* was the turning point which allowed the long awaited confrontation with the past. Now German writers could address German history without being encumbered by the 'eternal penitent's' need to atone. Historical narratives concentrated on German victims, including the Wehrmacht and SS. For instance, the film *Das Boot*, later segmented for television, portrayed the anxieties and sufferings of a German U-boat crew.<sup>1</sup>

But it was the ordinary civilians in small town Germany, similar to those of early Böll and Reinshagen, that were the real tragic victims. The intention of Edgar Reitz's sixteen-hour television epic *Heimat* (1984) was to repossess the prewar image of 'fatherland' and patriotism. *Heimat*, meaning 'homeland' or 'native habitat', was a word which held negative and sinister connotations after the war because of Hitler's vision of a purely Aryan *Heimat*. Local history and personal stories, argued Reitz, needed to be articulated and then mourned. Germans had been denied an outlet for their own grief because of the Jewish tragedy. In literature and film, the only way to address Germany's losses was to remove the 'rival' historical claim for attention. If the Holocaust was part of the panorama, then the German history which had engendered the horror could not be articulated. Therefore, the first five episodes of *Heimat*, set at the time of the Third Reich, make no reference to the genocide of the Jews. In Episode Three, set in the mid 30s, the audience witnesses a long shot of a labour camp from the viewpoint of a child, Hänschen Betz - the amoral, one-eyed sharp-shooter reminiscent of Grass's Oscar Matzenrath. Like Oscar, Hans is apolitical.

*Heimat* proved immensely popular - an average of nine million viewers watched each episode.<sup>2</sup> Reitz's own argument for omitting the Holocaust from his narrative was that 'The question of the Jews and National Socialism is a theme that has been explicated over and over.'<sup>3</sup> He called for the German people to repossess their history with a sense of pride and patriotism. Their inheritance had become subsumed by a master narrative conceived and perpetuated by the war's victors:

There are thousands of stories among our people that are worth being filmed... Authors all over the world are trying to take possession of their own history and therewith of the history of the group to which they belong. But they often find that their own history is torn out of their hands. The most

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<sup>1</sup>Günter Lowthar, *Das Boot*, directed by Peter Fleischman, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> Kaes, *From Heimat to Hitler*, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

serious act of expropriation is when a person is deprived of his or her own history. With *Holocaust*, the Americans have taken away our history.<sup>1</sup>

Some attempts were made to reassert the Holocaust in the German war narrative: *Eine Synagoge in Wassenberg: Historische Review* (1988) created by the Theatergruppen der Evangelischen Kirchengemeinden dealt with the destruction of the local synagogue and ensuing pogrom by local inhabitants on Kristallnacht. *Holocaust* was re-run on West German television in November 1982; Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* was screened across Germany; and Eberhard Feckner's four and a half hour film *Der Prozess (The Trial)*, based on interviews with people involved in the Düsseldorf Trial of Majdanek war criminals, was shown on West German television in November 1984, only one month after the end of *Heimat*. There was also Thomas Harlan's 1985 semi-documentary, *Wound Passage*, in which the director put his father Veit Harlan, star of the Nazi propaganda film *Jew Süss*, acquitted of war crimes in 1949, on trial once again. Thomas Harlan hired a convicted mass murderer to play his father's role.<sup>2</sup> Frans Weisz's film, *Charlotte*, recounted the story of the artist, Charlotte Salomon, who died in Auschwitz. Peter Lilienthal's *David* (1978), Michael Hoffmann's *Regentropfen (Raindrops)*, (1981), and Axel Corti's *An uns glaubt Gott nicht mehr (God Does Not Believe in Us Anymore)*, (1982) focused on the lives of Jewish adolescents during the war. But of major significance was Heinz Scheik's film, *Die Wannseekonferenz (The Wannsee Conference)*, (1984):

No other movie about the Holocaust, German or non-German, fictional or documentary, states unequivocally that the genocide of the Jews was a central policy of National Socialism. The film reflects the views of the so called intentionalists in the historians' debate that erupted among intellectuals and functionalists in Germany in the 1980s.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly Dieter Hildebrandt's documentary *Der gelbe Stern (The Yellow Star)*, (1980) set out to show that the Final Solution operated with the complicity of ordinary Germans. Yet, as far as box-office figures suggest, it would appear that, on the whole, these films did not make an impact on German audiences.<sup>4</sup>

Both the Israeli proclivity to ritualize Holocaust mourning to service contemporary political imperatives and the Austro-German nations' aptitude to generalize the atrocities into one long litany of global horror was, of course, nothing new. As Eric L. Santer writes, each nation developed different national strategies to deal with the 'trauma': 'The crucial difference between the two modes of repair has to do with the willingness or capacity to include the

<sup>1</sup> Eric L. Santer 'History Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on the Representation of Trauma', in Friedlander, *Probing the limits of Representation*, pp. 143-54; p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Kaes, *From Heimat to Hitler*, p. 139.

<sup>3</sup> Reimer, *Nazi-retro Film*, pp. 137-8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187

traumatic event in one's efforts to reformulate and reconstitute identity.'<sup>1</sup> The Germans responded with 'narrative fetishism' - the removal of the trauma from the narrative altogether, the Israelis responded by retroping the Holocaust in an effort to salvage meaning. Despite the expressionist style of Borchert's *The Man Outside* and the documentary principles of Kipphardt's *Brother Eichmann*, the two plays are remarkably similar in intent; and in Israel, group solidarity continued to be roused by public ritual: the motivations behind the Demjanjuk trial, for example, were no different to those behind the Eichmann trial. These responses both in Israel and the Germanies resulted from the same initial wounds which were then shaped by political considerations. But what heightens the stakes, making them more than mere psychological reactions to trauma, is the current political climate which can propel these strategies into extreme polarities, what Walter Benjamin called - *Jetztzeit* - the 'blasting out' of historical episodes from their continuum to service present exigencies. The 1980s both in central Europe and Israel was a decade of political extremism.

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<sup>1</sup> Santer, 'History Beyond the Pleasure', p. 152.

## 5.1. The Federal Republic

### Introduction

The frustration at being cast in the role of 'eternal penitent' reached a peak in the mid 1980s. The decade began on a particularly low note when it was discovered, in 1981, that the West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was planning to sell tanks to Saudi Arabia. The Israeli Premier, Menachem Begin, openly accused Schmidt and the entire German people of being as guilty as the Nazis in perpetuating the same anti-Jewish policies forty years on.<sup>1</sup> Schmidt and his successor Helmut Kohl, elected in October 1982, wondered if the past could ever truly be overcome. Many saw the fortieth anniversary of V.E. Day as the prime opportunity to lay the ghosts of the past to rest publicly and thereby achieve 'normalization' and 'forgetting'. Chancellor Kohl arranged for a double ceremony at a German mass grave in Bitburg and a Jewish one in Bergen-Belsen on 5 May 1985 on the anniversary of V.E. day. The problem was that the Bitburg grave contained forty-nine SS bodies.<sup>2</sup> Thus the victims and victimizers were to be united in a single commemorative ceremony, and this act of 'forgetting' supplanted the Jewish narrative with the German one. The event was to have an extremely high public profile, acting as a major rite to signal the closing of a chapter of history. Kohl increased the importance of the Bitburg-Belsen ceremony by inviting President Ronald Reagan to attend. The act of 'forgetting' therefore, visibly received the endorsement of the Western Alliance. As Yitzhak Rabin, the then Israeli Defence Minister stated, 'The historic mistake of President Reagan was in equating murderers with their victims.'<sup>3</sup>

Reagan's choice of vocabulary at the twin ceremonies did not help diffuse the storm. His rhetoric served to aggravate Jewish anger and endorse Kohl's strategy of universalization. The rationale behind his language was to vilify totalitarianism (Communist Russia and East Germany) and endorse Democracy (West Germany). At Bitburg Reagan 'mourned the human wreckage of totalitarianism'<sup>4</sup> and was 'glad of the re-kindling of the democratic spirit in Germany'.<sup>5</sup> But perhaps his most tactless comment came when he declared: 'We can mourn the German war dead today as victims of a vicious ideology.'<sup>6</sup> Responsibility was restricted to the few.

International Jewish condemnation was swift with rabbis and Jewish leaders boycotting the memorial ceremony at Bergen-Belsen whilst Catholic and Protestant prayers

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<sup>1</sup> Wolffsohn, *Eternal Guilt?*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunday Times* (5 May 1985), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Anson Rabinbach, 'Introduction', in Zipes/Rabinbach, *Germans and Jews Since the Holocaust*, p. 6. Kohl wanted the Nazis to be forgotten and Reagan wanted West Germany's acceptance of Pershing Cruise missiles on German soil and their endorsement of the American 'Star Wars' programme.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times* (6 May 1985), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

went ahead as planned.<sup>1</sup> In Naharaya, Northern Israel, one Holocaust survivor, Yacor Meinberger, went on hunger strike on a grave where soap made from Jews was buried. There were demonstrations outside the American embassy in Tel Aviv and the consulate in Jerusalem, as well as the American embassy in Amsterdam. Israeli politicians, such as Ronnie Milo, Israel's deputy Foreign Minister, and Victor Shemtov, leader of the opposition Mapam Party, joined the angry crowds in the streets. Some politicians wore yellow stars of David as signs of remembrance and protest,<sup>2</sup> and the Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, told the Knesset, 'There can be reconciliation between peoples. There is no reconciliation regarding the past' to which the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* replied, 'After thirty years in NATO reconciliation should not be necessary. It should be a foregone conclusion.'<sup>3</sup> Such comment from the German press indicated how much at cross-purposes the Germans and Israelis were. Peres indicated that, as far as he was concerned, the Israelis had no quarrel with contemporary West Germans but, as a totally separate issue, the past could not be forgotten. Germans, on the other hand saw national identity and self-respect 'withered' by a historical 'tumour' that had to be amputated.

The German people on the whole supported Kohl's strategy. A poll showed that seventy-two per cent of West Germans agreed with the Bitburg-Belsen visit. Not surprisingly, it was mainly young people (under twenty-five) that objected to Kohl's insensitivity.<sup>4</sup> Interviews with 'the man on the street' indicated that many people were angry at being continually cast as the pariahs of Europe. Using the traditional self-defence mechanism of historical analogy, they pointed to the so-called 'civilized' countries' decimation of native Africans, indigenous Americans and their unleashing of the firestorms of Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Kohl's aim of uniting the German and Jewish dead into a single roll-call of totalitarian destruction in order to 'forget' backfired and the Holocaust became a topical issue once again. It was taken up by historians such as Jürgen Habermas, Ernst Nolte and Andreas Hillgruber in what became known as the *Historikerstreit* (The Historians' Battle or Quarrel) which erupted in the summer of 1986. It began with two articles published by Habermas in *Die Zeit*. Referring to the events of the previous year, Habermas examined selective historical narratives and their consequences for national identity. Nolte immediately took issue and published an article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* entitled *A Past That Will Not Pass Away*.<sup>6</sup>

The central issue was whether the Holocaust and, by default, the crimes of the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Times* (6 May 1985), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times* (6 May 1985), p. 1 & p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Sunday Times* (5 May 1985), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times* (7 May 1985), p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Sunday Times* (5 May 1985) p. 17

<sup>6</sup> *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (6 June 1986).

German nation, were unique. Habermas argued that the Final Solution was indeed singular and the German people should accept it as such. Nolte, on the other hand, reasoned that the Germans created concentration camps for political and racial detention only because of the threat of Bolshevism. Moreover, the Russians had been the initial inventors and exponents of such totalitarian measures. The Nazis had merely taken up the same processes but had been technologically superior in their application. Furthermore, Nolte characterized the Soviets as 'Asiatic' warmongers, creating the notion of Nazi Germany as the defender of European civilization against the Mongol hordes. A third historian who joined the debate was Andreas Hillgruber who in 1987 published two essays collectively entitled *Two Kinds of Ruin: the Shattering of the German Reich and the End of European Jewry*. Hillgruber rejected Nolte's argument that the Germans committed genocide because the Russians did it first. Judeocide is central to Hillgruber's historical narrative. However, he places the German and Jewish tragedies adjacent to each other so that they become double threads in the same tragedy. The German tragedy, he argues, was the decimation of German soldiers (especially on the eastern front); the fate of German nationals (particularly, the farmers, who were forced to flee as the Soviets advanced); and the splitting of Germany. Ultimately, Hillgruber's reasoning behind this double tragedy is the same as Nolte's:

They belong together, above all, for their common effect, which was to destroy the so-called Europe of the centre. Once the middle of the continent was broken to pieces in the cataclysm of war, Europe as a whole was the loser.<sup>1</sup>

World War Two became a tragedy about the destruction of western civilization with the Germans as martyred Knights Templar. Whatever the motivations behind Nolte's and Hillgruber's theories, by employing a strategy of comparative analogies, they succeeded in universalizing Judeocide into genocide and then into mass death. Such generalization reduced the magnitude of specific German crimes at the time of the Final Solution.

These arguments were, of course, not new. They were present in West German narrative strategies during and immediately after the war. Markus Imhoof's film, *Das Boot ist voll* (*The Boat is Full*, 1980), for instance, universalizes wartime guilt by looking at a group of Jewish refugees turned back at the Swiss border. The film sought to highlight the hypocrisy of Swiss immigration policy. The most important theatrical offering of the 1980s that appeared to typify this decade's intellectual climate actually had its origins - both thematic and temporal - thirty years beforehand. Heinar Kipphardt's *Brother Eichmann* emphasized German suffering, relativized Nazi crimes and made a tragic figure, if not tragic hero, of the man entrusted with the Final Solution.

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<sup>1</sup>Perry Anderson 'On Emplotment: Two Kinds of Ruin', in Friedlander, *Probing the Limits of Representation*, pp. 54-65; p. 57.

*Brother Eichmann*

Heinar Kipphardt's play premièred in 1983, before Bitburg and the *Historikerstreit* but went into repertory in East and West German theatres for much of the 1980s and well into the 1990s. *Brother Eichmann*, inspired by Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem - The Banality of Evil*, was begun in 1965 at the height of the documentary theatre movement. Kipphardt's play, about the imprisonment, trial and execution of Adolf Eichmann, is a mixture of historical drama and dramatized documents based on transcripts of Eichmann's trial and tapes of his interrogation taken by the Israeli security police. Kipphardt, like Arendt, sought to examine the phenomenon of the desktop murderer: the civil servant who signed the death warrants. Kipphardt abandoned the script in the late 1960s but was inspired to take the project up again by George Tabori's comments in 1978:

From what I read of it, it seems the best antidote to the new Hitler wave: it makes Fascism normal and present instead of leaving it in the demonic past.<sup>1</sup>

Kipphardt then travelled to Jerusalem to study the trial transcripts at first hand. The resulting play undemonizes Eichmann by comparing him to other instigators of atrocity in a series of analogy scenes involving, for example, nuclear warfare experts and Chilean torturers. Kipphardt stated:

When looked at more closely, it can be seen that Eichmann's behaviour has become the normal form of behaviour in our world today... That is why the play is called *Brother Eichmann*.<sup>2</sup>

Kipphardt's intention initially appears to be the same as that of Thomas Mann's in *Brother Hitler* - to reveal the innate Fascist in all of us and to place the emphasis for good and evil on the individual's sense of morality and free will. However, Kipphardt employs a number of strategies, both structural and thematic, that universalize the event and remove the need for individual ethical behaviour. Analogy here leads to levelling which in turn leads to exculpation.

Kipphardt juxtaposes contemporary events with Eichmann's confessions to illuminate the workings of twentieth-century politics. However, two analogies caused particular furore: an Israeli soldier who has a recurrent nightmare about clearing an Arab village whilst wearing an SS uniform and General Ariel Sharon's endorsement of human rights violations during the Lebanon campaign as he struggled to find 'a solution to the Palestinian problem'.<sup>3</sup> These two characters, more than any other, are set up as Eichmann's direct counterparts. For Kipphardt, the Israelis have learned to avoid becoming victims

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<sup>1</sup> Heinar Kipphardt, *Bruder Eichmann*, Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1986, p.197.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Stillmark, 'Brother Eichmann. The Story of an Awkward Relationship', paper given at the Shoah and Performance Conference, Glasgow, 1994, p.4.

<sup>3</sup> Heinar Kipphardt, *Brother Eichmann*, trans. Roy Kift, unpublished, p.61.

again by becoming the next Nazis.

The analogy scenes only began to emerge when Kipphardt was in Jerusalem in the early 1980s where he witnessed the Israeli forces' often brutal methods.<sup>1</sup> By a process of political comparison, Kipphardt's text makes the German crimes appear less unique, and by attacking the former victim's own ethical integrity, the initial outrage less profound. The violation of the 'pure' is always regarded a greater crime than the violation of the 'soiled'.

The diverting of attention from Eichmann's crimes is reinforced by Kipphardt's portrayal of a realistic and sympathetic character. In comparison, the other criminals in the analogy scenes are demonized. The result is that the audience is encouraged to empathize with Eichmann and to vilify his parallels. Eichmann is an average man. He is an apolitical bureaucrat who 'fell' into the role of engineering the Final Solution. This accident in Eichmann's life is raised to the level of tragedy in Kipphardt's play. Eichmann fell into his role because it was his destiny: 'My whole life long I've believed in fate.'<sup>2</sup> He says his destiny was shaped by 'errors which have plagued my life'<sup>3</sup> and his self-confessed fatal flaw is his love of duty and obedience. In an ending that uncannily prefigures the Bitburg scandal, the cremation of Eichmann's body is compared to the cremation of other bodies in other ovens; the smoke billowing from the chimney is compared to plumes of smoke from other chimneys. All war dead are thus united into one symbol of meaningless destruction: twin victims in a narrative similar to that of Hillgruber's. The final picture of the man with an Auschwitz tattoo who pushes Eichmann's dead body into the oven leaves an ambiguous image, similar to that of the gas in the suicide of Beckmann's parents in *The Man Outside* and the deaths of Maria and Lene in *The Marriage of Maria Braun* and *Germany, Pale Mother*, respectively. Kipphardt's closing image can be read either as a criticism of Israeli revenge or as an affirmation of Israeli justice.

The play was intended to be an indictment of human 'civilization' in the twentieth century but it was also read as an apology for those who did exactly the same as Eichmann, namely follow orders. An ambiguous response also ensued in the Democratic Republic where the Berliner Ensemble, directed by Alexander Stillmark, produced the play in 1984 - a year after Kipphardt's death.<sup>4</sup> For the East German audiences, *Brother Eichmann*, addressed the possibility of individual freedom in a totalitarian regime, rather than the Holocaust.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Jewish Telegraph* (26 October 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Kipphardt, *Brother Eichmann*, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Hugh Rorrison, *Plays International* (October 1996), pp. 48-9. Rorrison describes another play on Eichmann at the Berlin Fringe that year. *I Was With Them in Thought* was a monologue delivered by the actor Michael Maassen. It, too, took inspiration from Arendt's theory of 'desk-top' murderers and described the Holocaust as 'just part of the job'.

## 5.1. The Federal Republic

### *Introduction*

The frustration at being cast in the role of 'eternal penitent' reached a peak in the mid 1980s. The decade began on a particularly low note when it was discovered, in 1981, that the West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was planning to sell tanks to Saudi Arabia. The Israeli Premier, Menachem Begin, openly accused Schmidt and the entire German people of being as guilty as the Nazis in perpetuating the same anti-Jewish policies forty years on.<sup>1</sup> Schmidt and his successor Helmut Kohl, elected in October 1982, wondered if the past could ever truly be overcome. Many saw the fortieth anniversary of V.E. Day as the prime opportunity to lay the ghosts of the past to rest publicly and thereby achieve 'normalization' and 'forgetting'. Chancellor Kohl arranged for a double ceremony at a German mass grave in Bitburg and a Jewish one in Bergen-Belsen on 5 May 1985 on the anniversary of V.E. day. The problem was that the Bitburg grave contained forty-nine SS bodies.<sup>2</sup> Thus the victims and victimizers were to be united in a single commemorative ceremony, and this act of 'forgetting' supplanted the Jewish narrative with the German one. The event was to have an extremely high public profile, acting as a major rite to signal the closing of a chapter of history. Kohl increased the importance of the Bitburg-Belsen ceremony by inviting President Ronald Reagan to attend. The act of 'forgetting' therefore, visibly received the endorsement of the Western Alliance. As Yitzhak Rabin, the then Israeli Defence Minister stated, 'The historic mistake of President Reagan was in equating murderers with their victims.'<sup>3</sup>

Reagan's choice of vocabulary at the twin ceremonies did not help diffuse the storm. His rhetoric served to aggravate Jewish anger and endorse Kohl's strategy of universalization. The rationale behind his language was to vilify totalitarianism (Communist Russia and East Germany) and endorse Democracy (West Germany). At Bitburg Reagan 'mourned the human wreckage of totalitarianism'<sup>4</sup> and was 'glad of the re-kindling of the democratic spirit in Germany'.<sup>5</sup> But perhaps his most tactless comment came when he declared: 'We can mourn the German war dead today as victims of a vicious ideology.'<sup>6</sup> Responsibility was restricted to the few.

International Jewish condemnation was swift with rabbis and Jewish leaders boycotting the memorial ceremony at Bergen-Belsen whilst Catholic and Protestant prayers

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<sup>1</sup> Wolffsohn, *Eternal Guilt?*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunday Times* (5 May 1985), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Anson Rabinbach, 'Introduction', in Zipes/Rabinbach, *Germans and Jews Since the Holocaust*, p. 6. Kohl wanted the Nazis to be forgotten and Reagan wanted West Germany's acceptance of Pershing Cruise missiles on German soil and their endorsement of the American 'Star Wars' programme.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times* (6 May 1985), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

went ahead as planned.<sup>1</sup> In Naharaya, Northern Israel, one Holocaust survivor, Yacor Meinberger, went on hunger strike on a grave where soap made from Jews was buried. There were demonstrations outside the American embassy in Tel Aviv and the consulate in Jerusalem, as well as the American embassy in Amsterdam. Israeli politicians, such as Ronnie Milo, Israel's deputy Foreign Minister, and Victor Shemtov, leader of the opposition Mapam Party, joined the angry crowds in the streets. Some politicians wore yellow stars of David as signs of remembrance and protest,<sup>2</sup> and the Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, told the Knesset, 'There can be reconciliation between peoples. There is no reconciliation regarding the past' to which the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* replied, 'After thirty years in NATO reconciliation should not be necessary. It should be a foregone conclusion.'<sup>3</sup> Such comment from the German press indicated how much at cross-purposes the Germans and Israelis were. Peres indicated that, as far as he was concerned, the Israelis had no quarrel with contemporary West Germans but, as a totally separate issue, the past could not be forgotten. Germans, on the other hand saw national identity and self-respect 'withered' by a historical 'tumour' that had to be amputated.

The German people on the whole supported Kohl's strategy. A poll showed that seventy-two per cent of West Germans agreed with the Bitburg-Belsen visit. Not surprisingly, it was mainly young people (under twenty-five) that objected to Kohl's insensitivity.<sup>4</sup> Interviews with 'the man on the street' indicated that many people were angry at being continually cast as the pariahs of Europe. Using the traditional self-defence mechanism of historical analogy, they pointed to the so-called 'civilized' countries' decimation of native Africans, indigenous Americans and their unleashing of the firestorms of Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Kohl's aim of uniting the German and Jewish dead into a single roll-call of totalitarian destruction in order to 'forget' backfired and the Holocaust became a topical issue once again. It was taken up by historians such as Jürgen Habermas, Ernst Nolte and Andreas Hillgruber in what became known as the *Historikerstreit* (The Historians' Battle or Quarrel) which erupted in the summer of 1986. It began with two articles published by Habermas in *Die Zeit*. Referring to the events of the previous year, Habermas examined selective historical narratives and their consequences for national identity. Nolte immediately took issue and published an article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* entitled *A Past That Will Not Pass Away*.<sup>6</sup>

The central issue was whether the Holocaust and, by default, the crimes of the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Times* (6 May 1985), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times* (6 May 1985), p. 1 & p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Sunday Times* (5 May 1985), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times* (7 May 1985), p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Sunday Times* (5 May 1985) p. 17

<sup>6</sup> *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (6 June 1986).

German nation, were unique. Habermas argued that the Final Solution was indeed singular and the German people should accept it as such. Nolte, on the other hand, reasoned that the Germans created concentration camps for political and racial detention only because of the threat of Bolshevism. Moreover, the Russians had been the initial inventors and exponents of such totalitarian measures. The Nazis had merely taken up the same processes but had been technologically superior in their application. Furthermore, Nolte characterized the Soviets as 'Asiatic' warmongers, creating the notion of Nazi Germany as the defender of European civilization against the Mongol hordes. A third historian who joined the debate was Andreas Hillgruber who in 1987 published two essays collectively entitled *Two Kinds of Ruin: the Shattering of the German Reich and the End of European Jewry*. Hillgruber rejected Nolte's argument that the Germans committed genocide because the Russians did it first. Judeocide is central to Hillgruber's historical narrative. However, he places the German and Jewish tragedies adjacent to each other so that they become double threads in the same tragedy. The German tragedy, he argues, was the decimation of German soldiers (especially on the eastern front); the fate of German nationals (particularly, the farmers, who were forced to flee as the Soviets advanced); and the splitting of Germany. Ultimately, Hillgruber's reasoning behind this double tragedy is the same as Nolte's:

They belong together, above all, for their common effect, which was to destroy the so-called Europe of the centre. Once the middle of the continent was broken to pieces in the cataclysm of war, Europe as a whole was the loser.<sup>1</sup>

World War Two became a tragedy about the destruction of western civilization with the Germans as martyred Knights Templar. Whatever the motivations behind Nolte's and Hillgruber's theories, by employing a strategy of comparative analogies, they succeeded in universalizing Judeocide into genocide and then into mass death. Such generalization reduced the magnitude of specific German crimes at the time of the Final Solution.

These arguments were, of course, not new. They were present in West German narrative strategies during and immediately after the war. Markus Imhoof's film, *Das Boot ist voll* (*The Boat is Full*, 1980), for instance, universalizes wartime guilt by looking at a group of Jewish refugees turned back at the Swiss border. The film sought to highlight the hypocrisy of Swiss immigration policy. The most important theatrical offering of the 1980s that appeared to typify this decade's intellectual climate actually had its origins - both thematic and temporal - thirty years beforehand. Heinar Kipphardt's *Brother Eichmann* emphasized German suffering, relativized Nazi crimes and made a tragic figure, if not tragic hero, of the man entrusted with the Final Solution.

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<sup>1</sup>Perry Anderson 'On Emplotment: Two Kinds of Ruin', in Friedlander, *Probing the Limits of Representation*, pp. 54-65; p. 57.

*Brother Eichmann*

Heinar Kipphardt's play premièred in 1983, before Bitburg and the *Historikerstreit* but went into repertory in East and West German theatres for much of the 1980s and well into the 1990s. *Brother Eichmann*, inspired by Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem - The Banality of Evil*, was begun in 1965 at the height of the documentary theatre movement. Kipphardt's play, about the imprisonment, trial and execution of Adolf Eichmann, is a mixture of historical drama and dramatized documents based on transcripts of Eichmann's trial and tapes of his interrogation taken by the Israeli security police. Kipphardt, like Arendt, sought to examine the phenomenon of the desktop murderer: the civil servant who signed the death warrants. Kipphardt abandoned the script in the late 1960s but was inspired to take the project up again by George Tabori's comments in 1978:

From what I read of it, it seems the best antidote to the new Hitler wave: it makes Fascism normal and present instead of leaving it in the demonic past.<sup>1</sup>

Kipphardt then travelled to Jerusalem to study the trial transcripts at first hand. The resulting play undemonizes Eichmann by comparing him to other instigators of atrocity in a series of analogy scenes involving, for example, nuclear warfare experts and Chilean torturers. Kipphardt stated:

When looked at more closely, it can be seen that Eichmann's behaviour has become the normal form of behaviour in our world today... That is why the play is called *Brother Eichmann*.<sup>2</sup>

Kipphardt's intention initially appears to be the same as that of Thomas Mann's in *Brother Hitler* - to reveal the innate Fascist in all of us and to place the emphasis for good and evil on the individual's sense of morality and free will. However, Kipphardt employs a number of strategies, both structural and thematic, that universalize the event and remove the need for individual ethical behaviour. Analogy here leads to levelling which in turn leads to exculpation.

Kipphardt juxtaposes contemporary events with Eichmann's confessions to illuminate the workings of twentieth-century politics. However, two analogies caused particular furore: an Israeli soldier who has a recurrent nightmare about clearing an Arab village whilst wearing an SS uniform and General Ariel Sharon's endorsement of human rights violations during the Lebanon campaign as he struggled to find 'a solution to the Palestinian problem'.<sup>3</sup> These two characters, more than any other, are set up as Eichmann's direct counterparts. For Kipphardt, the Israelis have learned to avoid becoming victims

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<sup>1</sup> Heinar Kipphardt, *Bruder Eichmann*, Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1986, p.197.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Stillmark, 'Brother Eichmann. The Story of an Awkward Relationship', paper given at the Shoah and Performance Conference, Glasgow, 1994, p.4.

<sup>3</sup> Heinar Kipphardt, *Brother Eichmann*, trans. Roy Kift, unpublished, p.61.

again by becoming the next Nazis.

The analogy scenes only began to emerge when Kipphardt was in Jerusalem in the early 1980s where he witnessed the Israeli forces' often brutal methods.<sup>1</sup> By a process of political comparison, Kipphardt's text makes the German crimes appear less unique, and by attacking the former victim's own ethical integrity, the initial outrage less profound. The violation of the 'pure' is always regarded a greater crime than the violation of the 'soiled'.

The diverting of attention from Eichmann's crimes is reinforced by Kipphardt's portrayal of a realistic and sympathetic character. In comparison, the other criminals in the analogy scenes are demonized. The result is that the audience is encouraged to empathize with Eichmann and to vilify his parallels. Eichmann is an average man. He is an apolitical bureaucrat who 'fell' into the role of engineering the Final Solution. This accident in Eichmann's life is raised to the level of tragedy in Kipphardt's play. Eichmann fell into his role because it was his destiny: 'My whole life long I've believed in fate.'<sup>2</sup> He says his destiny was shaped by 'errors which have plagued my life'<sup>3</sup> and his self-confessed fatal flaw is his love of duty and obedience. In an ending that uncannily prefigures the Bitburg scandal, the cremation of Eichmann's body is compared to the cremation of other bodies in other ovens; the smoke billowing from the chimney is compared to plumes of smoke from other chimneys. All war dead are thus united into one symbol of meaningless destruction: twin victims in a narrative similar to that of Hillgruber's. The final picture of the man with an Auschwitz tattoo who pushes Eichmann's dead body into the oven leaves an ambiguous image, similar to that of the gas in the suicide of Beckmann's parents in *The Man Outside* and the deaths of Maria and Lene in *The Marriage of Maria Braun* and *Germany, Pale Mother*, respectively. Kipphardt's closing image can be read either as a criticism of Israeli revenge or as an affirmation of Israeli justice.

The play was intended to be an indictment of human 'civilization' in the twentieth century but it was also read as an apology for those who did exactly the same as Eichmann, namely follow orders. An ambiguous response also ensued in the Democratic Republic where the Berliner Ensemble, directed by Alexander Stillmark, produced the play in 1984 - a year after Kipphardt's death.<sup>4</sup> For the East German audiences, *Brother Eichmann*, addressed the possibility of individual freedom in a totalitarian regime, rather than the Holocaust.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Jewish Telegraph* (26 October 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Kipphardt, *Brother Eichmann*, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Hugh Rorrison, *Plays International* (October 1996), pp. 48-9. Rorrison describes another play on Eichmann at the Berlin Fringe that year. *I Was With Them in Thought* was a monologue delivered by the actor Michael Maassen. It, too, took inspiration from Arendt's theory of 'desk-top' murderers and described the Holocaust as 'just part of the job'.

*Jubiläum*

George Tabori, on the other hand, did not seek to close the past by relativizing Nazi crimes. Nor did he seek merely to produce a memorial to the dead. For Tabori, the danger in remembrance and commemoration is closure and, thereby, forgetting. Although he describes his theatre as cathartic, he argues that the Holocaust should not be dealt with, and thereby forgotten, through emotional release. As always, his use of black comedy is crucial in this and his *Jubiläum* was his blackest play to date. As Tabori said, 'Humour is no laughing matter.'<sup>1</sup> His jokes, like the past itself, should stick in the throat.

*Jubiläum* premièred on 30 January 1983 in Bochum,<sup>2</sup> where he had been invited to produce a play to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the rise of the National Socialists.<sup>3</sup> Set in a cemetery on the banks of the Rhine, the ghosts of Hitler's murdered victims, disturbed by Neo-Nazi acts of desecration, rise to the surface in the belief that history is about to repeat itself. They are, however, confronted with Jürgen, a neo-Nazi, whose racial hatred is not ideological, but is derived from a number of sources which have more to do with contemporary social malaise than a romantic lionization of Germany's Nazi leaders.

Tabori's concern was inherent human Fascism, the human condition, not fatuous links between past and present. The 'victims' in his play are not just Jews, they are people who continue to be persecuted and ostracized today: Mitzi, a spastic girl and Helmut and Otto, homosexual lovers. Therefore, although ostensibly about the rise of National Socialism, *Jubiläum* is equally about the nature of society today. Tabori underscored this point by shifting the production to the foyer of Bochum Schauspiel - a place belonging to the present, where its large glass windows overlook the contemporary world outside, rather than the auditorium where the audience would expect history and fiction to be played out. The audience entrance was used by the characters: Jürgen arrived at the theatre in a taxi and Tabori, as the character of Arnold, departed onto the street in his concentration camp uniform.<sup>4</sup> Reality and fiction, past and present were merged.

Tabori aims to encourage a confrontation with the past and the self by overcoming deep-seated German taboos on the Holocaust. The use of comedy is one of his weapons in liberating his audience from 'pious and mawkish sympathy' and false solemnity into a more deep and profound confrontation with the past.<sup>5</sup> False solemnity and sentimentality, he argues, are merely philo-Semitic responses to the Jewish tragedy. Tabori was intent on shattering these particularly German ritualized responses which, he argued, impeded a real

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<sup>1</sup> Anat Feinberg, 'The Taboos Must be Broken: George Tabori's Mourning Work in *Jubiläum*', paper given at The Shoah and Performance Conference, Glasgow, 1994, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> George Tabori, *Jubiläum*, Berlin: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> Ursula Grützmacher, *Theater Heute*, Vol. 2 (February 1983), p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Feinberg, 'The Taboos Must be Broken', p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

mourning:

As a theatre person when I think about my work I say, well, Strindberg said 'the task of a playwright is to tear off masks', but I went a little further, and I think the task is to tear off fig-leaves.<sup>1</sup>

Like Martin Walser and Martin Sperr, Tabori wanted to address taboos: sexual, religious and political. In *Jubiläum*, his attack is threefold. First, as Anat Feinberg states, 'The victims are not saints but flesh-and-blood men, women and children, with their virtues and their flaws.'<sup>2</sup> His victims are neither tragic heroes nor martyrs. Tabori, like Fassbinder, regarded philo-Semitism as the flip-side of anti-Semitism. Only when German writers stop handling the representation of the Jew with 'kid gloves' will a normal German-Jewish relationship and a real exploration of the past and of the self ensue. Second, Tabori is interested in revealing the 'little Nazi' in everyone and he reveals this latent Fascism by interchanging the victim/persecutor roles. As in *The Cannibals*, the actors play multiple roles. The dead victims, Mitzi, Arnold and Otto also play persecutors and Jürgen plays a trial judge. The crucial element here is choice and Tabori vehemently believes that one only becomes a persecutor through choice. Third, not all his victims are Jewish. Otto and Helmut are persecuted for their homosexuality. Tabori thus challenges the Jewish narrative of exclusive victimhood during the Holocaust.

*Jubiläum* addresses both contemporary social malaise and the Holocaust. As such, Tabori manages to make his rendition of the Holocaust both an event and the Event in human history, both typical and unique. He is at pains to differentiate between the unique Nazis of the past and the neo-Nazi, Jürgen, who belongs to the present. Presenting Neo-Nazism as a continuation of National Socialism, he argues, only confuses both issues. But this 'uniqueness' is perhaps best seen by the use of real history within the fiction, particularly Tabori's personal and, therefore, unique memories. The character of Lotte, dies as the Nazis rise to power, by drowning in a telephone booth. In reality, Tabori's aunt Piroshka committed suicide in a telephone booth in the late 30s. More poignantly, Tabori, as the character of Arnold, recounts the fate of his father, Cornelius, who perished at the hands of the Nazis. Here, it is Tabori who is speaking of the fate of his real father who died in Auschwitz.

The meeting of past and present was intended to highlight universal truths about the destructive nature of Man, not gloss over one group's specific crimes, as in *Brother Eichmann*, to address a separate issue. The doubling of actors as victims and victimizers worked in the same manner as Sylvanus's *Dr Korczak and the Children* - to emphasize

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<sup>1</sup> George Tabori, fax to Michael Billington 1990 regarding the staging of *Mein Kampf Farce* by Yorick Theatre Co. at the Traverse in Edinburgh. Edinburgh: National Library Scotland, Traverse Theatre Archives, Acc 10577/229.

<sup>2</sup> Feinberg, 'The Taboos Must be Broken', p. 10.

moral choice. The German people, Tabori argues, had choice under Hitler as they do now.

## 5.2. The Democratic Republic

As the director of the East German première of *Brother Eichmann* indicated:

Behind the Berlin Wall we lived under the ideology of anti-Fascism; Fascists only existed outside our borders on the other side - How could the outlaw be my brother?<sup>1</sup>

At the Deutsches Theater in 1984 Alexander Stillmark's production sought to shatter the temporal and ideological distance between Nazi and contemporary East Germany by Eichmann's very first appearance on stage. The play was set in a fictional Eichmann and Holocaust museum. On a chair lay Kipphardt's script. A young tourist, the thirty year old actor, Thomas Neuman, lagged behind the rest of the group and flicking through the abandoned script began to assume the role of Eichmann. Stillmark thus linked past to present, Nazi Germany to the Democratic Republic. He contradicted the 'official' narrative of popular Communist resistance during the war and intensive de-Nazification afterwards. He presented contemporary East German citizens as a possible continuum of an alienated past. However, the by-product of such a theatrical strategy was that, as with *A Model Childhood*, the play was read as a critique of life under the contemporary Socialist regime:

With this 'self-infection with Eichmann's language', with this self-examination, we sought after historical answers which we also found formulated in our own situation in an authoritarian state... the language of Eichmann in the mouth of a young person of the Socialist present resulted in an uncomfortable, artificial figure and created a frightening proximity, almost too close for comfort.<sup>2</sup>

Eichmann had indeed become the audience's brother. For a 1980s East German audience, the play became an examination of life under a Socialist regime: indoctrination, fear of denunciation, lack of individual personality and unquestioning obedience to the state. Kipphardt had left East Germany in 1959, disillusioned with the Socialist state. In his diary in 1967 he noted:

What is evil? Evil as a historical category. Slavery - the basis of old cultures - is still certainly today regarded as an evil; work purchased by wages - the basis of bourgeois culture - will presumably appear as an evil to future generations.<sup>3</sup>

Such a comment suggests that Kipphardt's point of departure was vaguely Marxist and explains the play's tendency to relativize twentieth-century atrocity. It also indicates why this production spoke so forcefully to the East German audience for which it was perhaps

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<sup>1</sup> Stillmark, 'Brother Eichman: the Story of an Awkward Relationship,' p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Kipphardt, *Bruder Eichmann*, p. 168. From Kipphardt's diary (26 April 1967): 'Was ist das Böse? Das Böse als historische Kategorie. Die Sklavenhaltung - Grundlage alter Kulturen - wird heute sicher als böse verworfen, der Kauf von Arbeit gegen Lohn - Grundlage der bürgerlichen Kultur - wird einer späteren Gesellschaft böse erscheinen vermutlich.'

originally intended.<sup>1</sup>

Other East German productions that touched on the subject of The Third Reich included Manfred Karge's one woman show, *Mann an Mann (Man to Man)*<sup>2</sup> which, in 1987, was staged across Europe, including London and Edinburgh. The play opens in the 1930s and tells the story of a German woman, Ella, whose husband, a crane operator, dies of cancer. Threatened with destitution, Ella assumes the identity of her husband, Max, and succeeds in fooling everyone about her true identity. Karge was partly inspired by Brecht's *The Job, In the Sweat of Thy Brow Shalt Thou Fail to Earn Thy Bread* and *Mann ist Mann (Man Equals Man)*. It was also based on an apparently true story of a German woman who managed to impersonate her husband for at least seven years.<sup>3</sup>

As Stephen Unwin, the director of the Royal Court production in London in 1988 indicated, the play is really about survival - survival by means of transference of identity, survival by means of acquiescence.<sup>4</sup> Ella/Max may be able to feed and clothe him/herself but she is alienated from her true identity. A personification of East Germany, she reflects the changes and permutations that the country has undergone since the Weimar Republic. Ella survives by acquiescing to the National Socialists and the Communists. Under each regime, she must still hide her identity and her voice.

Importantly, like Eichmann, she is presented as a victim and it is through utilizing Ella's identity as a woman that Karge highlights her victimhood. The true Germany is female, the Nazis masculine. Ella secretly longs for innocence again, her nickname of 'Snow-white' from her early days of marriage becoming the leitmotif of the play. When she is forced to join a military organization she chooses the SA, because it is the only group that does not insist on a medical. Her role in National Socialism was therefore involuntary. She was a victim of the times.<sup>5</sup> Of National Socialism's other victims, little is said.

Karge successfully brings alive what had never been seen on the German stage before - the *Lumpenproletariat* - the beer-swilling, uneducated, apolitical and irrational element of German society. The uncanny feature of Karge's *Lumpenproletariat* is their contemporary recognizability: the neo-Nazis. Crucially, Karge and Kipphardt wrote about the present using historical analogy. Both Stillmark's production of *Brother Eichmann* and Karge's *Man to Man* investigate East German identity and not necessarily East German

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<sup>1</sup> Innes, *Modern German Drama*, p. 73. Kipphardt had left East Germany in 1959 after his dismissal from the Deutsches Theater for refusing to direct a pro-socialist play by Gustav von Wangenheim which he considered 'inept'.

<sup>2</sup> Manfred Karge, *Man to Man*, trans. Tinch Minter and Anthony Vivis, in *Plays International* (December 1987), pp. 78-81. Karge, like Kipphardt, had worked for the Berliner Ensemble.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Vivis, 'What Karge Is After', in *Plays International* (December 1987), p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> W. Stephen Gilbert, review of *Man to Man*, in *Plays International* (February 1988), pp. 26-7.

<sup>5</sup> Karge was not the only German writer to use gender to deconstruct German history. Across the border Helka Sanders-Brahms's 1980 film *Germany, Pale Mother* paints an image of a female Germany raped by the masculine Nazis. It was a variation on German *Väterliteratur* - a Holocaust-free study of parent figures during the war. Utilizing gender was the easiest cognitive means to emphasize Germany's victimhood.

history before 1945. Another East German writer who explored the same themes was Franz Fühmann. Fühmann had been a committed National Socialist until his experiences on the Russian Front. His literary career began with anti-war poetry.<sup>1</sup> He immersed himself in the Communist ethic but by the late 1960s had grown disillusioned. His essay, *Der Sturz des Engels* (*The Fall of the Angel*) is an exposition on his life which he regarded as a failure. It was adapted for the stage by Manfred Weber and first produced in Vienna in 1988.<sup>2</sup> Like *Man to Man*, the play charts the narrator's course from the Third Reich through Communism up to the present day. Again, it is really about the permutations of East German identity. Karge and Fühmann wrote about the war because of the need to understand the contemporary situation and unravel their own identity. They voiced the East Germans' loss of hope, choice and opportunity. As such, they were plays about German mourning and did not include the Jewish narrative.

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<sup>1</sup> Demetz, *After the Fires*, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Franz Fühmann, *The Fallen Angel*, adapted by Manfred Weber, trans. Anthony Vivis, London: Rosica Colin Ltd., 1990. Folio edition, courtesy of the Bush Theatre in London.

### 5.3. Austria

#### *Introduction*

In the late 1980s, with the imminent fiftieth anniversary of the Anschluss, plays about the war and the Holocaust abounded. President Kurt Waldheim, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, on 1 January 1988 made a speech in advance of the anniversary stating that racism had found fertile soil in Austria during the war. He refrained from emphasizing the Jewish aspect and enjoined: 'Let us preserve ourselves from xenophobia and intolerance.'<sup>1</sup> By February, however, after *Der Spiegel's* exposé of Waldheim's involvement in the interrogation, torture and transportation of over 4,000 people from the Balkans, Austria's forgotten past re-surfaced much to the consternation of the Austrians themselves.<sup>2</sup> The arts reflected the topicality of the moment but, apart from Thomas Bernhard, most writers who examined the Holocaust were not Austrian. Austrians were not interested in their country's National Socialist past.

A mix of nationalities made up Vienna's artistic milieu in the 1980s. More than ever, there was a substantial exchange of artists between Germany and Austria, illustrated by the German director, Claus Peyman's appointment to the Burgtheater. The Burgtheater, for all intents and purposes, is the national theatre of Austria. Moreover, Vienna, the pre-war centre of the Jewish entertainment business, found Jewish artists once again dominating its stages with the arrival of George Tabori and Peter Sichrovsky. It therefore becomes difficult to delineate national identities and boundaries in Austria in the late 1980s especially when Thomas Bernhard, the writer who made no distinction between the two German *Heimats*, is taken into account. Others like George Tabori denied having any national identity: 'I don't have any home country. I don't like that word.'<sup>3</sup>

#### *Mein Kampf*

In 1987 Tabori took over a fringe venue in Vienna renaming it 'The Circle'. He worked with a small number of actors using meditation, gymnastics and a mixture of acting styles. He had been exposed to the emotionally stretching 'method' style during his time at the Actors' Studio in New York with Lee Strasberg but also had a profound admiration for Brecht's epic theatre. His plays, therefore, are structured on emotionally engaging moments and shock alienation tactics which make them both moving and intellectually challenging. *Mein Kampf* contains elements of Brecht, Strasberg and Beckett.

*Mein Kampf* was inspired by Reinhold Hamisch's mémoires, written when he was living in an Austrian hostel for the homeless with Hitler.<sup>4</sup> Tabori's play tells the story of an

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<sup>1</sup> *The Times* (2 January 1988), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times* (1 February 1988), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Peter V. Becker, *Tabori*, directed by Michael Bauer, Goethe Institute Videos, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Joe Roe, *The List*, Edinburgh (25-31 August 1989).

old Jew, Shlomo Herzl, who living in a Viennese dosshouse in the early part of the century with a cook by the name of Lobkowitz (also known as God), is trying to write his memoirs which are eventually entitled *Mein Kampf*. As yet, he has not written a word of his opus. Herzl, a bookseller and would-be historian, symbolizes Europe's Jews who never wrote their own history or politically determined their own identity but subsumed themselves within the history and identity of their host nations. As Herzl ponders his book, a young demagogic stranger arrives intent on entering the Academy of Fine Arts. Even though the stranger, now revealed as Hitler, is both anti-Semitic and anti-social, Herzl is immediately drawn to the young man. When Hitler is rejected by the Academy, having been told that he would have better career prospects as a housepainter, Herzl takes care of the unfortunate youth in the manner of a Jewish mother. The more abuse Hitler heaps on him, the more Herzl heaps love and attention on Hitler. Not sure of his future, Hitler is struck by Herzl's suggestion of a career in politics. Thus inspired, Hitler gathers together some old schoolfriends (Himmlich and some *Lederhosen*-clad youths) and sets up campaign headquarters in the dosshouse. He espouses his racial theories (ironically, future sections of his own *Mein Kampf*) and begins to spread his new gospel. Eventually Frau Death arrives looking for Hitler whom she sees as her protégé and future partner: as a 'criminal, as a mass murderer, as an exterminating angel' the young man from Branau-on-the-Inn is 'a natural talent'.<sup>1</sup>

'Herzl' is an allusion to Theodor Herzl the father of Zionism. Yet, this Herzl is an orthodox Jew trying to fathom God's intentions. He bows his head before the enemy: 'Better be hunted than a hunter',<sup>2</sup> and like a true martyr tells Hitler that he has been weeping for 5000 years. After all the suffering he endures, Herzl shows no inclination of migrating to Palestine but instead draws closer to the orthodox fold and recites Kaddish over the one martyred victim in the play - a dead chicken by the name of Mitzi. Lobkowitz (God) who disappeared from the dosshouse on the arrival of Hitler (and the Holocaust-like destruction of Mitzi) tells Herzl, in Messianic terms, to eat the chicken: 'Eat, my son, not in hunger, but in the hope to ingest the martyr's strength.'<sup>3</sup>

The key Jewish question after the Holocaust was: where was God? Lobkowitz answers, 'I was here. I'm always here, only you forgot to look.'<sup>4</sup> Emil Fackenheim argues:

Thus the meaning of Israel's identity is in part revealed: it is to respond, ever again, to a divine challenge; to become, of her own free choice, a people of God, to give perpetual realization to this decision in thought and practice... Yet the meaning of Israel's destiny is also concealed... the Jew cannot understand the final reasons why he was chosen to exemplify these tensions.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>George Tabori, *Mein Kampf*, London: British Library Modern Playscripts, p. 71. The play was later performed in Edinburgh (1989) and the Maxim Gorki Theatre and Deutsches Theater in 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Emil L. Fackenheim, *Quest for Past and Future*, p. 111.

The Jewish nation would therefore seem to be in an absurd position. *Mein Kampf* is Tabori's ironic comment on historical and contemporary orthodoxy in a godless world. As the character of 'Uncle' proposes in *The Cannibals*, the Jews must abandon God and find their own way in an existentialist universe. Herzl prefers to remain in religious ignorance about the nature of the world. 'You've lost part of your humanity since you've been mothering that Branau bastard', Lobkowitz warns Herzl about his political procrastination. Herzl reveals to Hitler how to obtain power, hoping to secure his own stability. He believes assimilation is the key to Jewish survival and is unable to see the warning signs of early Nazism. For instance, Hitler ironically discloses, 'Jew, I appreciate your assistance. When my time has come I shall reward you suitably. I'll buy you an oven so you'll be warm, and when you're old, I'll find you a solution.'<sup>1</sup>

*Mein Kampf* is an ironic exposition on the historical and contemporary Jewish-German relationship where each nation defines its identity by the other. Gitta Honneger, at the première in Vienna, described the Hitler/Herzl duo in 'an impossible Beckettian relationship of clowns'<sup>2</sup> implying that Nazism and Judaism suffer from an extreme case of co-dependency. Nazism is both a rejection of and offspring from Judaism - a conundrum which George Steiner also explores in his novel, *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.*<sup>3</sup> For Steiner and Tabori, Hitler is propelled by a love-hate relationship with the Jews and their faith. In *Mein Kampf* he is pathologically jealous of Herzl's identity as a martyr and inspired by the story of a Chosen People with a divine mission which incorporates martyrdom. In National Socialist terms this translates as *Weltmacht oder Niedergang* (world domination or ruin). As Herzl tells Hitler: 'This last week you've been developing some of the worst habits of both Germans and Jews.'<sup>4</sup>

*Mein Kampf* is an outrageous farce which succeeded in offending audiences in Austria and abroad. Hitler runs around trouserless, the SA are 'nice boys in leather' and Herzl is an impotent old man trying to consummate his relationship with a sixteen year old virgin. Then there is the sacrificing of Mitzi the chicken and chase sequences described 'à la Mac Sennet'. Both in style and subject matter, Tabori seemed determined to give offence and thus shatter taboos. Philo-Semitism, as in *Jubiläum*, is attacked through the use of what could be construed as anti-Semitic imagery. The picture of Herzl, an old Jew trying to seduce an Aryan virgin, was intended to break the vicious circle of philo-Semitic portrayals of objectified Jews on stage. Tabori employs farce and shock tactics to compel the audience into confrontation and hence catharsis. As Lobkowitz at the end of the play says:

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<sup>1</sup> Tabori, *Mein Kampf*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Gitta Honneger, 'Tales From The Imperial City', in *Performing Arts Journal*, Vol. XI, No. 2 (1988), pp. 45-61; p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> George Steiner, *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.*, London: Faber & Faber, 1982.

<sup>4</sup> Tabori, *Mein Kampf*, p. 60.

In the heart of each joke hides a little Holocaust. Like for instance, thief on the cross, hanging, groans. Second thief asks, Does it hurt? First Thief says, Only when I laugh.<sup>1</sup>

For Tabori, laughter releases his German audience from specious gravity, making them reformulate afresh their responses to the Holocaust.

### *Born Guilty*

The fiftieth anniversary of the Anschluss saw a spate of artistic events which dealt with the war and the Holocaust. *Mein Kampf* continued its run into 1988 with Tabori staging his own adaptation of Peter Sichrovsky's *Schuldig geboren (Born Guilty)* - a collection of interviews with the children of known Nazi war criminals.<sup>2</sup> The book caused a stir in February 1987 when portions were serialized in three consecutive issues of *Der Spiegel*. Initially, the editor rejected the scheme feeling that the market was already saturated with information, testimonies and confessionals from the war. Yet when the first segment was printed, the telephones at *Der Spiegel* never stopped ringing with people wanting to talk about their own experiences.<sup>3</sup> As with Gerald Green's *Holocaust* in 1978, many wanted to break the silence.

Sichrovsky, like Tabori, is Jewish. He fled Austria with his parents during the war, returning to settle there permanently after the surrender. In Tabori's production of *Born Guilty*, the topicality of the material and the emotional impact was increased by one of the interviewees playing himself. It also added to the confessional nature of the piece. The play was set simply in a kitchen where blood flowed from a stove at the end. The production was presented on alternate nights with a revival of *The Cannibals* - a play where the children of survivors try to come to terms with their parents' legacy. As Sichrovsky and Tabori discovered through their research, the children of Nazis believed they were victims of the war just as much as the persecuted had been. The situation for the children of the Nazis' was complicated by the inability to mourn because of political impropriety. They felt that they were prevented from mourning their loss of innocence by the weight of history. As Sichrovsky writes:

A forty-year old psychologist told me that I wanted to deny her the role of victim. When she talks about this subject with her friends she is talking to fellow victims, but when she is talking to me she is reminded of her possible complicity in the crime.<sup>4</sup>

Themes of the sins and sufferings of parents being visited upon the children are also apparent in Peter Sichrovsky's *Das Abendmahl (The Supper, 1988)*. Robert, the thirty-

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<sup>1</sup> Tabori, *Mein Kampf*, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Sichrovsky, *Born Guilty. The Children of the Nazis*, trans. Jean Steinberg, London: I. B. Taurus & Co. Ltd, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

seven-year old son of a survivor, lives with the daughter of a former SS Kommandant. The parents have been invited to dinner for the first time. Over the course of the evening it becomes clear that the girlfriend is using Robert to rebel against her father, an accusation which Robert himself levels at her. The evening degenerates into recrimination, mutual embarrassment and sexual violence. The children of the Nazis have been irretrievably tainted by the past as have the children of the victims. They are twin victims of the same catastrophe - or to use Honneger's phrase, entrenched in an 'impossible Beckettian relationship of clowns'<sup>1</sup> - tied together by the same history in which they played no part. Tabori's and Sichrovsky's productions are a kind of Jewish-German *Väterliteratur*. They seek to examine the lives of children who have had to deal with their parents' legacy, whether as children of survivors or children of Nazis. Whereas German *Väterliteratur*, such as that of Reitz, Lowther and Kipphardt, refers to the Holocaust in passing, if at all, the Jewish-German duo Sichrovsky and Tabori were intent on forcing a meeting between the crimes and sufferings of the parents and their descendants.

In 1988, there were plenty of other productions about the war. There was a revival of Hochhuth's *The Representative* and Axel Corti staged Ferdinand Brückner's 1933 *Die Rassen (The Races)* which centred on group of Jewish and German medical students at the time of Hitler's ascent. Any opportunity to make reference to the past was seized. For instance, Claus Peyman's *Richard III* had Gert Voss in the title role made up as Hitler. But it was Thomas Bernhard who again emerged as the *cause célèbre* of the season. In 1981 he had written *Der deutsche Mittagstisch (The German Lunch Table)*, a series of satirical sketches which reflected continuing Nazism and anti-Semitism in modern-day Austria and Germany. It premièred in Bochum. Ironically the play included a typically German family by the name of Bernhard. His next play also centred around a family and climaxed around a lunch table.

### *Heldenplatz*

Heldenplatz (Heroes' Square) in Vienna was the location of Hitler's party-like reception when he marched into Austria in 1938. Bernhard with his play *Heldenplatz* again intended to reveal how little modern-day Austria had come to terms with its involvement in the Third Reich and that anti-Semitism still exists in Austria. The timing of *Heldenplatz* could not have been more apt. 1988 was not only the fiftieth anniversary of the Anschluss, it was also the one hundredth anniversary of the national cultural pride - The Burgtheater. The Burgtheater represents a tradition rooted in the Baroque classicism of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. The appointment of the controversial German, Claus Peyman, as the new Artistic Director of Austria's national theatre sent ripples through the conservative elements of the Austrian arts community. On Peyman's arrival in Vienna the ripples turn

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<sup>1</sup> Honneger, 'Tales From The Imperial City', p. 53.

into a tidal wave. He openly condemned Viennese cultural tradition to the press and then approached Thomas Bernhard to write a play for the Burgtheater's centenary production. The choice of playwright was seen as an insult. Bernhard was regarded as a gloomy moralizer and scandal-maker, certainly not a playwright one would choose for a festive celebration of Austrian culture. Bernhard recognized that the centenary of the Burgtheater provided the perfect occasion to condemn both the saccharine cultural façade of Austrian society and attack the national historical war-narrative of 'the rape of Austria'.

The scandal began with the read-through. Actors walked out, refusing to take part in a theatrical event that slandered their country. Excerpts of the play were leaked to the press and printed out of context.<sup>1</sup> Angry letters were sent to the press. For instance, Bernhard's claim that there are more National Socialists in contemporary Austria than there had been in 1938 and that the President of Austria is 'a crafty liar' angered the public.<sup>2</sup> Evidence suggests that, as with Piscator and Hochhuth a quarter of a century before, contentious fragments of the play were intentionally leaked by the artistic management in order to create a scandal. With increasing problems besetting the production, the date of the première was moved from March to November. However, Peyman continued to bill the production as the official play of the centenary celebrations.

Politicians joined the public debate with ex-Chancellor Bruno Kreisky and right-winger Jorg Haider issuing anti- Peyman/Bernhard statements to the press. They were followed by Waldheim himself who called *Heldenplatz* 'an outrage against the Austrian people'. He argued that Bernhard should look to some of Austria's neighbours, namely Germany, if he wanted to find the real Nazis.<sup>3</sup> As the première approached, letters to the press increased. Peyman and Bernhard were subject to physical abuse in public: one was attacked by an umbrella-wielding old lady, the other by an old man on crutches. Demonstrators gathered outside the theatre from the late afternoon of the première. The moment was crowned when a cartload of horse manure was dumped outside the theatre entrance.<sup>4</sup>

*Heldenplatz* traces the story of two Jewish brothers, Professors Robert and Josef Schuster who fled to Cambridge and Oxford respectively in 1938. They both return in the 1950s, on the invitation of the Austrian government to return to their former university posts, and their old home, an apartment on the Heldenplatz. However, they discover that there is not much to separate the Austria of 1938 from that of the present day. Josef's wife, Hedwig, begins to disintegrate mentally. She believes she can hear crowds cheering 'Sieg Heil' from the square below the apartment. As the voices become more pronounced,

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<sup>1</sup> Suhrkamp agreed not to publish the text until the opening night.

<sup>2</sup> Christine Kiebuszinska, 'The Scandal Maker: Thomas Bernhard and the Reception of *Heldenplatz*', in *Modern Drama*, Issue 38 (1995) pp. 378 - 88; p. 379.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 380.

<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Times* (29 May 1988).

Hedwig becomes a regular visitor to a Viennese mental institution. For the sake of her mental health Josef agrees to move back to Oxford. The action of the play starts in 1988 in Hedwig's and Josef's Heldenplatz apartment just after the fiftieth anniversary of the Anschluss, on the eve of their departure to Oxford. Josef has recently and without explanation committed suicide by throwing himself from the window of their apartment on the fiftieth anniversary of Hitler's arrival in the same spot. The family congregates for the funeral. Hedwig states her intention to continue with her plans to move back to Oxford. Throughout the course of the play the voices in her head become more insistent. At the end of the play, while the family sits around the dinner table, Hedwig is overcome by another attack. This time the audience can hear the chanting too. She succumbs to a heart attack and dies with her head falling face first into her soup.

Bernhard's intention was to present contemporary Austria as part of a continuum with the Nazi Third Reich. He also wanted to have immense fun with his audience, making them the real subject of his play. The barriers between art and reality were stripped away, not only in the numerous references to Austria's contemporary Nazi establishment, but in the design of the play itself. The second act takes place in Vienna's Volksgarten, near the Burgtheater. The design calls for the Burgtheater to be present in the background of Act Two. The audience is truly watching itself being reflected upon in the play.

Peyman and Bernhard went on stage after the première where the applause apparently went on for forty-five minutes.<sup>1</sup> One is tempted to wonder, as with the opening night of Hochhuth's *The Representative*, what caused such a reaction. Bernhard, perhaps did not believe he had forced the Austrian nation into an honest confrontation with the past or the present. Three months later he died leaving a will forbidding any performance of his works in Austria for the next seventy years.

### 5.3. Conclusion

Ironically, apart from Bernhard, no Austrian writer tackled the issue of the Holocaust except Sichrovsky who was Jewish. The example of Waldheim, who was never brought to trial, merely confirmed Austrian strategy in relation to the Holocaust, namely historical amnesia. Bernhard attempted to shake his country from this self-willed forgetfulness but his own embargo ensured that his voice of protest was silenced.

Tabori and Sichrovsky hoped to activate a reinvestigation of the past by encouraging a *meeting between the children of the persecutors and the persecuted*. Both were the victims of a common inheritance, trapped in self-destructive patterns because of a past that had remained a festering wound. Jeaneatte Malkin argues that Bernhard based Josef in *Heldenplatz* on the Austrian writer, Jean Améry.<sup>2</sup> In his writings, Améry refused to forgive

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<sup>1</sup> Kiebuszinska, 'The Scandal Maker: Thomas Bernhard and the Reception of *Heldenplatz*', p. 385.

<sup>2</sup> Jeaneatte R. Malkin, 'In Praise of Resentment: Thomas Bernhard, Jews, *Heldenplatz*', paper given in Glasgow, The Shoah and Performance Conference, Glasgow University, 1994.

the German people and a literary debate developed between himself and Primo Levi. Levi urged understanding regarding his fellow man, particularly towards the Germans. Améry argued, however, that there could be no understanding or forgiveness. In 1978 Améry returned to his native Salzburg where he rented a room and hanged himself. *Heldenplatz* points to the self-destructive nature of remembrance.

Tabori and Bernhard were interested in excavating the past in order to heal wounds. The success of this process lay in establishing a more realistic relationship between the Jews and the Germans, one that was not based on philo-Semitism or guilt. Neither Tabori nor Bernhard present idealized Jews on stage. The autocratic and sometimes tyrannical Josef Schuster and the lascivious Shlomo Herzl find their counterpart in Fassbinder's Rich Jew. All three writers strove for stage representations which were neither one-dimensional nor politically correct, but had their truth in the complex and conflicting layers of reality. As such, all three walked a very fine line between progressive and anti-Semitic representation. Tabori and Bernhard were especially condemned for their perceived 'anti-Semitism'.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ruby Cohen, 'Ruby Cohen in Berlin', in *Plays International* (July 1990), pp. 30-1.

#### 5.4. Israel

##### *Introduction*

In Elie Wiesel's 1987 novel *The Fifth Son*, the son of the survivor, Reuven Tamiroff, reaches the following conclusion about his relationship with his father:

The children of survivors are almost as traumatized as the survivors themselves. I suffer from an Event I have not even experienced.<sup>1</sup>

As with Sichrovsky's *Born Guilty*, much Israeli writing during the 1980s was preoccupied with the effects of the unbearable weight of history upon those born after. David Grossman's *See: Under Love* (one of Israel's bestsellers both nationally and abroad) and Yossi Hadar's play *Biboff* reflect on how a past withheld or distorted through the political prism of Zionism affects the younger generation with disastrous results.<sup>2</sup>

The dissent initiated by writers in the 1970s increased with the invasion of the Lebanon in 1982. By the early 1980s the PLO was entrenched in the Lebanon. A cease-fire had been agreed in 1981 and the border had remained silent for ten months. Then in early June, Shlomo Argov, the Israeli envoy to Britain, was shot in London. Although all eight guerrilla groups within the PLO immediately denied any involvement, Begin ordered a ninety-minute airstrike against PLO camps in the Lebanon and Beirut on Friday 4 June.<sup>3</sup> The invasion commenced. Less than two weeks later, the Red Cross estimated that over 600,000 Lebanese and Palestinians had been driven from their homes<sup>4</sup> with up to 2,000 civilians dead in the town of Sidon alone where a primary school was shelled.<sup>5</sup> By the beginning of August it was estimated that during Israeli night sorties, mortar bombs were hitting Beirut at the rate of one every ten seconds.<sup>6</sup> But the event which caused the greatest public outcry was the massacre of 800 civilians by Christian Phalangist forces (Lebanese Christians allied to Israel) in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps. Initially, the Israeli government denied all responsibility, but eventually it was revealed as the duplicitous engineer behind the attack.<sup>7</sup>

It soon became apparent to many Israelis that the war was not only aggressive in nature but that its premise was politically dubious, in that the PLO had not engineered the attack on Argov. A basic paradox emerged in the foundations of Israeli national identity. There was the reality of Israel, the military aggressor, and the image of Israel, the victim of

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<sup>1</sup> Elie Wiesel, *The Fifth Son*, trans. Marion Wiesel, New York: Viking/Warner Books, 1987, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> David Grossman, *See: Under Love*, trans. Betsy Rosenberg, London: Jonathan Cape/Pan Books, 1990. (Published in Hebrew 1989).

<sup>3</sup> *The Times* (5 June 1982).

<sup>4</sup> *The Times* (14 June 1982).

<sup>5</sup> *The Times* (19 June 1982).

<sup>6</sup> *The Times* (5 August 1982).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

global anti-Semitism. Menachem Begin, the Prime Minister, in charge of one of the most modern armies in the world, continued to invoke the archetypal rhetoric of Jewish national destruction: Arafat as Hitler, Israel as a beleaguered ghetto. As Amos Oz, a journalist and member of the Peace Now movement, wrote:

Time again, Mr Begin, you publicly betray a weird urge to resurrect Hitler from the dead just so that you may kill him over and over again each day: sometimes cast as Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, at other times in the role of terrorists, or the Soviets, or Bruno Kreisky, or the Iraqis, or virtually every gentile who has ever fought us or opposed our conduct.<sup>1</sup>

The biblical master narrative of the eternal battle of 'Them and Us' was now subsumed within the Zionist one. Begin's strategy was nothing new. Ben Gurion had employed it at the time of the Eichmann Trial and Golda Meir during the Yom Kippur War. What split public opinion this time was the motivation behind the war and the way in which it was waged. As Amos Oz accused Begin in the press, 'Your real purpose is to reduce the Palestinians into a submissive group of serfs brought to its knees within the Greater Israel of your fantasies.'<sup>2</sup>

Writers such as Yehuda Bauer and Dan Meron, Professor of Literature at the Hebrew University, added their voices to the protest. Meron openly accused Begin and Sharon of fabricating a web of lies, employing euphemistic vocabulary to pursue military tactics. Highlighting the hypocrisy of Israel's military aggression against an outnumbered and ill-equipped adversary, he asserted that the name of the invasion campaign 'Operation Peace for Galilee' was downright 'Orwellian'.<sup>3</sup> Amos Oz called the invasion a mere pretext for the sole objective of eradicating an 'irritant'.<sup>4</sup> In an unprecedented move, *The Jerusalem Post* questioned General Ariel Sharon's and Begin's methods. On 10 June 1981 *Ha'aretz* called for an immediate cease-fire.<sup>5</sup> Other newspapers, such as *Al Hamishmar*, soon adopted the same line and the protest movement gathered momentum. Satirical anti-war poetry and plays such as Hanoach Levin's scathing cabaret number, *The Patriot (Ha-Patriot)* augmented the voice of protest. Christopher Walker, an English correspondent in Jerusalem, wrote that the popular reaction to the Lebanese slaughter was singular :

It [the war] produced a phenomenon not seen during the other 5 [wars] - there is now internal dissent about the war on a scale never experienced among people who traditionally unite behind their soldiers.<sup>6</sup>

The protest was not limited to Israel. International media condemnation verged on the

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<sup>1</sup> Amos Oz, *The Slopes of Lebanon*, trans. Maurice Goldberg-Bantura, London: Vintage Books, 1991, p. 28. (First published in Hebrew in 1987).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times* (14 June 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Oz, *The Slopes of Lebanon*, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *The Times* (11 June 1982).

<sup>6</sup> *The Times* (22 June 1982).

sensationalist utilizing predictable analogies: namely, the Israelis as the new Nazis. TASS accused Israel of embarking on the genocide of the Palestinians<sup>1</sup> and the Greek Premier, Andreas Papandreu, compared the Israelis to the Nazis and the 'heroic and proud' Palestinians to the Jews of the Holocaust.<sup>2</sup> Israeli writers drew similar parallels. In Hanoch Levin's *Ha-Patriot* scandal erupted over a scene which physically recreated the photograph of the boy in the Warsaw ghetto, arms raised surrounded by Nazis (the famous photograph that Danny Horowitz also employed with satirical effect in *Cherli-Ka-Cherli*). In Levin's satire, however, the small boy was patently Palestinian and the soldiers Israeli.<sup>3</sup> Levin had wanted his audience to feel empathy with the Palestinian child. Critics and public alike found the image tasteless.

The intention of many writers was to shatter the various social taboos with which the Holocaust had become enmeshed as well as destroy the tendency to speak of suffering in exclusively Jewish terms. This meant removing its status as 'unique' and its aura of 'untouchability'. Joshua Sobol and Yossi Hadar attempted this by questioning the Zionist narrative of the Holocaust which denied all other narratives. The Zionist structures of national mourning and national identity stunted individual identity and denied a true catharsis of past events. As Joshua Sobol writes:

Israel lives on a frozen ocean of tears; my urge is to use an axe, to break this ice and let the tears come out.<sup>4</sup>

This emotional cauterization was the result of a ritualized pattern of mourning that had been perpetuated throughout the fabric of Israeli society, achieved through national remembrance days, the vocabulary individual politicians utilized, and the manner in which the Holocaust had been emplotted in a Zionist narrative. All of these emphasize armed self defence. Institutionalized ritual is more concerned with sustaining anger than healing wounds. Levin and Sobol argue that only when the Holocaust had been refigured afresh and outwith the Zionist narrative can a real sense of mourning take place and hence progression in both a political and human sense - a kind of advanced *Trauerarbeit*. To appraise the Holocaust in a fresh manner, writers had to go to the source of memory itself: the survivors. A second pattern which emerged in Israeli writing was the reclamation of the past - a reinvestigation of what actually happened as opposed to what strands of the Holocaust story had been repeated and filtered down. Necessarily, contact with survivors resulted in a re-examination of the standard images: specifically that of martyr, hero and collaborator. All three 'types' had held implications for contemporary Israelis even before the War of Independence. Those who

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<sup>1</sup> *The Times* (7 June 1982).

<sup>2</sup> *The Times* (23 June 1982).

<sup>3</sup> Young, *Writing and Re-writing the Holocaust*, p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> Joshua Sobol in *Ghetto*, Scottish Youth Theatre Programme, the Old Athenium, Glasgow (summer season 1995).

had collaborated with the Nazis were viewed as social outcasts. Laws to prosecute collaborators had been passed the same year that the law to prosecute Nazi war criminals had been initiated.<sup>1</sup> Collaborators had negotiated with the enemy and betrayed the nation of Israel. Successive Israeli leaders insisted that no negotiation was possible with contemporary enemies, namely the Arabs. Partisan fighters and resistance workers, on the other hand, were lionized. Like the Israeli military dead, the partisans had died honourably. Those Jews who died in the general history of 'Jew versus gentile' were elevated to the status of martyr. But in the 1980s these attitudes began to be questioned, significantly in 1986 by Elie Wiesel:

I find it shocking, if not indecent, that one must plead to protect the dead. For that is the issue: they are being dug up in order to be pilloried. The questions asked of them are only reproaches. They are being blamed, these corpses, for acting as they did: they should have played their roles differently, if only to reassure the living who might thus go on believing in the nobility of man... For the sake of convenience and also to satisfy our mania to classify and define everything, we need some distinctions: between the Germans and the Judenräte, between the kapos and the ghetto police, between the nameless victims and the victim who obtained a reprieve for a week, for a month. We judge them and we hand out a certificate for good or bad conduct. We detest some more than others.<sup>2</sup>

This division of people into 'types' had been essential for maintaining clear parameters for popular response in times of crisis. Annual ritual and single public events played a key part in this process. The staging of the John Demjanjuk trial (the 'Ivan the Terrible' of Treblinka), in Israel in 1987, was partially motivated by the government's attempt to stem increasing dissent. In the same decade that Kurt Waldheim 'got off' and international pressure was brought to bear against the Israelis over the Palestinians, Menachem Begin, like Ben Gurion, needed to stage a trial in which he could defend his actions to the world and galvanize Israeli popular reaction into supporting another 'defence' against the aggressor. Hence the Demjanjuk case was the first war crimes trial to be televised in its entirety. The proceedings took place in a specially leased theatre hall, rather than a courtroom, to accommodate the 'audience' for one of Israel's most public theatrical spectacles of the decade:

As soon as he was extradited, Demjanjuk was condemned by the Israeli public and media. As a result of the atmosphere surrounding the case... it was made clear even before the trial began that the court, like the media, would find him guilty at the end of the show trial it was planning. After all, the theatre was not rented to provide live TV coverage of his acquittal.<sup>3</sup>

Many people found such a strategy outdated, simplistic, manipulative and inappropriate especially when it was discovered that Demjanjuk's whereabouts had been known for at

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<sup>1</sup> Barker, *The Legal System of Israel*, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Elie Wiesel, *Legends of Our Time*, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> Yoram Sheftal, *The Demjanjuk Affair. The Rise and Fall of A Show Trial*, trans. Haim Watzman, London: Victor Gollancz, 1994, pp. xii-xiv.

least the last ten years.<sup>1</sup> The Demjanjuk trial illustrates the theatrical nature of Israeli politics and society. Israel, like many other countries, is a nation of theatrical emblems. By the 1980s it became a stage on which the same tired clichés and narratives were being played out over and over again.

When survivors began to speak out, the theatricality of these ritualized responses was illuminated. As David Grossman points out, traditionally survivors had not been encouraged to share their experiences. With their testimonies came the realization that the division between collaborators, heroes and martyrs was not as clear-cut as convention suggested. Most people belonged to, as Primo Levi put it, the 'Grey Zone'.<sup>2</sup> In the 1980s there was a pronounced appearance of first-person narratives which focused on subjective memory rather than recorded historical narrative. Joshua Sobol, for instance, had found inspiration for his *Ghetto* trilogy in the chance discovery of the former director of the Vilna theatre troupe, Israel Segal, who lived in anonymity a few streets from his own home. Segal had been impugned as a collaborator. Sobol's plays were the first to take their impulse from the words of survivors, and they mark the first appearance of a ghetto on the Israeli stage.

Fifteen years after the first production, Sobol continues to redraft his work as more information from survivors come to light. The subjective viewpoint of the 'memory owner' is reinforced by Sobol's theatrical strategy: all three plays start in the present with a survivor or child of a survivor acting as the spectator's guide into the past. Sobol uses this framing technique to raise questions about the nature of historical narratives and subjective emplotment. Both this and the continual re-drafting stress that memory is a fluctuating quantity and history is more subjective than generally accepted. At the heart of the trilogy lies Sobol's intention to get to the 'truth' of the survivors' stories.

In the public sphere, as testimonies emerged and the government came under attack, chasms began to emerge in some of the most basic tenets of Zionist identity and history. Differences arose between individual memory and recorded history, the state and the individual; the image of Israel as beleaguered David and Israel as mighty Goliath. Israel developed what could be described as a split identity. Those in the protest movement noted that Israel was pursuing an insane course in the quest for peace. Peace could not result from military aggression, they argued. In theatre, themes of identity crisis and insanity were taken up. The irony running through these storylines is that those who see the truth of the situation stand outside society (outside the collective with its rituals and herd mentality) and are deemed mad. Yet only they see the truth. This sense of schizophrenia is not only apparent in individual characters but in the structure of works as well - what Freddie Rokem

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. xiii. Demjanjuk was eventually acquitted and released because of lack of evidence and the unreliability of the witnesses.

<sup>2</sup> Primo Levi, 'The Grey Zone', in *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal, London: Abacus Books, 1988, pp. 22-51.

refers to as 'the fantastic'.<sup>1</sup> 'The fantastic' is a development of the overt use of theatricality from the 1970s - the self-conscious emphasis on the audience watching a construction about construction. The fantastic favours images of circuses, plays within plays and the downright bizarre. It seeks to create a world of madness through which the truth is revealed. The 'fantastic' is thus similar to Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the 'carnavalesque': in a world where individual identity has become consumed within the collective (for Bakhtin, Communism) official norms, periodically, are overturned during festive occasions and every man is allowed to speak his mind.<sup>2</sup> For example, the climactic scene of Hanoch Levin's *The Sufferings of Job*, shows a circus master taking possession of Job's inert but alive body to offer it up to the public as a spectacle of ghoulish suffering. After losing his sons and all his earthly possessions, Job refuses to denounce his recently re-discovered Jewish God to a Roman soldier. His friends deem his actions to be insane, but Job is the only one who can see truth in his 'insanity'.<sup>3</sup>

The use of the 'fantastic' as Rokem points out, is linked to the rise of the first-person narrative and the interest in subjective memory opposed to 'historical' narrative. Writers must necessarily stretch their own imagination and that of the post-Holocaust audience who have become inured to the subject through social ritualization. They must find ways to express what is often considered inexpressible. Primo Levi in *Survival in Auschwitz* writes:

Just as our hunger is not that feeling of missing a meal, so our way of being cold has need of a new word. We say, 'hunger' we say 'tiredness' 'fear' 'pain,' we say 'Winter' and they are different things. They are free words, created and used by free men who lived in comfort and suffering in their own homes. If the *Lagers* (camps) had lasted longer, a new harsh language would have been born; and only this language could express what it means to toil the whole day in the wind, with the temperatures below freezing, wearing only a shirt, underpants, cloth jacket and trousers, and in one's body nothing but weakness, hunger and knowledge of the end drawing near.<sup>4</sup>

Lawrence L. Langer challenged writers to create a new vocabulary which would give shape to a terrain which had never previously been seen and which perhaps defied language itself. Israeli writers in the 1980s reached back beyond language to something more primitive. Language organizes: it is an expression of reason. The camps defied reason. Words impose a rational structure on the irrational and reduce the horror. They are agents of the brain, not the heart or the senses. Fine writing therefore runs the risk of engaging the intellect, not the emotions. Israeli writers in the 1980s assailed their audiences on an emotional and, more importantly, on a physical level, in order to activate feeling.

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<sup>1</sup> Freddie Rokem, 'Theatre and Survival: On the Fantastic in Holocaust Performances', paper given at The Shoah and Theatre Performance, Glasgow, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> Hanoch Levin, *The Sufferings of Job*, trans. Barbara Harshav, in *Modern Israeli Drama*, Michael Taub, ed., Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heineman Educational Books Inc., 1993.

<sup>4</sup> Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, trans. Stuart Woolf, New York: Collier Books, 1961, pp. 112-113.

### 5.4.a National Schizophrenia

#### *The Nazi Israeli*

'The Nazi Beast would come out of any kind of animal if it got the right care and nourishment', discovers Momik, the boy protagonist, in the first part of David Grossman's *See: Under Love* as he tries to piece together the fragments of his parents' past 'over there' from their cryptic vocabulary.<sup>1</sup> As Momik grows up he learns just how true the above statement is: 'We are responsible murderers, albeit looking out for our own welfare, polite and anxious, but murderers nonetheless.'<sup>2</sup> Grossman concludes that the development of Israeli Fascism was inevitable because the past has been distorted, abused, manipulated and atrophied into lifeless narratives. The Jewish national identity is built on hate, fear and paranoia rather than love and humanity. 'Those we appoint to defend us' writes Grossman, 'strangle our happiness little by little.'<sup>3</sup> Grossman's writings are concerned with the need to understand, empathize and heal wounds.

Yossi Hadar's play *Biboff* is darker and more vitriolic.<sup>4</sup> The play premiered at the Habima in 1986 with subsequent productions in London and the USA. The action opens in 1968 in a psychiatric ward of an Israeli hospital. The significance of the date (one year after the Six Day War) is that it signalled the emergence of the first cracks in the Pioneer-Zionist hegemony. This was a turning point in Israeli identity. The Six Day War had proved to the world and Israel's own inhabitants that Israel was no longer 'Little David'. Israelis, too, could be oppressors.

Doctor Ziv, *Biboff*'s narrator, is confronted with an eighteen-year-old Israeli boy, Yitzhak Dvir, who, dressed in full SS uniform, believes himself to be Hans Biboff, the Nazi official in charge of Lodz ghetto. He has been admitted to hospital after attempting to burn down his home with his parents and uncle, Holocaust survivors, inside. Doctor Ziv's question is: 'Why does a good Israeli boy choose to be a Nazi?'<sup>5</sup> It transpires that too many secrets about the past have been kept from him. None of Yitzhak's family talk about the Holocaust or their past in Lodz. The only way he can relate to the Holocaust is in contemporary political terms - as a warning to achieve, at any cost, supremacy in the modern Middle East. Yitzhak feels that as soon as he dons his SS uniform his fears of inadequacy and confusion disappear. To prevent himself becoming a victim, he must emulate the historical oppressor. For Yitzhak, Israel is a ghetto. In a word association game with Ziv, Yitzhak connotes Tel Aviv as Theresienstadt and then Treblinka. 'If this is a ghetto, then someone has to be Biboff',<sup>6</sup> he argues and he tells Palestinians, 'Dirty Arabs we'll slit your

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<sup>1</sup> Grossman, *See: Under Love*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Yossi Hadar, *Biboff*, trans. Isaiah Bar Yaacov, folio edition available in The British Library, London, Modern Playscripts 5420.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p 15.

throats.<sup>1</sup>

Doctor Ziv's fascination arises from the realization of his own latent Fascism: 'Something sent shivers down my spine and made contact with the dark secret part of my soul.' Doctor Ziv's Fascism, however, is not directed at the Arabs but at Holocaust survivors and his own patients. He is particularly condescending to Yitzhak's Uncle Noah, whom he mentally caricatures as an untrustworthy and manipulative eastern European Jew. As for Yitzhak himself, Doctor Ziv is only excited about him as an interesting case study rather than as a human being in pain.

Joshua Sobol's *Ghetto Triptych* (1983-9) centres on the theatre troupe, hospital and resistance movement within the Vilna ghetto. The trilogy is an examination of Zionist ideals and the present spiritual state of Israel, especially the 'kill or be killed' philosophy towards the Arabs which, Sobol believes, results from historical trauma. As Jacob Gens, head of the Vilna Jews, reflects about the Nazis' impact on future Jewish identity:

Jews have always suffered, always. Never like this. They want to kill us all. Listen: all. They won't. No, no, they're going to lose this war. But when they've retreated, gone, what state will our souls be in? Pure, Jewish, healthy? Or riddled with their fatal disease?<sup>2</sup>

Sobol is particularly interested in how the past affects events in the present, in other words, *Geschichtspolitik*. The last play of the trilogy, *Adam*, calls for the sound of 'some eternal Middle Eastern war' to be heard in the background - an allusion to the Intifada at the time the play was written.<sup>3</sup> Each play in the trilogy is rooted firmly in the present, narrated from the perspective of a survivor or descendant of one who perished. Thus past and present are linked in an examination of how history has been used to create a system that institutionalizes mourning and triggers self-defence mechanisms. Several subtle analogies, perceptible to an Israeli audience, examine the emergence of Fascism in modern Israel. For instance, the actors in *Ghetto* dress as their Jewish or Nazi characters before the audience, showing how easily one can assume the identity of a victimizer or a victim. *Adam*, the third in the trilogy, again shows how the oppressed have become the oppressors. Adam Rolenik, the supposed leader of the underground, is forced to endure the screams of an unknown woman and her child behind a wall when being interrogated by Kittel, the German commander of Vilna ghetto:

Kittel: All right, I'll make it easier for you: this woman is not even one of your people. She is a foreigner. That eases your conscience, doesn't it? You must be asking yourself, why am I telling you all this? Well, because I don't give a shit about any 'information' which you might be withholding from me... I want only one thing: to show that you are no better than I am, because if you are an honest man you must be realizing and admitting to yourself that you love your children more than your comrades, and your comrades more

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p 18.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua Sobol, *Ghetto*, trans. David Lan, London: Nick Hern Books, 1989, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> The Palestinian uprising initiated in the late 1980s in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

than the rest of your people, and the rest of your people more than foreigners.<sup>1</sup>

Adam discovers his own Fascism by the realization that he considers some lives more worthy than others. His willingness to sacrifice 'foreigners' to safeguard his own people is intended to parallel Hitler's prime directive of Aryan supremacy. Sobol, like Grossman, aimed to reveal how the Holocaust, as reflected through the Zionist narrative, distorts the memory of those who suffered and perpetuates suffering in the present. As Sobol said, 'I wrote it [*Ghetto*] in '82,'83. Israel was involved in the war in the Lebanon. I must say that I was terribly afraid by then that we have been maybe contaminated, more than we knew, by our oppressors.'<sup>2</sup> The Israelis had been tainted by the Nazis because the trauma of the Holocaust had impressed upon the Jews the imperative for self-defence. For him, Jewish spirituality had been impaired by the new military identity.

#### 5.4. b. *Collaborators, Heroes and Martyrs.*

##### *The Grey Zone.*

As Sep says to his wife, Old Nadya, in Sobol's *Adam*:

Adam is a first rate survivor, I know he is a national hero; you are a second rate survivor, because you saved our honour, and I am a third rate survivor because I saved only myself.<sup>3</sup>

In *Adam* Sobol attempts to expose the hierarchy through which survivors are classed (heroes, martyrs, victims and collaborators), as a politically motivated division which has more to do with the marshalling of Israeli identity than the Holocaust itself. Told from the survivor, Old Nadya's point of view, *Adam* reveals the dichotomy between history as recorded and history as embodied in memory. The underground movement in Vilna and its leader Adam, for instance, are now celebrated as daring heroes by the Israelis. Underground members had not gone 'like sheep to the slaughter'. Nadya, however, knows another 'truth': the partisans were human beings not heroes. They could be disorganized, fearful, spiteful, unthinking and, above all, cowardly. Old Nadya and Sep tour the country giving story-telling sessions about the Holocaust as part of an educational programme. Instead of telling the real story of Adam and the Underground, Old Nadya agrees to recount the story the Israelis *want* to hear: that the Underground movement was the courageous forerunner of the Zionist pioneer generation. The ghost of Adam begs Nadya to tell the real story because 'Everyone tells my story the way it suits him.'<sup>4</sup> Themes of image and appearance are intricately threaded through the play with the message that each person sees

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<sup>1</sup> Joshua Sobol, *Adam*, trans. Joshua Sobol and Miriam Schlesinger, unpublished, 1990, p. 3

<sup>2</sup> *Kaleidoscope*, BBC Radio 4. Conversation with Joshua Sobol. Produced by Anthony Denselow. Transcript available through the Royal National Theatre library, London.

<sup>3</sup> Sobol, *Adam*, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

what he wants to see and repeats what he wants to hear. Young Nadya, for instance, falls in love with the image of Adam as a romantic leader of the Underground. When Adam's identity as the real leader's decoy is revealed, he loses his 'movie-star' charisma and she abruptly falls out of love with him.

Sobol also examines the portrayal of the collaborator. Sobol's protagonist, Jacob Gens, is the focal point of all three plays. Gens, the historical leader of the ghetto, used the traditional method by which Jews, for over 2000 years, had tried to ensure their security: negotiation not confrontation. The Jews were the people of the word not the gun. Gens believes that bargaining can be more profitable than fighting. By implication, Sobol is casting a shadow on modern Israel's incapacity to sue for peace across the negotiating table. Pleas for increased understanding, negotiation and compromise between the Jews and Palestinians were first seen in Sobol's 1985 play *The Palestinian Girl*<sup>1</sup> in which a mixed Arab/Israeli film crew can only complete a joint project through concession. Sobol pursued the notion of concession more forcefully in his recreation of Jacob Gens. Regarded by historians as a collaborator, Gens's only interest was saving as many Jews as possible, a feat which necessarily involved negotiation and compromise with the Nazis.

Traditionally, collaborators have been regarded with equal contempt as the Nazis because they had contravened the Maimonides principle. This was seen by the passion evoked during the 1954 trial of Rudolf Kastzner (head of the Jewish Council in Budapest) resulting in his subsequent assassination by an outraged citizen.<sup>2</sup> In the social arena of the theatre the main objective was to reinforce desired social responses. Ever since the Habima's 1933 production of *Jew Süß*, collaborators have been vilified. In the 1980s theatrical representations of Jacob Gens and Rudolf Kastzner countered this polarized presentation. In Sobol's *Ghetto* trilogy and Motti Lerner's play *Kastzner*, each of these historical figures receive a fair hearing. Gens is forced into the position of selecting his own people for transportation which he knows means certain death. He realizes that if he does not enter into this 'pact with the devil', the Nazis will take who they want and probably in greater numbers. So Gens attempts to buy the lives of the young and healthy by sending the elderly and infirm to the camps - a course of action which sends him to the brink of mental collapse. He knows what he has become and how his own people perceive him. He is attacked by the ghetto librarian, Kruk, for betraying his people. Gens argues that Kruk and his colleagues, by rigidly adhering to moral absolutes, are, in fact, generating more death and suffering. They have withdrawn from the arena of real decision making whereas he cannot 'afford the luxury of a clean conscience'. Gens's dilemma is paralleled in a skit performed by the Vilna actors. A doctor asks a rabbi's advice on whether he should maintain distributing his depleting supply of insulin to all his diabetic patients equally, thus

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<sup>1</sup> Joshua Sobol, *The Palestinian Girl (or Shooting Magda)*, trans. Joshua Sobol and Miriam Schlesinger, unpublished, 1985.

<sup>2</sup>Dan Laor, 'Theatrical Interpretation of the Shoah: Image and Counter-Image', p. 8.

ensuring their survival for a matter of a few months, or give the medication to only those who are young, healthy and have families to support, thus ensuring the survival of the fittest for a longer period of time. The rabbi argues that self-selection is 'Nazi medicine' and refuses to discuss the matter further. The doctor is left with the moral predicament. As Gens says to Kruk, 'History will judge us. At the time of catastrophe, who served the Jews better, you and your ideals, or me?'<sup>1</sup>

The most written about figure in the 1980s was Doctor Rudolf Kastzner. As Dan Laor writes, the figure of Kastzner represented for the 1980s what Senesh represented in the 1950s and 1960s - role models for progressive Israeli identity.<sup>2</sup> The difference between these two historical, Hungarian Jews is that they were situated at the extreme ends of the hierarchy of Holocaust membership.<sup>3</sup> Kastzner had negotiated with Eichmann himself, and was regarded as the direct antithesis to the sabra ideal embodied in Senesh. Either figure represents a different response to national crisis. In 1982, coinciding with the Lebanese invasion, Yehuda Kaveh made a two part television documentary about Kastzner, giving a fair portrait of the man and criticizing the manner in which he had been dealt with by the Israeli Judiciary and his fellow Israelis. This documentary was followed in 1984 by a devised piece, *Reszö*, by David Levine, director of the Habima, and the writer Miri Shomron, which Laor describes as a 'favourable' trial drama about Kastzner. Then in 1985 there was a highly successful production by the Cameri of Motti Lerner's first play *Kastzner* which provided a positive and humane picture of the former collaborator. Born in Israel in 1949, Lerner had originally written a three-part television drama on Kastzner in 1984. His play proved extremely successful winning the Aharon Meskin Prize in 1986.<sup>4</sup> By 1987 the first biography of Kastzner appeared written by Don Dinur and in the early 1990s an opera was commissioned.<sup>5</sup>

All the above works attempt to exonerate Kastzner and remove the stigma of collaboration and, by implication, negotiation. Sobol and Lerner highlight the necessity for mediation in the struggle for Jewish survival. Gad Kaynar interprets Lerner's portrayal of Kastzner as a direct comment on Israeli Right-wing attitudes regarding the Palestinians:

It is not Rudolf Kastzner who negotiates with Eichmann in Motti Lerner's *Kastzner*, but an ideal Leftist Israeli politician dealing with the demonic incarnation of the PLO leader in the Israeli reality-convention of 1986.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sobol, *Ghetto*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Dan Laor, 'Theatrical Interpretation of the Shoah: Image and Counter-Image', p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 682: After the Hungarian invasion in March 1944, Kastzner negotiated his famous 'Jews for trucks' deal. As a result 1,686 Jews left Budapest by special train in June 1944.

Laor, 'Theatrical Interpretation of the Shoah: Image and Counter-Image', p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Motti Lerner, *Kastzner*, trans. Imre Goldstein, in Michael Taub, ed., *Israeli Holocaust Drama*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996, pp. 187-267.

<sup>5</sup> Arie Shapira, *The Kastzner Trial: Electronic Opera in 13 Scenes*, 1991-94.

<sup>6</sup> Gad Kaynar, 'What's Wrong with the Usual Description of Extermination? National Socialism and the Holocaust as a Self-Image Metaphor in Israeli Drama: The Aesthetic Conversion of a National Tragedy into

Sobol and Lerner attempt to reclaim Jewish history.<sup>1</sup> Rejecting the simple, moral categories established by the Zionist narrative (a narrative which prescribed collaboration, pacifism and religious martyrdom as unacceptable while heroism, idealism, and Zionist martyrdom was welcome), writers sought to portray people as human beings with all their frailties. Sobol's characters are never morally pure, never totally convinced of their actions. The character of Doctor Weiner in the second play of the *Ghetto* trilogy, *Underground*, agrees to run a secret quarantine ward even though his actions could result in his own death sentence.<sup>2</sup> His motive's, however, are not noble. He agrees because he has fallen in love with Sonja, another doctor. Even though his wife and child are possibly still alive, he embarks on an affair. His perceived heroism has a very human and unheroic basis. As David Grossman argues, tackling Adorno's aphorism on 'no poetry after Auschwitz': 'There were human beings in Auschwitz... and that's exactly what makes poetry possible.'<sup>3</sup> Grossman, Lerner and Sobol present human beings not political icons.

#### 5.4.c. The 'Fantastic'

One Jewish watchman, especially selected by the Germans, was stationed in front of the door of our barrack. He wore red pants, like those of a Circassian, a tight fitting jacket and wooden cartridges on both sides of his chest. He wore a tall fur calpac on his head and carried a wooden rifle. He was forced to clown and dance to the point of exhaustion. On Sundays he wore a suit of white linen with red stripes on the pants, red facings and a red sash. The Germans often got him drunk and used him for horseplay... His name was Moritz and he came from Czestochowa.

Another such poor wretch was the so-called Scheissmeister (shitmaster). He was dressed like a cantor and even had to grow a goatee. He wore a large alarm clock on a string around his neck. No one was permitted to remain in the latrine longer than three minutes, and it was his duty to time everyone who used it. The name of this poor wretch was Julian. He also came from Czestochowa, where he had been the owner of a metal works factory. Just to look at him was enough to make one burst out laughing... Moritz meekly accepted whatever the Germans did with him; he did not even realize what a pitiful figure he cut. Julian was a poised and quiet man, but when they began their horseplay with him, he wept bitterly.<sup>4</sup>

This true story from Treblinka at once challenges the human imagination and is supremely theatrical. As Danny Horowitz wrote in *Uncle Arthur*, 'It was very theatrical: in go people at one end and out comes smoke at the other.'<sup>5</sup> In 1981 *Uncle Arthur* (a play in which characters act out a rehearsed scenario) was revived at the Bet Lessing Theatre to critical

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Reality-Convention', in Bayerdörfer, *German-Israeli Theatre Relations*, p. 204.

<sup>1</sup> There was a growing scholarly interest in the history of the Judenrat and its leaders beginning with Yad Vashem's publication of a Hebrew version of Isaiah Trunk's *Judenrat* in 1979 followed by Ruth Bondy's, *Elder of the Jews: Jacob Edelstein of Theresienstadt*, trans. Evelyn Adel, New York, 1981.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua Sobol, *Underground*, trans. Joshua Sobol and Miriam Schlessinger, unpublished, 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Grossman, *See: Under Love*, p. 106.

<sup>4</sup> Jankiel Wiernik, 'One Year in Treblinka', in Alexander Donat, ed., *The Death Camp Treblinka: A Documentary*, New York: Holocaust Library/Schocken Books, 1979, pp. 147-88; pp. 178-9.

<sup>5</sup> Horowitz, *Uncle Arthur*, p. 2.

acclaim. Horowitz's use of 'theatricality' hinted to other theatre practitioners a possible way to approach the Holocaust. In 1989, for example, Yoram Porat's *The Last Golem Show* depicted inmates of a concentration camp presenting a command performance of *The Golem* to the camp Kommandant and SS.

Today, the theatrical nature of the Holocaust and the camps makes the event seem 'unreal'. Yet, paradoxically, stories like that of Julian and Moritz, jar against the more familiar images and reanimate the Holocaust in the imagination. Naturally, such bizarre accounts 'wake up' an audience familiar with often-repeated stories and images. The theatricalizing techniques of the 1970s, mutated into 'the fantastic' in an attempt to 'jolt' the audiences into watching, listening and participating. The fantastic endeavours to articulate and render visible the 'inexpressible'. Inured to the same images over time, the audience needs to be 'tricked' into a world where the usual rules do not apply, a kind of 'Never-Never-Land' where anything is possible. The circus, for example, with its feats of daring and magic, and the audience's child-like willingness to suspend disbelief became integral to 'the fantastic'. Circus motifs were used as a means to transport the audience into the Holocaust world of the 'unimaginable', the 'fantastic'. In Sobol's *Adam*, for instance, Sep, a magician, uses magic tricks and puffs of smoke to convey the spectator back in time to the war. In *Ghetto*, the narrator, Srulik links past and present by his magical expertise. In the first scene, he is an old man before an invisible interviewer, trying to remember the Vilna theatre troupe's last performance. Suddenly he runs forward and 'breaks through a wall' to carry the audience back in time. Acting as a magician-cum-stage manager, he creates the ghetto by signalling for a pile of old clothes to drop from the flies which the actors then rush to clothe themselves in. In *Underground*, the figure of 'the Singer' creates a scene which Sobol describes as a 'romanced reality' where ghetto inhabitants and modern day Israelis sing and dance together.

The fantastic serves to re-awaken grief by giving history fresh images. In order to articulate what was not only horrific, unspeakable and incommunicable, writers depart from realism and absurdism and descended into a mixture of nightmare, kitsch and circus. Hanoeh Levin's *The Sufferings of Job* is an allegory about the Holocaust and the postwar cashing in on the 'Shoah business'. In order to express the horror of Job's Promethean suffering, Levin set the play in a circus-ring with Job's impaled and crucified body as the main attraction. The child-like delight the audience expects from the circus clashes with Job's suffering to create an uneasy and unbearable image. The audience is implicated in the act of passively watching atrocity and thereby condoning it, their role as 'spectator' being highlighted by the circus setting. The clash of opposite responses - childish delight and horror - recreate the initial shock of the atrocity. In *Biboff*, the recurring horror of the Holocaust and the guilt of having survived it is recreated by an hallucination conjured up by Noah, as a magician. In the hallucination Yitzhak's parents, blindfolded, gagged and wearing dog collars, tear each other apart in a wrestling ring. In *Ghetto*, Srulik practices his

ventriloquist techniques with a dummy. So human is the dummy (and so endeared to the audience through its humour) that by the end of the play, it takes on human characteristics and is able to walk by itself. The human aspect of the dummy is hammered home in the final scene where the Vilna actors remould Shylock's 'Hath not a Jew eyes?' speech substituting the word 'dummy' for 'Jew'. When the actors dressed as Nazis decide that the dummy cannot be human, they gas him. The sight of a dummy being gassed in a play within a play is more moving than Kittel's shooting of the entire Vilna troupe which immediately follows the end of the Shylock skit. Sobol makes their deaths casual in comparison. Israeli audiences had seen enough images of gassed and dead human beings at Yad Vashem and other memorials. One can only be shocked by the same images for a limited amount of time. Sobol manages to re-create the grief afresh through this oblique and highly theatrical manner.

The adoption of this 'fantastic' is also a response to certain ambiguities that emerged once survivors began to speak: the moral ambiguities that faced them in camp (what Primo Levi calls the Grey Zone); the inability and inappropriateness for those who came after to judge; and the ambiguous identity of a schizophrenic nation - the 'David and Goliath syndrome'. Israel has systematically attempted to bring to heel a weaker people whilst at the same time employing its own track-record as victim to justify both present military action and counter its international profile as aggressor. 'If Adolf Hitler were hiding in a building with 20 innocent civilians' said Begin justifying the mortar attacks on Beirut, 'wouldn't you bomb the building?'<sup>1</sup>

Thus, those who recognize their twin identity of both victim and victimizer are necessarily schizophrenic. Though they go mad, only they can see the truth. Yitzhak in *Biboff* is the only sabra who can imagine the Holocaust and perceive the Israeli 'ghetto' mentality in his state of madness. The use of insanity as a means to express both the horrors of the war and comment on contemporary Israel was first seen in Yoram Kaniuk's 1968 novel, *Adam Resurrected*.<sup>2</sup> The book achieved little success at the time, but two theatre companies produced free stage adaptations in the 1980s and the 1990s, the first being Nola Chilton's production at the Neve Zedek Theatre Centre in 1982.

The central character, Adam Stein, formerly Germany's greatest clown, finds himself with his family in Auschwitz. Recognized by Kommandant Klein, he is promoted to the position of camp jester. Adam's best 'trick' is his impersonation of a dog. Using his clowning techniques, he entertains people on the way to the gas chambers, including his own wife and daughter, Ruth. It is at this juncture that Adam's already fragile mental health cracks and he now becomes trapped in his canine identity. After the war, Adam recovers and returns to Germany only to discover that Ruth is alive and well in Israel. He writes to

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<sup>1</sup> Amos Oz, 'Hitler's Dead, Mr Prime Minister', in *Yediot Aharonot* (21 June 1982).

<sup>2</sup> Yoram Kaniuk, *Adam Resurrected*, trans. Seymour Simckes, London: Chatto and Windus, 1972.

her but receives no answers. He nevertheless decides to go to Haifa to seek her out. On arrival in Israel, Adam is met by Ruth's husband who tells the former clown that Ruth never forgave her father for what he became in the camp. He also discloses that Ruth died in childbirth a few days before Adam's arrival. Adam's recovered wits collapse totally and his canine persona returns. He is hospitalized in Mrs Seizling's Institute for Rehabilitation and Therapy in the Arad Desert. Seizling, an American Jewish religious convert and millionairess, believes that God reveals himself only to the mad survivors of the Holocaust. She had the institute built in the Arad desert because she is convinced that this desert will be the location where God's Covenant with his people, the survivors of the Holocaust, will be confirmed.

The book and play are based on reversal: the inmates of the institute stage a Purim play about the traditional Esther/Ahasuerus story which celebrates the deliverance of Jews from slavery. Ironically, the mental patients are not physically free but, according to Mrs Seizling, they are spiritually liberated compared to the sabras. For her, the sabras are insane. It is the 'fools' in the institute who speak the truth. Kaniuk challenges the assumption that the sabras are the heirs to Jewish history. He asks who is more mad: the sabras who accept the dogma of Zionism or the insane Holocaust survivors? Kaniuk favours images of mental crisis to illustrate that a state of madness continued for many who survived, not just because of their experiences but because the Zionist dream could not heal the trauma of the past and because Israeli judgement has made a mockery of their experiences through Zionist emplotment. Israel, and especially Israeli militarism, is not necessarily the end, the salvation, nor the answer for those who survived. In the Arad institute, the national insecurities on which military aggression is founded, are embodied in a mad inmate who only feels secure when dressed in an army uniform.

#### 5.4. Conclusion

The success of Horowitz's *Uncle Arthur*, Yossi Hadar's *Biboff* and Joshua Sobol's *Ghetto* trilogy reflected the urge for change in Israeli politics, especially after the invasion of the Lebanon. Importantly, Hadar and Sobol's plays were staged in mainstream theatres: the Habima and the Tel Aviv Municipal Theatre respectively. All three writers had their works toured or performed independently throughout the world. To date, for example, Sobol's *Ghetto* trilogy has been performed in countries as diverse as Japan, Scotland, Sweden and Germany.<sup>1</sup> All three writers used 'theatricality' to create a 'true' catharsis and critical analysis of contemporary Israeli society.

However, by the late 1980s the bulk of this developmental work was over and the protest movement subsided. The cause behind this reversal was the onset of the Intifada.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph* (24 April 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Saïd K. Aburish, *Cry Palestine. Inside the West Bank*, London: Bloomsbury, 1991.

The tenacious manner in which the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza resisted Israeli authority and began their own terrorist attacks within Israel's borders not only alienated those Israelis sympathetic to the Palestinian cause but the more protracted the struggle became, the more weary the Israelis grew and the less likely it appeared that the situation could ever be resolved. With the Israeli forces brutally repressing the culture, education and political development of the Palestinian population<sup>1</sup> a sense of disillusion, and apathy took root. Guilt over the shambolic state of affairs turned to glitz. As the realities of the contemporary situation festered, theatre managements provided the public with escapism. The late 1980s in Israel were the years of the West End and Broadway musicals with their emphasis on fantasy, production values and anyone else's history of oppression so long as it did not relate to the Israeli/Palestinian predicament. *Les Miserables*, the musical about proletarian death on the barricades and the birth of a new state, was Israel's most expensive production ever mounted and its biggest box-office success.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 13-14: between 1987 and 1989 it was estimated that over 1200 Palestinian children and teenagers were killed by Israeli soldiers with a further estimated 8000 wounded and 40,000 detained. Once arrested, a suspect can be denied access to a lawyer and any communication with his/her family for up to three weeks. Many can be detained in this manner for months under what is known as 'Administrative Detention,' before their hearing comes up - and this is even before they come to trial. In prison, children are denied reading and writing materials so that their education is disrupted. For example, one man, Kamal Sheikh Amin, spent seven years under administrative detention waiting for his hearing (p. 121).

## 5. Conclusion

### 'The Impossible Beckettian Relationship of Clowns'

Forty years after the war Israeli-German relations and self-identity were still circumscribed by the Holocaust. The result, as Grossman illustrated in *See: Under Love*, was that the generation born after the war were affected by an event in which they had not been involved. Yitzhak Dvir in *Biboff* is a victim of his parents' actions just as much as the children of Sichrovsky's *Born Guilty* are. Casualties of circumstances that had been thrust upon them, Germans and Jews, like Beckett's characters, found they shared a common bond, locked in a sometimes tragi-comic relationship that showed little sign of ending. The absurdity of the situation expressed itself through the 'fantastic' in the Germanies just as much as in Israel. Ghosts speak from the grave and commune with the present as in Tabori's *Jubiläum* and Bernhard's *Heldenplatz* in the same way that Old Nadya living in contemporary Israel can talk with the ghost of Adam. Unlike Senesh's ghost in Megged's *Hannah Senesh*, ghosts of the 1980s returned to challenge not affirm the status quo. The influence of the past on the present has palpable and catastrophic results. The past kills Hedwig and her husband in *Heldenplatz*. Ella in *Man to Man* is trapped in a false identity and alienated from her moral self. In *Biboff*, the Dvir family's undisclosed history results in their only son going mad and adopting murderous tendencies. The frustration of being trapped by the weight of history and the impossibility of having a normal relationship with one's parents, manifests itself in self-destructive game-playing: Yitzhak burns houses, dresses as a Nazi, plays sadistic mind-games with Doctor Ziv and tries to murder his parents. In Sichrovsky's *The Supper* Robert's relationship with his girlfriend descends into sado-masochism over the course of one evening. Art met reality when Robert Harlan, filming *Wound Passage*, nearly drove the convicted murderer hired to play the role of Veit Harlan to the point of physical and mental breakdown through his sadistic rehearsal methods.<sup>1</sup>

Syberberg with *Hitler, a Film from Germany* had employed circus imagery not only to create spectacle but to highlight how the Holocaust had become 'the greatest show on earth'. From the 1970s onwards the tendency to theatricalize had increased, moving from simple framing devices, such as those favoured by Sobol in a Shakespearian 'play/film within a play' strategy found in *The Palestinian Girl*, to more complex methods which, like those of Thomas Bernhard's, made the audience the true subject of the theatrical event. What many writers were trying to address was the audience's selective knowledge, the emplotment of Holocaust, and atrocity as theatre spectacle. They were especially interested in social ritual, especially those public rites, dealing with remembrance, which used past suffering to attain political aims or to attempt exorcism. The theatricality of the Demjanjuk trial, like that of the Eichmann trial was an example of public ritual used to encourage

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<sup>1</sup> Anton Kaes, *From Heimat to Hitler*, p. 141.

selective political responses. So was the binary rhetoric of successive politicians, taken to extremes by Begin's use of historical analogy during the Lebanon. The need to exorcize the past was found in Kohl's Bitburg ceremony where the Jewish narrative was subsumed within others.

The intention of many writers in the Austro-German states and Israel was to erode the sanctity of the Holocaust as unequivocally 'unique'. Their individual motivations were very different. Kipphardt drew parallels to incorporate the Holocaust within a larger historical narrative because the German nation needed to be released from its identity as the unique perpetrator of a unique atrocity with a unique and continuous pariah identity. Sobol drew parallels to highlight the contemporary situation whilst encouraging an emotional response to the trauma of the Holocaust. So did Tabori. Both Sobol and Tabori showed that it is possible to examine the Holocaust from a specific point of view, safeguarding the memory of the victims, whilst addressing contemporary issues and universal truths about the nature of the human condition. It is possible to view the Holocaust both as unique and universal rather than one or the other exclusively.

**TOWARDS A CONCLUSION**  
*From the Fall of the Wall to the Present*

In 1988 Julian Hilton wrote: 'Whatever the West fears in the GDR, it is not the renaissance of Right-wing Fascism.'<sup>1</sup> Less than two years later, however, Germany found itself at the centre of a pan-European racial crisis. The breaching of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989, and the collapse of Communist authoritarianism was accompanied by a wave of xenophobic violence in Germany and beyond. The rise of the European Right, however, was really a European issue and not specifically confined to Germany. The fragmentation of the USSR enabled Right-wing leaders such as Milosovic, Karadicz and Zhirinovskiy to secure power in the former eastern block whilst, in the west, the ongoing economic recession gave anti-immigration campaigners such as Jean-Marie Le Pen,<sup>2</sup> Jörg Haider,<sup>3</sup> and David Beackon<sup>4</sup> greater credence with the voters. Yet it was the television images of flag-waving Germans on the night of the German reunification in November 1990 and skinheads taking to the streets that caught the imagination of the media. Germany came under the world's media spotlight and historical parallels were drawn.<sup>5</sup>

Widening political fissures in Europe had enabled an increasing number of neo-Nazi groups to gain a higher profile. The international media focused on those emerging in Germany, particularly in the former east.<sup>6</sup> As Hermann Kurthen writes, 'Anxiety was

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<sup>1</sup> Julian Hilton, 'Volker Schlöndorff: Back to the Future' in W. G. Sebald, ed., *A Radical Stage. Theatre in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s*, Oxford, New York, Hamburg: Berg Publishers, pp. 124-44; p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, calling for the repatriation of immigrants, secured a large following from the early 1990s onwards, winning around one sixth of the votes in the 1997 French parliamentary elections.

<sup>3</sup> Denis Staunton, 'Nazi Echoes Haunt Austrian Elections', *The Observer* (3 December 1995), p. 26. Jörg Haider, had been the Prime Minister of the Austrian state of Carinthia until his comment on 'the Führer's sensible policies' forced his resignation in 1990. Five years later, during the national elections, he called for a complete halt to immigration and the repatriation of those immigrants already present.

<sup>4</sup> 'Nazis. Danger on the Isle of Dogs', in *Journalist - Magazine of the National Union of Journalists* (April/May 1994), p. 6; *After Millwall*, BBC2 (2 October 1993): In 1993 the BNP candidate, David Beackon was democratically elected to the Tower Hamlet constituency in London. One fifth of white people in the area said that the immigrants had caused unemployment and the recession. After the BNP election victory, complaints were brought against the police who dragged their heels after an Asian youth was badly beaten by racist thugs.

<sup>5</sup> Hermann Kurthen, Werner Bergmann, Rainer Erb, eds, *Antisemitism and Xenophobia in Germany after Unification*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 8-28: This attention was fuelled by a unique refugee problem that suddenly overwhelmed Germany with the troubles in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Article Sixteen of the German Federal Basic Law automatically grants political asylum to any individual fleeing religious or political persecution. No other European state is so generous. In 1986, the number of asylum seekers in West Germany stood at just over 100,000. In 1990, in the new Germany, the figure almost doubled to 193, 000. By 1992 this had more than doubled again to 438,000. Assimilating so many so quickly inevitably drained resources and led to racial tension. In 1990, 1,848 xenophobic incidents were reported to the police. In 1992, the figure rose to 7,684 and in 1993 peaked at 10, 561.

<sup>6</sup> James Dalrymple, 'Holocaust Lies of the Neo-Nazis', *Sunday Times (News Review 2)* (26 July 1992), pp. 1-2: Dalrymple noted that since 1982 neo-Nazi movements had been increasing in number, strength and organization not just in Germany but all over Europe.

directed in particular towards East Germans because very little was known of their political attitudes.<sup>1</sup> Yet xenophobic attacks occurred in the west as well as the former east. On 8 March 1990, a group of vandals attacked a hostel for asylum seekers in Essen. On 25 November, skinheads threw stones and Molotov cocktails at a mosque in Herten (North-Rhine Westphalia). In January 1991 a hostel in Eisenhüttenstadt was attacked. The violence continued into 1992 when firebombings against Turks and Slavs in Rostock and again in Eisenhüttenstadt led to over five hundred arrests.<sup>2</sup> In September stones and firebombs were thrown at a refugee hostel in Quedlingburg<sup>3</sup> over three consecutive nights and on 13 October a hostel was destroyed by arson in Immenstadt. On 3 November, in the north-west town of Mölln, three Turkish women died as a result of a firebomb attack on their home.<sup>4</sup> By the end of 1992 seventeen people had been murdered by Right-wing extremists. The violence was interpreted as a sign that there was very little to distance contemporary Germans from their Nazi forebears. Much of this anxiety was, however, media fuelled as Hermann Kurthen notes:

When in the early 1990s ugly pictures of xenophobic violence, swastika graffiti, and vandalism replaced the joyful and peaceful pictures of German unification, some observers speculated that the horrific past of Germany would surface again. The fear that again an army of industrious and obedient *Volksgenossen* (member of the German national collective) would mobilize and overrun Europe was not stifled by reports of millions of marchers who protested the violence by candlelight... Continued anti-Semitism and xenophobic resentment in a nation that was responsible for the Holocaust has been viewed as an indication that postwar Germany's policy of dealing with the past has failed.<sup>5</sup>

Attitudes were not uniform: other Germans protested against the violence in 1992 with the 'Chain of Light' demonstration and 'Rock against the Right' concert.<sup>6</sup> Misinterpretation of Germany's peculiar problem arose because popular consciousness and international media coverage confused xenophobia with anti-Semitism. For example, on 7 January 1989, the Memorial to the Deportation of Berlin Jews at the Pulitzbrücke in Berlin was splattered with pig's blood. In 1990, Jewish cemeteries were desecrated in Stuttgart, Munich and Baden-Württemberg. In September 1991, on the eve of the Jewish New Year, neo-Nazis burned down the former Jewish barracks in Sachsenhausen (it had already been attacked on 5 August that year). Jewish memorials at Ravensbrück and the

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<sup>1</sup> Kurthen, *Antisemitism and Xenophobia in Germany*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Field, 'Violence Shatters a Tourist Paradise', *The Observer* (13 September 1992), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Reiner Oschmann, 'A Wall Goes Up Again in German Hearts', *The Observer* (13 September 1992), p. 11. Oschmann is the editor-in-chief of the paper, *Neues Deutschland*.

<sup>4</sup> Catherine Field, 'Violence Shatters a Tourist Paradise', p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Hermann Kurthen, 'Antisemitism and Xenophobia in United Germany. How the burden of the Past Affects the Present' in Kurthen, *Antisemitism and Xenophobia*, pp. 39-61; p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfsohn, *Eternal Guilt?* p. ix.

lake-side town of Überlingen were also desecrated. On 2 March 1992 Lübeck's synagogue was destroyed by arson. It was the first time a synagogue had been destroyed on German soil since the war.<sup>1</sup> In 1991, a total of 367 anti-Semitic incidents were reported. In 1992 the figure almost doubled to 627. By 1994 a total of 1,366 incidents were reported and in 1995 the figure peaked at 1,155.<sup>2</sup> These statistics were seized upon as firm proof of rising neo-Nazism. Yet Werner Bergmann writes that these figures are misleading. More cases were being reported because there was greater awareness, especially from the former eastern sector where anti-Semitism was reported for the first time.<sup>3</sup> Anti-Semitic resentment was not targeted against people as such but was expressed in symbolic acts against property. A number of polls carried out throughout Germany in the 90s show that the majority of its citizens, in both east and west, possess considerable knowledge of the Holocaust and support commemoration days and memorials. The surveys also indicate that many are concerned about anti-Semitism.<sup>4</sup> The xenophobia expressed in the reunited Germany has very little to do with the Jewish issue:

Rejection of Jews in Germany today must be viewed within the context of attitudes towards National Socialism and German history. Guilt, responsibility and reparations are the major issues involved, in contrast to questions of entitlement to civil rights and welfare services or feelings of cultural isolation, which influence attitudes towards migrant workers in Germany. Right-wing extremism always couples anti-Semitism with xenophobia, though each serves a different function: Jews are challenged as a politically influential group that is suspected of being behind state and media attacks on the right-wing. Foreigners (Ausländer), on the other hand, are considered competitors.<sup>5</sup>

Commentators, both outside Germany and within, have failed to distinguish between xenophobia caused by unemployment, political upheaval and rapid social change and actual anti-Semitism, derived from a guilt that remained unexpressed because of cultural taboos and is mainly the preserve of a small number of neo-Nazis. In addition, they have not differentiated between the basic causes of xenophobic violence in the east (cultural isolation, betrayal, helplessness and poverty) and those in the west (patriotism and resentment).

Observers, since 1990 have interpreted anti-Semitism and xenophobia as symptoms of the same disease, the root of which is to be found in the years 1933-45. The Holocaust, therefore, has become a touchstone by which contemporary situations are

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Fullbrook, *The Two Germanies 1945-90: Problems of Interpretation*, London: Macmillan, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Kurthen, 'Antisemitism and Xenophobia in United Germany', p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 46-8.

<sup>5</sup> Bergmann, 'Antisemitism and Xenophobia in Germany since Unification' in Kurthen, *Antisemitism and Xenophobia*, pp. 21-38, p. 21.

dissected. This is not only because of the apparent similarities but because the state of affairs, especially in the early 1990s, seemed beyond comprehension. People called for simple moral formulae with which to decipher contemporary complexities.

With the slaughter in the Balkans, the drive to understand the present through the detritus of the past gathered momentum. The Holocaust became a prism through which to filter contemporary affairs. The current situation signified that mankind had progressed little since Hitler's concentration camps. To the intellectuals and media it was obvious that multi-culturalism and democracy were not working and that history was repeating itself.<sup>1</sup>

The misconception of the true nature of German xenophobia was not confined to outside observers. Martin Walser in an article in *Der Spiegel* (1993) came closest to the truth when he argued that German leaders and intellectuals, by successively avoiding the problematic and even 'embarrassing' question of German nationalism, had forced patriotic feeling into dangerous areas of Right-wing extremism.<sup>2</sup> Günter Grass, on the other hand, saw a direct link between Nazism and the present-day problem. On 2 February 1990 he cut through the euphoria of reunification with the comment: 'Whoever thinks about Germany now, and seeks answers for the German question, must think about Auschwitz.'<sup>3</sup> Grass infuriated many people at a moment when it seemed as though the war years might finally be laid to rest. Re-unification appeared as the long awaited exoneration.<sup>4</sup> Now, such hopes were frustrated as both external and internal criticism only led the Germans back to the Holocaust. The Holocaust still defined German identity. After the death of the three Turkish women in Mölln, Grass addressed a deeply shocked and divided Germany with the question: 'Are we condemned to relive our history?'<sup>5</sup> The answer for the press came in March 1994 when Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* was screened in Berlin. At several cinemas Neo-Nazis applauded when Jews were shot on screen.<sup>6</sup>

The theatrical establishment mirrored the urge to view contemporary conflicts through the lens of the Holocaust. When Joshua Sobol's *Das Ghetto - Tryptichon* was

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Günter Grass, *Call of the Toad*, translated by Ralph Manheim, London: Secker and Warburg, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart Parkes, 'Postmodern Polemics: Recent Intellectual Debates in Germany', in Durrani, Good, Hilliard, eds, *The New Germany*, pp. 92-108; p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> Günter Grass, 'Losses', translated by Michael Hoffman in *Granta* : 'Krauts!', Vol. 42 (Winter 1992), pp. 97-108.

<sup>4</sup> The date of unification - 9 November 1990 - not only marked the anniversary of the opening of the East German border but coincided with the anniversary of Kristallnacht. The choice of date therefore served to replace one narrative (the German oppression of the Jews) with another (the Liberation of the Germans).

<sup>5</sup> Grass, 'Losses', p. 100.

<sup>6</sup> *Kaleidoscope*, BBC Radio 4, (6 April 1994) and Adrian Bridge, 'Spielberg brings the Holocaust Home to Berliners', *The Independent* (5 March 1994), p. 7.

directed by Carl Hermann Rise at the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin, October 1994, the reviewer from *Der Nord Berliner* commented, '*Ghetto* is still a relevant piece, which is a deplorable revelation after Rostock and Sachsenhausen.'<sup>1</sup> The Austrian playwright, Elfriede Jelinek, specifically linked Germany's contemporary racism to the Third Reich's. Her play *Totenauberg* (1993) was, according to one reviewer, 'a continuum of oppression from the Third Reich's anti-Semitism to present-day xenophobia'.<sup>2</sup>

### *Theatre in the Former East*

The German crisis is more than mere historical repetition. The German problem stems from reunification and the division of *Ossies* and *Wessies* or, as the journalist Reiner Oschman put it, 'the spoilt rich kids' of the west and their 'poor relatives'. 'The party is over', he declared.<sup>3</sup> Reunification had not magically dissolved East Germany's problems. The introduction of a competitive market economy led to redundancy and poverty in a country which had enjoyed full-employment under the Communists. By 1992, some areas of the former east were plagued by unemployment rates of up to forty per cent.<sup>4</sup> Without a dictatorship to blame, East Germans had to accept responsibility and strive for self-determination. Unaccustomed to exercising their own decision-making faculties, they reacted by withdrawing from responsibility and looked for a scapegoat. As the East German writer, Monika Maron, declared in 1992, the East Germans acted as though the world owed them something and, as the reunification dream turned sour, they whined like children who had not been given the present they wanted at Christmas:<sup>5</sup>

Sometimes I think the opponents of unification were right: the East Germans should have been left to grow through all the miseries that had to follow the collapse of Communism on their own, so that they could finally learn that their own action and inaction have consequences, as did their earlier passivity and silence. Instead they have simply mistaken the new authorities for the old ones. They chose this government.<sup>6</sup>

Initially, some western observers believed that years of anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli Soviet propaganda had irreversibly tainted the East Germans, and that the West had inherited an anti-Semitic powder keg. Before reunification only one per cent of the East German population was 'foreign' in origin. This figure then mushroomed as the first asylum

<sup>1</sup> *Der Nord-Berliner* (29 January 1994): '*Ghetto* ist, und das ist nach Rostock und Sachsenhausen eine jämmerliche Erkenntnis, schon wieder ein aktuelles Stück.'

<sup>2</sup> Katrin Sieg, *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 45 (March 1993), pp. 35-47; p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Oschmann, 'A Wall Goes Up Again in German Hearts', p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Monika Maron, 'Zonophobia', translated by Shaun Whiteside, in *Granta* 42: 'Krauts!' (Winter 1992), Vol. 42, pp. 117-24; p. 121.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

seekers fled across the borders in 1990.<sup>1</sup> Until that time, East German youth had remained unacquainted with other cultures. Crucially, the influx of refugees coincided with the post-unification recession.

As western companies took over factories in the former east and implemented rationalization and redundancy, former East Germans naturally felt betrayed. Writers and historians in the former Democratic Republic continued to cast their fellow citizens in the role of the victim just as Karge and Fühmann had done in the 1980s. This was seen in the changes at Buchenwald Museum in the former East after 1990. Since 1945 the camp had been a memorial to German anti-Fascism under Hitler. With reunification came the percolation of the Jewish narrative. Before 1990, only one plaque dedicated to Jews of Kristallnacht had signified the Jewish catastrophe. After 1990 a new leaflet was published by the Buchenwald visitors' centre 'to overcome a certain one-sidedness in the presentation'.<sup>2</sup> The East Germans finally had to accept their historical complicity in the Holocaust whereas previously the East German authorities had emphasized a narrative in which the Nazis, as a handful of mad capitalists, had exploited the German working class. The way in which the *Ossies* responded to this new narrative can be seen in their reaction to the discovery that Buchenwald had also operated as a Soviet labour camp. In 1983 builders found human bones outside the camp boundaries. The East German government declared the matter closed but in 1989 more bones were uncovered. The authorities finally admitted that Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück had remained operational as prison camps until the early 1950s. Under the Communist authorities, one third of the prisoners in Buchenwald had died of hunger and disease.<sup>3</sup> After 1990 a new exhibit was set up dedicated to German prisoners under the Soviets. This led to much crossfire between historians about the 'levelling' of East German history. People were presented as twin victims under consecutive totalitarian dictatorships, with German and Jewish victims under Hitler being on a par with German victims under Stalin.

However, a handful of writers were critical of their fellow *Ossies*' proclivity to cast themselves in the role of victim. Michael Peschke's *Hauptbahnhof (Central Station)* at the Karl-Marx-Stadt Studio in 1990 tells the story of a social drop-out nicknamed 'Central-Station' who has made the station buffet his home for the last forty years. He abandoned his wife during the Nazi era and then pretended to be a party member in the postwar period. He has denied responsibility all his life. As one reviewer wrote, Peschke

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<sup>1</sup>Wilfried Schubarth, 'Xenophobia Among East German Youth', in Kurthen, *Antisemitism and Xenophobia*, pp. 143-58; pp. 144-5.

<sup>2</sup>Ian Burma, 'Buchenwald', in *Granta* 42: 'Krauts!' (Winter 1992), Vol. 42, pp. 65-75; p. 70.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

aimed to show that 'East Germans are still running away from their past'.<sup>1</sup>

Stefan Schütz's 1989 play *Orestesobsession*<sup>2</sup> was written with a similar intent. It was first performed at the Kapuziner Theater in Luxemburg and received its German première at the Freie Kammerspiele in Magdeburg in April 1993. Most of Schütz's previous work, writes Jonathan Kalb, had been directed at the hypocrisy of family bonds and authoritarian parents.<sup>3</sup> In the former Democratic Republic metaphor was often the only way to bring politics to the stage and Schütz had used the metaphor of corrupt families and 'totalitarian' parents to make his political point. A committed Communist, Schütz emigrated to the West in 1980, having been unable to reconcile his political beliefs with those of the Democratic Republic.

At first, *Orestesobsession* appears to be written in the same vein as Karge's *Man to Man* and Fühmann's *The Fallen Angel*. In all three the protagonists are self-obsessed, ranting ego-maniacs who consider themselves to be 'victims' of history and politics. For example, in *Orestesobsession*, Schütz describes East Germany as a 'concentration camp' and a 'human zoo'. Under the zoo director (named Walter Ulbricht) each prisoner gazes across the border and 'pales with envy'. He 'stares longingly at glossy postcards. He dreams of life in the wild.'<sup>4</sup> Like Karge's Ella/Max and Fühmann's narrator, Schütz's protagonist, Orestes, condemns the 'role' he is obliged to play in society. However, Schütz utilizes this tradition to invert it. He calls for East Germans to accept their complicity both in historical horrors and present xenophobia. He does this by addressing the East German proclivity to blame the 'other'. Electra complains:

Why can't I expunge the dead father and mother from my brain? Family films: snows of yesteryear. Why do I wait for the hero to come and liberate me? Where is my freedom? Where is the fire that makes me dance?

To which Orestes replies:

It's because that despite all that's happened, you're still your mother's whiny little girl.<sup>5</sup>

The authoritarian mother represents the totalitarian government. Although both mother and government wield absolute control, the advantage is that the 'child' need never grow up. Schütz wants East Germans to stop casting themselves in the role of innocent victims,

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<sup>1</sup>Hugh Rorrison, *Plays International* (July 1990), p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Stefan Schütz, *Orestesobsession*, translated in *Theatre Forum*, No. 3, (Spring 1993), pp. 41-53.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* p. 44.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 47.

re-evaluate their historical complicity and actively participate in the construction of the future.

Another production which forced the former East Germans to re-evaluate their relationship with the past was Alexander Stillmark's revival of Heinar Kipphardt's *Brother Eichmann*. The Berliner Ensemble had taken the play out of its repertory at the Deutsches Theater in 1988. When the company revived it in 1992 Stillmark removed all the analogy scenes and concentrated on the figure of Eichmann and the specific event of the Holocaust. This new focus was enhanced by the production's geographical location and its thematic placement within a larger artistic event: the play was performed at the Tacheles studio, next to the synagogue in Berlin's former Jewish quarter as part of the *Jewish Spheres of Life* exhibition. Stillmark noted that there were many young people in the audience who, after the collapse of authoritarian rule, were investigating their country's history. In particular they were re-assessing their complicity in Communist suppression, the East German narrative of the Holocaust and their parents' role in the destruction of European Jewry:

In the GDR this question was always delegated to West Germans. Now, it belonged to us. The question of our relationship to the victims and the dead was suddenly raised. We were surrounded by dead: in front of us the dead of the Holocaust and the War and behind us, ever more distinct, the dead of the Gulags and the cultural revolutions.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1995, the company has continued to perform *Brother Eichmann* in the studio space in Berlin in this new compressed version. The intimate studio with its mirrored walls forces a close relationship between actor and audience, past and present. In particular, the production raises the question of responsibility. The new generation, through the example of Eichmann's unthinking identification with political dogma and lack of compassion for his fellow human being, is asked to respond to today's world in a pro-active manner.

There are many young people who have never concerned themselves with this theme and are confronted by the world in a totally different way than we older people are. Their world is also a different one. War is raging in Europe, the problem of hunger exists worldwide, the refugees, the national wars. The exertions of the warring parties is, in most cases, not aimed at subjugating the opposing people, but simply at expelling them or exterminating them as quickly as possible.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Stillmark, 'Brother Eichmann. The Story of an Awkward Relationship', p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

By focusing Kipphardt's text solely on Eichmann and the Holocaust, the director seeks to stress German culpability for a unique moment in history. Stillmark's compressed version highlights the question of individual responsibility:

We must learn to listen to Eichmann carefully, to descend deep in the lower reaches of his thoughts in order to understand the *banality of evil* as his virulent truth.

The realization of this truth includes us since Eichmann is not from another world. He is the product of our century like ourselves. The play is called BROTHER EICHMANN.<sup>1</sup>

The East Germans have been rapidly catching up on their history. In response to fears of latent East German anti-Semitism and xenophobia, a number of studies were carried out in the early 1990s to establish voter profiles, political beliefs and attitude towards foreigners. Polls on xenophobia (defined as an unduly fearful, hostile, or contemptuous attitude toward foreigners) and anti-Semitism (defined as an unfavourable and hostile attitude to the Jews) showed surprising results: they revealed only slight differences in attitude between *Ossies* and *Wessies*.<sup>2</sup> Although the former East Germans were fractionally more xenophobic and more likely to vote for Right-wing parties, they were less anti-Semitic than their Western cousins. A similar survey in *Der Spiegel* in 1992 showed virtually the same results with sixteen per cent of West Germans describing themselves as anti-Jewish whilst only four per cent of East Germans responded in the same manner.<sup>3</sup> Studies carried out between 1994 and 1997 have confirmed these findings. Moreover, they showed that East German schoolchildren and young adults knew more about the Holocaust and the history of anti-Semitism than their West German, Austrian, British and American counterparts.<sup>4</sup> Until the 80s, the East German state had ignored Israel and the Jewish war narrative. Then the first freely elected parliament of East Germany, *Der Volkskammer*, unanimously approved the following declaration in April 1990:

We ask the forgiveness of the Jews throughout the world. We ask forgiveness of the people of Israel for the hypocrisy and hostility of the official GDR policy toward the state of Israel and for the continued persecution and humiliation of Jewish citizens in our country after 1945.<sup>5</sup>

The above declaration does not necessarily testify to an overwhelming change in social

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Kurthen, *Antisemitism and Xenophobia*, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.23.

<sup>4</sup> Kurthen, 'Antisemitism and Xenophobia in Germany', pp. 40-57; p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Kurthen, *Antisemitism and Xenophobia*, p. 12.

and political attitudes towards the Jews that suddenly occurred in the east during this decade. Since 1945, the Jewish tragedy has been addressed through the arts, albeit within the rigid structure of socialist realism and Soviet historiography. The surprise shown at the results of the polls carried out through the 90s, signifies, rather, the west's miseducation and prejudice against the east.

### *Theatre in the Former West*

While former East German writers, directors and politicians have been attempting to come to terms with the past and the current state of affairs, the xenophobic violence has been received in a well-worn manner by the West Germans, namely by denial, distancing, and 'levelling' through analogy. As in the 1970s, when the RAF had created a 'bad press', 'decent' citizens distanced themselves from the radical elements which they associated purely with the former East Germans. Right-wing individuals, organizations and easterners were demonized as the progeny of the 'lunatic' Nazis. When violence occurred in the west it was blamed on migrant *Ossies*. Such strategies are no different to those of the previous fifty years. Old war narratives have continued to be perpetuated. For example, a poll in *Der Spiegel* in May 1995 indicated that seventy-four per cent of Germans over the age of sixty-five believed that the Wehrmacht was not involved in the Holocaust and that the expulsion of over fourteen million ethnic Germans from Soviet territory was a greater crime.<sup>1</sup> As late as 1997, angry scenes and protests accompanied a photographic exhibition in Munich entitled *Crimes of the Wehrmacht*. Letters to newspapers indicated that many believed that the pictures, taken by photographers who had accompanied the troops, were fake.<sup>2</sup> *Junge Freiheit*, a weekly published in Berlin, ran a series of articles entitled 'Fifty Years After' about the memories of World War Two which concentrated almost entirely on the sufferings of young conscripts and civilians, as if the Holocaust and the Nazis had never existed.<sup>3</sup> In Berlin, November 1993, the Memorial to the Victims of War and Tyranny was erected, thus unifying all victims of war. This tactic was no different to Borchert's choice of universalizing all war dead in *The Man Outside* or Kohl's Bitburg ceremony in 1985. Films such as Michael Verhoeven's *Das schreckliche Mädchen* (*Nasty Girl*; 1990), and Agnieszka Holland's *Europa, Europa* (1991) painted a picture of a country that was still not fully reconciled to its past.

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<sup>1</sup> John Linklater, 'Great Peace Tour Rolls into Germany', *The Glasgow Herald* (9 May 1995), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *The Guardian* (25 February 1997), p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Elliot Neaman, 'A New Conservative Revolution? Neo-Nationalism, Collective Memory and the New Right in Germany since Unification', in Kurthen, *Antisemitism and Xenophobia*, pp. 190-208; p. 202.

From Adenauer to Kohl, German politicians have been conscious of how racial tensions are perceived by outside observers. For example, in 1984, when Peter Zadek produced the European première of Sobol's *Ghetto* at the Berlin Volkstheater, questions were raised as to whether the play was suitable for a German audience.<sup>1</sup> The fact that the majority of the audience in 1984 had been born after the war did not enter the debate.<sup>2</sup> Ten years later the same concern about public profile remained. When a comic-book, designed for schools, about Hitler and the Holocaust (inspired by Art Spiegelman's *Mauss*)<sup>3</sup> was approved by Simon Wiesenthal, the German government rejected its application arguing that it trivialized the event. In reality, the Germans were concerned that it would be they who would seem to be trivializing the Holocaust by using such an incongruous teaching aid as a comic book to further Holocaust studies.<sup>4</sup>

This concern with appearance stemmed from a self-flagellatory tendency endemic among German intellectuals, such as Grass. It was partly engendered by the misconception that 1990s xenophobia and historical anti-Semitism were intrinsically linked and, moreover, that such violence was the sole preserve of the German nation. For example, Susan Tebbutt showed that in children's literature Fascism was presented as a German not European phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> Grass argued that, historically, power corrupts the Germans. He therefore opposed reunification from the beginning:

I understand the Germans... Unity has always been a disaster... German unity, from Bismark to Hitler, was the basis of Auschwitz.<sup>6</sup>

As one outside observer commented on Grass:

Modern Germans distrust themselves... Of course, they are becoming a little more assertive, but so far their vulnerability, their insecurity and their capacity for self-criticism are more evident.<sup>7</sup>

One German writer who typifies this 'distrust' is Hans Magnus Enzensberger. In 1964 he wrote that Auschwitz was a product of western 'civilization', not specifically the German nation.<sup>8</sup> But by 1993, he saw the xenophobic violence as an expression of German

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfssohn, *Eternal Guilt*, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> Conversation with Joshua Sobol, Weimar, December 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Art Spiegelman, *Mauss: A Survivor's Tale*, New York/London: Pantheon, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Steve Crashaw, 'Hitler Comic For German Schools Raises Only a Grim Smile', *The Independent* (18 October 1993), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Tebbutt, 'The Representation of Right-wing Extremism in Post-unification German Jugendliteratur', in Durrani, *The New Germany. Literature and Society after Unification*, pp. 302-20; pp. 304-5.

<sup>6</sup> *The Independent* (18 October 1993), p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'Am I German?', in *Encounter*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (1964), p. 16.

collective madness.<sup>1</sup> In his short story, *The Great Migration* (1992), Enzensberger uses a modern-day railway carriage as a metaphor to link contemporary German xenophobia and Hitler's concept of *Lebensraum*.<sup>2</sup> In the story, a traveller sits in the compartment. As new travellers enter, he feels 'invaded' and sends out antagonistic signals to each wave of 'new migration' to create an unwelcome atmosphere. Enzensberger does not necessarily agree that the German people have a monopoly on racism but states that his people show an alarming proclivity for it. In the final analysis, he writes that Germans appear to generate racial violence with more ease and regularity than other Europeans.

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In 1994 Steve Katz tackled the issue of the 'uniqueness' of the Holocaust.<sup>3</sup> It is this central debate in Holocaust studies, he proposes, that has always confounded any objective appraisal. By historicizing the event, Katz concludes, successive writers have marshalled no concrete arguments in demonstrating the Holocaust's transcendental uniqueness and he rejects the tendency to place the event loftily above history as a mystical occurrence. He does, however, write that the Holocaust was singular for tangible historical reasons. Shrouding the event in semi-religious mysticism and creating an aura of 'untouchability', he argues, has confused research and understanding. Yet, by stating, categorically, that the Holocaust was a unique event, Katz paradoxically makes it 'untouchable' by denying other points of reference.

The re-appearance of European genocide has meant that there has been a move over the last ten years to locate and study the Holocaust within a variety of related frameworks. For some, this paralleling means that a simplistic structure is being forced on extremely complex scenarios. Historical analogies run the risk of eroding the Holocaust's identity as an event in its own right. But is this erosion tantamount to depreciation? Ronnie S. Landau writes that different groups have emphasized the uniqueness of the Holocaust to highlight its significance. Yet, as he argues:

When assessing the importance of the Holocaust, its uniqueness and universality should not be seen as mutually exclusive categories: but, on the contrary, as complementary and effective ways of grappling with the Holocaust and its lessons for us all. We must confront our past, not run away from it, or elevate it to a mysterious plane that is utterly beyond our grasp.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger 'Ausblicke auf den Bürgerkrieg', in *Der Spiegel* (1993) translated in Parkes, *Postmodern Polemics*, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'The Great Migration', translated by Martin Chalmers, in 'Krauts!', *Granta*, (Winter 1992), Vol. 42, pp. 15-51.

<sup>3</sup> Steve Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context. Volume 1: The Holocaust and Mass Death Before the Modern Age*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Ronnie S. Landau, 'The Nazi Holocaust: Its Moral, Historical and Educational Significance', in Monica Bohm-Duchen, *After Auschwitz. Responses to the Holocaust in Contemporary Art*, pp. 17-24; p. 17.

Landau argues that the Holocaust should be investigated within multiple discourses: German history, Jewish history, Christian history and twentieth-century genocide, to name but a few. Yet, he concurs that to make comparisons in the most general of manners betrays a certain 'sloppiness' of thinking.<sup>1</sup> The way in which the Bosnian conflict was portrayed by the media was one such case. The day after the British journalists Ed Vulliamy (*The Guardian*) and Penny Marshall (ITN) reported from the Serbian camps at Omarska and Trnopolje on 5 August 1992 showing the all too familiar images of emaciated inmates, Vulliamy complained:

The reaction was so tumultuous, that, to my annoyance, I was obliged to spend more time emphasizing that Omarska was not Belsen or Auschwitz than detailing the abomination of what we had found.<sup>2</sup>

ITN screened the images on 6 August and they were immediately reproduced in newsrooms around the world. On 7 August, the *Daily Mirror* ran the leader-headline 'Belsen 1992'.<sup>3</sup> Some observers, however, commented that Penny Marshall and her cameraman, Jeremy Irving, chose to depict Trnopolje, a refugee centre, in the manner of a concentration camp in the hope that the politicians would feel compelled to intervene. Irving's pictures invited the spectator to gaze at the figures behind barbed wire at Trnopolje and to encode these images within a historical framework of understanding which has a very clear moral imperative: Jews (victims) Nazis (victimizers). After the passing of UN Resolution 96 (1) after Nuremberg, the United Nations are committed to intervene in areas where evidence confirms genocidal activities.<sup>4</sup> Resolution 96 has never once been invoked. Many believed that Irving's pictures would change that. In addition, the Holocaust analogy was encouraged because the viewing public, needing to identify the black and white issues of the war, had lacked an image of the 'bad guy' until that point. After August 1992, the tone of reporting from Yugoslavia shifted to the narrative of barbaric Serbians and victimized Muslims, a strategy which involved historic as well as contemporary revisionism:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ed Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell. Understanding Bosnia's War*, London: Simon and Schuster, 1993, p. xii.

<sup>3</sup> Joan Phillips, 'Bosnia: a Mess Made in the West', in *Living Marxism*, No. 56 (June 1993), pp. 20-8; p. 28. Phillips accused the western media of portraying 'gross exaggerations' with the purpose of encouraging western powers to intervene. ITN is currently suing *Living Marxism* over its allegations. See: Mick Hume, 'Good Lies Make Bad News', in *Living Marxism* (March 1997), pp. 4-5; and *Living Marxism* (October 1997), pp. 20-1.

<sup>4</sup> UN Resolution 96 (1), (11 December 1946). For the background on the continuing legal battle between *Living Marxism* and Channel 4, I am indebted to Guy Westwell's paper, 'Reading Trnopolje Camp, Bosnia-Herzegovina, August 5, 1992'.

The key feature here is the representation of Serbia as a Fascist regime; the left has been in the fore in drawing direct parallels between Serbs and Nazi Germany. This has the effect, not only of demonizing the Serbs, but also of mystifying the truth about Nazi Germany.<sup>1</sup>

Arguments to study the Holocaust in the context of the history of human 'civilization', and the twentieth century particularly, remain strong. Even though, for example, the Bosnian conflict and the Holocaust are separate, they are not wholly incomparable. The problem arises with the conclusions drawn from such parallels and the use to which they are put. Analogies come near the truth only when differences are stressed as well as similarities. In the case of Kipphardt's original text of *Brother Eichmann* or public memorials such as Bitburg and the Berlin Memorial to the Victims of Tyranny, analogies were drawn to exonerate German wartime activities. Yet this technique was the only way Germans could rationalize their own history whilst maintaining a degree of self-respect and, additionally, grieve for their own dead. The German narrative is characterized by fifty years of suppression because of the 'sin' of the Holocaust. Whatever the sins of the parents, Germans still need to mourn and bury their own dead. For the Germans, the rising wave of xenophobia coupled with the media's inclination to revisit the Holocaust illustrates once again the impossibility of 'overcoming' their unique past. One writer who attempts to mourn her own dead and damaged is Helke Sander but, for many, her book and subsequent film, *BeFreier und Befreite*, is an example of *Schadenfreude* in the same manner as *Brother Eichmann*.

*BeFreier und Befreite: Krieg, Verwaltungen, Kinder (Liberators Take Liberties: War, Rape, Children)*<sup>2</sup> is a collection of interviews made with some of the estimated 1.9 million German girls and women raped by Allied soldiers in the nine days between 24 April and 3 May 1945. Sanders considers the rape of these women to be *Zeitereignis* - an event whose enormity makes it almost unique in history. There are no records of rape on a comparable scale. In 1992, as the first evidence of mass rape in Bosnia began to emerge and Korean women began to speak of their imprisonment as 'comfort women' for the Japanese troops in World War Two,<sup>3</sup> Sander released the film version of the book at the 1992 Berlin Film Festival. It opened with the line, 'Just like in Kuwait, just like in Yugoslavia' and so unfolds the history of rape as a military and masculine system of subjugation.

Sander split opinion. Some believed she was attempting feminist historical

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Helke Sander and Barbara John, *BeFreier und Befreite: Krieg, Verwaltungen, Kinde*, Munich: Verlag Antje Kunstmann, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Keith Howard, ed., *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*, London: Cassell, 1995.

revisionism whilst others praised her for broaching a taboo subject. The crux of the debate centred once again on the use of analogy and whether such a technique led to levelling and German exculpation. In particular, interviews with raped Jewish and German women are placed side by side. Gertrud Koch:

The women's sex assumes transhistorical importance, whether the woman be a Jewess living in hiding or a German interviewed... all women now seem to be in the same boat.<sup>1</sup>

The master narrative presents women as joint victims of a masculine war, or as David J. Levin proposes:

The film presents us with a new community of unmitigated, undifferentiated victims: German women from 1945. In doing so, it formulates a new *Stunde Null* or Zero Hour, a moment, that is, when the Nazi politics of genocide are replaced by the occupation forces' practice of widespread rape.<sup>2</sup>

Sander's film was not only topical but highly valid. It raised the question of whether all narratives dealing with World War Two should have to pay deference to or revolve around the Holocaust and whether the Jews have taken a monopoly on suffering. The debate around the film indicated that many intellectuals, especially Germans, were uncomfortable with the film or disagreed with Sander's analogous interpretation of history.

There have been very few West German plays on the Holocaust in the 1990s, due, certainly, to the sweeping political and territorial changes. This does not mean that the German public has ignored the subject. There have been several important non-German theatrical events on the Holocaust. In the 1990s Israeli writers (such as Sobol) and companies (such as Theatre Akko) have toured Germany. And it is not just the Israelis who have found success there. The British group, Towering Inferno, with their rock concert-cum-performance-art piece *Kaddish* scored a massive success at the 1992 Festival of Jewish Culture in Berlin and the Berliner Ensemble are currently considering the production of Roy Kift's *Camp Comedy* - a play about Kurt Gerron and his film *The Führer Donates a Town to the Jews*.

Notably, at the heart of Sobol's *Ghetto* trilogy and Theatre Akko's *Arbeit Macht Frei* lie questions about vying historical narratives, subjective memories and the use of

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<sup>1</sup> Gertrud Koch, 'Blood, Sperm and Tears', translated by Stuart Liebman in *October*, Vol. 72 (Spring 1995), Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, pp. 26-41; p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> David J. Levin, 'Taking Liberties with Liberties Taken. On the Politics of Helke Sander's *BeFreier und Befreite*', in *October*, Vol. 72, pp. 65-77, p. 76.

analogy. Sobol has always placed the notion of personal memory at the heart of his work. This is particularly true of his filmscript for *Ghetto, J*. As the number of Holocaust survivors dwindles, Sobol feels compelled to record their stories and interweave them with his text. *J* remains unfilmed but in 1995 Sobol strove for the same ideal in his production of *Gens-Ghetto Triptychon* at the Weimar Schauspielhaus. In this production, Sobol said that he concentrated all his efforts on getting to the truth of who Adam was and how the Underground operated.<sup>1</sup> Sobol had been berated on national Israeli television by the surviving wife of one of the Vilna Underground fighters who had challenged his version of events. As a result, he searched even harder to piece together the historical reality or, rather, history composed of memories as opposed to Israeli historiography.<sup>2</sup>

David Ma'ayan, the director of Theatre Akko, is also concerned with individual memories. Both he and Sobol, as Israelis, feel that the history of the Jewish nation has been consciously propelled in certain political directions and that their country is one where the collective is traditionally prized over the individual. They, conversely, have emphasized the subjective. Theatre Akko's *Arbeit Macht Frei* tackles the Holocaust in a manner similar to that which Ronnie S. Landau proposed: the Holocaust presented from multifaceted perspectives - a cacophony of individual voices, sometimes clashing, sometimes complementary to give a glimpse of the Holocaust in its entirety. Ma'ayan has successfully achieved his vision of Auschwitz in the same manner that Picasso visualized the Spanish Civil War in *Guernica*. For the Cubists, the entire picture only emerges when several simultaneous perspectives are 'conceived' in the mind's eye, thus liberating the intellect and the senses from the limitations of realism.

Traditionally, Holocaust representation had been limited by various critical constraints: to represent Auschwitz was 'barbaric', wrote Adorno; because it stood outside the imagination it was nigh on 'impossible' warned Lawrence Langer; Holocaust representation was a 'profanation' which trivialized the event argued Wiesel.<sup>3</sup> Wiesel was especially vociferous in his attack against the New York production of *Ghetto*.<sup>4</sup> From Hochhuth to Sobol, writers and directors have refrained from presenting the horrors through fear of being blasphemous. As Howard Jacobson argues, this fear has led to the perpetuation of banal images and responses:

The philosopher, Adorno, led us down the garden path with his notoriously seductive: 'To write

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<sup>1</sup> Conversation with Joshua Sobol, December 1995, Weimar.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.' The problem isn't poetry, it's quiet poetry. The trap isn't too little reverence, but too much.<sup>1</sup>

Grass perhaps came closest to representing hell on earth when he described Brauxel's underground mining activity in *Dog Years*. Yet his metaphoric language cloaked rather than revealed historical realities. Conversely, Steven Spielberg directed his efforts at photographic realism in his physical reconstruction of Auschwitz in *Schindler's List* and the documentary style of the camera movement. The film was not storyboarded and the actors were directed to act a scene while the camera 'eavesdropped'.<sup>2</sup> Yet realism merely reproduces familiar and therefore worn images which no longer have the capacity to shock. Ma'ayan, by his 'unrealism', like the Cubists, has created a higher reality and more importantly recreated the initial 'shock' that must have been felt by many spectators when they witnessed Richard Dimbleby's first news report from Belsen. Ma'ayan has perhaps come closest to a physical representation of Auschwitz by recreating this initial traumatic experience.

Yet Ma'ayan was not only interested in the individual spectators participating in constructing the 'past' by witnessing fragments of individuals' memories. He was also concerned with the present: how it is determined by the manner in which the past has been encoded. In *Arbeit Macht Frei*, he asks whether it is possible to create a representation of the Holocaust which can provide valuable lessons by analogy and, at the same time, maintain the Holocaust's integrity as an atypical historical event. Could analogies be presented that were neither reductivist, detrimental or a case of 'sloppy thinking'? In addition, could a piece of art represent the magnitude of the Holocaust as a 'rupture' in history while at the same time 'healing' the gash so that Israeli national identity could be liberated from its love-hate relationship with the past and persecution?

### *Arbeit Macht Frei*

#### *Background*

The situation in Israel in the early 1990s was characterized by increasing political complexities and continued terrorism. Notably the violence originated from groups outwith the PLO and, for the first time, Israeli citizens as well. The PLO by the late 1980s had become the accepted representative body of the Palestinian people entrusted with negotiating an independent Palestinian homeland. Since the late 1970s, it has provided funds to support the infrastructure of the West Bank, healthcare, education and

<sup>1</sup> Howard Jacobson, 'Jacobson's List', in *The Independent* II (2 February 1994), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Quentin Curtis, 'Lest We Forget', *Independent on Sunday* (13 February 1994), p. 19: about 40% of the movie was shot with a hand-held camera.

agricultural programmes. Arafat became the people's champion. Yet, by recognizing Israel's right to exist and favouring a settlement through negotiation rather than terrorism, he had alienated many of his supporters. From the late 1980s the PLO declined in power and, as Arafat made concessions to the Israelis, the Palestinians began to re-assess his capabilities. Arafat himself had been aware of his waning popularity and had adopted the Intifada<sup>1</sup> as his cause for fear of being overshadowed by the popularity of the movement and its emerging leaders. Militant Arab groups were siphoning away his support, notably *Hamas*, *Jihad* and *Hezbollah*, a militant Iran-sponsored, Shiite-Muslim terrorist group.

The 1990-91 Gulf War deepened divisions between Israelis and Palestinians as many of the latter openly supported Hussain whose long-term political goal is to eradicate Israel. The Palestinians were therefore collectively viewed by the Israelis as the enemy within. This was seen in the distribution of gas masks, free of charge, to Jewish citizens but not to the Palestinians. Eventually the government agreed to sell the masks to the Arabs at the equivalent of ninety dollars a piece.<sup>2</sup> Naturally many Palestinians, being at the lower end of the wage earning scale, could not afford the expense.

As in all previous wars, Israeli fears were fed with the deliberate paralleling of the Holocaust to the current threat. As Freddie Rokem writes:

Moshe Zuckerman in *Shoah in the Sealed Room: the 'Holocaust' in Israeli Press during the Gulf War* (Tel Aviv Authors Press, 1993) has shown how the equation 'Sadam = Hitler' was developed as a reaction to the threat of Iraqi Scud missiles and how fears were intensified by the fact that certain components for the manufacture of Iraqi gas had been supplied by German companies.<sup>3</sup>

After the Gulf War Israeli society became increasingly polarized between those who favoured a negotiated peace and those who wanted a military solution. The situation for Palestinians in Israel generally declined. In 1992 David Grossman published *Sleeping on a Wire*, a collection of interviews with Palestinians and a document of their living conditions. Grossman revealed that twice as many Palestinian than Israeli babies died in the first six months and ninety-two per cent of Arab wage earners were on the bottom half of the social scale. Half of the Palestinian population lived below the poverty line.<sup>4</sup> Grossman argued that there was a systematic attempt to create an Arab underclass encouraged by an underfunded Arab education system. For example, Grossman pointed

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<sup>1</sup> The Intifada demanded the creation of a Palestinian homeland in the Gaza Strip.

<sup>2</sup> Saïd K. Aburish, *Cry Palestine. Inside the West Bank*, London: Bloomsbury, 1991, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Freddie Rokem, 'Cultural Transformations of Evil and Pain: Some Recent Changes in the Israeli Perception of the Holocaust' in Hans Peter Bayerdörfer, ed., *German-Israeli Theatre Relations*, Tübingen: Niemeyer Verlag, 1996. pp. 217-41; p. 219.

<sup>4</sup> David Grossman, *Sleeping on a Wire. Conversations with Palestinians in Israel*, translated by Haim Watzman, London: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux and Jonathan Cape, 1992, p. 110.

out that there were no vocational programmes in electronics and computers for Arabs but abundant courses in auto-mechanics for boys and sewing for girls.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, their poor education had been further disrupted by prolonged detentions during the Intifada. The Intifada had earned the nickname of 'the Children's War'. Many of those arrested on suspicion by the Israeli police were under eighteen and kept in administrative detention whilst awaiting trial. Some waited for two or three years in custody during which time they were denied access to educational books and writing materials.<sup>2</sup> Grossman's book was considered inflammatory and was banned in detention centres by the Israeli authorities.

The flagging 'peace process', inaugurated by Rabin and Arafat in 1993, has done little to ameliorate matters. By 1994 Arafat expressed his doubts as to whether any real progress could be achieved when so many Israelis and Palestinians were against making the concessions necessary for peace.<sup>3</sup> Naturally, not all Israelis were in favour of negotiating a settlement with the Palestinians, particularly if it involved relinquishing parts of the occupied territories. A number of nationalistic Israeli citizens therefore resorted to terrorism themselves. In March 1994, an Israeli-American settler Baruch Goldstein, walked into a mosque in the West Bank town of Hebron and opened fire on praying Arabs. In November 1995, Rabin was assassinated by a young Israeli patriot, Yigal Amir, who stated:

I did not commit the act to stop the peace process, because there is no such concept as the peace process; it is a process of war.<sup>4</sup>

Like the fictional character of Yitzhak Dvir in Yossi Hadar's 1986 play, *Biboff*, Amir, viewed Israel as a beleaguered ghetto and had turned his ire against the 'collaborator'. Goldstein had often been seen wearing a yellow star of David as a sign of remembrance.<sup>5</sup> As the Palestinian poet, Anton Shammas, pointed out, the weight of the Holocaust was crippling national progression:

My pain, and that of the Palestinians in the refugee camps, will never be heard, because it always has to pass through the filter of the Holocaust.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> Aburish, *Cry Palestine*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> 'Arafat in the Storm', in *Vanity Fair* (May 1994), pp. 71-7, 129-35, 137.

<sup>4</sup> *The Independent* (7 November 1997), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Rokem, 'Cultural Transformations', p. 223.

<sup>6</sup> Grossman, *Sleeping on a Wire*, p. 227.

Theatre in Israel reacted to the escalating situation either by addressing matters directly or providing escapism for a politically weary audience. Since Sobol's *Jerusalem Syndrome* in 1988 and *Adam* in 1989, Israeli protest theatre has originated on the fringe or taken place abroad. For example, Sobol's *Underground* premièred at Yale Repertory Theatre and Sobol spent much of the early 1990s working abroad. Political theatre about the Holocaust and Jewish identity came from abroad, notably from Germany. Since 1984 when Theatre Khan produced Tabori's *Jubiläum*, a steady stream of challenging German writing has been received favourably by Israeli critics.<sup>1</sup> Sichrovsky's *Born Guilty*, Bernhard's *The Lunchtable*, and Tabori's *My Mother's Courage* have been produced in Israel. The reception of *Mein Kampf* in 1991 was especially telling. Crucially *Ha'aretz* stated that Hitler could only be overcome if one was 'willing to identify his features within yourself.'<sup>2</sup> As Shimon Levy proposes:

Contemporary German-Jewish plays such as *Mein Kampf* or *Schuldig geboren...* can be regarded by Israeli decision makers of theatre as convenient substitutes for what Hebrew drama is invited to do, but not allowed to present, namely a serious questioning of the so-called exclusivity of suffering.<sup>3</sup>

Tabori's tendency to combine victim and victimizer within the same role shares an affinity with the work of Sobol, Lerner and Hadar. For 'progressive' Israelis, Tabori's works have important implications for understanding contemporary Israeli identity. Papers such as *Al Hamishmar* and *Davar*, however, disliking the ambiguity of the piece and the negative Jewish images, protested that *Mein Kampf* compared the sufferings of the victims and the victimizers for spurious effect.

Indigenous protest theatre originated on the fringe. Akko (Acre) a mixed Arab/Jewish town in Northern Israel became the centre for political theatre. Its annual theatre festival offered many smaller groups the opportunity of gaining national recognition. In 1985, *Gingham Cohen's Dance*, after Hanoach Bartov, told the story of a ghost of a former camp internee mercilessly reeking revenge on a former guard. In October 1990 the first prize at the Akko Theatre Festival was awarded to *Reulim (Masked Faced Terrorists)* by Ilan Hatzet. According to Linda Ben Zvi, this was the first play to deal entirely with the Intifada.<sup>4</sup> The director cast three Israeli actors as Palestinians in an attempt to make the Israeli audience empathize with the 'other'. It was also a means to

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<sup>1</sup> Shimon Levy, 'German Plays on Hebrew Stages: Israelisch-deutsche Theater-beziehung', in Bayerdörfer, *German Israeli Theatre Relations*, pp. 36-46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Ben Zvi, *Theatre in Israel*, p. 41.

diffuse the explosive nature of the play. The aim was to encourage dialogue not confrontation. *Reulim* proved successful and transferred for a two-year run on the second stage at the Cameri (1990-92). The Akko festival was instrumental in bringing Palestinian theatre and issues to Israeli audiences. 1991, for example, was the first year that Arabic writing was performed by Arab actors to a predominantly Jewish audience.

One theatre production which aimed to shatter the divide between Palestinian and Israelis was David Ma'ayan's *Arbeit Macht Frei mi' Toitland Eiropa (Work Means Freedom in the Deathland of Europe)* which won the first prize at Akko in 1991. Ironically, by using analogy, Ma'ayan intended to shatter the traditional political paralleling of the Holocaust with contemporary events to justify government action. Ma'ayan argued that the Israelis had drawn the 'wrong' lessons from the Holocaust. He believed that there were 'other' lessons to be learned. *Arbeit Macht Frei* showed how analogy could be both constructive and destructive, enabling and prohibitive.

#### *Arbeit Macht Frei mi' Toitland Eiropa*

In 1985 David Ma'ayan established a mixed Jewish/Palestinian laboratory theatre in Akko. It revolves around four core members: David Ma'ayan, Smadar Ma'ayan, Moni Josef and the Palestinian actor Khaled Abu Ali. *Arbeit Macht Frei* (1991) was the group's second production. It is still performed by the same core group seven years on, mutating to reflect contemporary political changes. There is no script as such. Many moments are improvised depending on audience make-up. For instance, when it was performed in Germany, changes were incorporated to reflect both the German audience and topical events. The language used also depends on the audience. Generally, it is performed in a mixture of Yiddish, Polish, Hebrew, German, Arabic and English. The following analysis is informed by my participation as a spectator in Akko, spring 1996, five months after Rabin's assassination. At that time, the Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, was trying to salvage the peace process and his own government against mounting Right-wing agitation, particularly from Binyamin Netanyahu, then leader of the opposition.

*Arbeit Macht Frei* took three years to develop. Ma'ayan and his actors devised the production from information gathered from museums, memorials and family history or stories they had heard or read from survivors. The play is an amalgam of the actors' memories and intends to reflect the collective consciousness of Israeli society:

*Arbeit Macht Frei* is a play about memories of the Holocaust and their place in Israeli reality. Its materials are the collective biography of its actors and their spectators, the majority of whom are second generation Holocaust survivors. This is the most experimental play ever to be performed

on the Israeli stage.<sup>1</sup>

During the performance, which lasts approximately five and a half hours, the audience is deluged by images, songs, odours, rapidly changing environments and conflicting reports of 'history', 'fact' and 'reality' that activate the senses and stimulate the intellect. It is deliberately fragmentary and imagistic.

*Arbeit Macht Frei* is performed as a stationdrama. The production begins at a Holocaust, or war museum, depending on the individual production. In Hamburg, for example, the audience was bussed to Neuengamme camp. In Berlin, the production began at Hitler's Wannsee villa. Secondary theatrical moments are played out on the bus. The fact that these moments are 'theatrical' only becomes apparent to the audience at a later stage. In Akko the bulk of the production takes place in a specially built subterranean complex where actors and audience mingle and exchange thoughts. This is where the play 'proper' begins, marked by the collection of tickets at the entrance. Within this Hades-like catacomb, the audience witnesses and participates in several scenes as it is led into increasingly confined spaces which resemble the barracks of Auschwitz. Through an ill-lit and twisting route within the complex, the audience is disorientated and 'explored' by the actors. It is the audience that stands at the centre of this theatrical experience. As the piece is about the Israeli perception of the Holocaust and how it has been emplotted in Israeli society, the audience, as representatives of that society, must necessarily be put under the microscope.

In April 1996, myself and twenty-two other spectators met each other in a car park in Akko. The audience was deliberately small, not only, as we were to discover, because of the confines of the playing space, but because the discourse generated between the actors and the spectators as well as among the spectators themselves is the most important part of the show. Five and a half hours later we knew things about each other that under normal conditions we would not have divulged to total strangers. In the car park we were met by Moni Josef who shepherded us to a bus. A guide informed us that we were going to Lochamei Ha Ghettaot, a Holocaust museum, established by a group of Holocaust survivors, several of whom were leaders of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. All the themes explored in *Arbeit Macht Frei* are established in the museum and expanded in the second part of the play.

The first theme concerns illusion and reality, narrative and counter-narrative. 'The text is organized as a string of deceptions', writes Dan Urian, which activates the

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Urian, 'Arbeit Macht Frei in Toitland Europe (Work Through Freedom in the Deathland of Europe) Theatre Centre, Akko, Israel', in *Theatre Forum*, Vol. 3 (1993), pp. 60-6, p. 61.

audience's alertness. The audience's perception of reality and 'truth' repeatedly come under attack in an attempt to stimulate questions about other 'truths' regarding the nature of the Holocaust, historical narratives and political perceptions. For example, at the museum the audience was met by 'Selma' whom we were informed was a Holocaust survivor. Her initial identity was confirmed by her appearance but, as she guided us around the museum, it became apparent that she was a much younger woman than we had supposed and therefore an actress (whose real name was Smadar Ma'ayan).

The second theme, similar to that explored in Hadar's *Biboff*, revolves around what Anton Shammas called 'tormented Judaism': the sado-masochistic tendency to re-awaken the pain of the Holocaust whilst inflicting a similar race-related degradation on the 'other'. 'Selma', a victim of the Nazis, paradoxically seems to admire Nazi achievements. Her fascination is fetishistic. She strokes and fondles exhibits on which her eyes linger intently. Her attitude is highly sensual, even sexual. She wallows in images of death and torture. For example, at one point the audience was ushered into a small cinema to watch a Polish fictional film, *Ambulans* (*Ambulance*, Janusz Morgenstern; 1955). It depicts a group of children walking unknowingly into a mobile gas van. As Selma talks about the film, she walks in front of the screen and thus lets the projected images of the children fall across her body. She bathes in their images, again in a sensuous manner. As Freddie Rokem writes, it is an act of 'inscribing on the body'.<sup>1</sup> The past has left more than scars. There has been a voluntary decision to have the wounds indelibly graven into the skin. This theme is developed later in the production by the revelation that the tattoo Smadar wears as Selma is in fact real.

The third theme revolves around this act of inscription, specifically the purpose of maintaining these festering, Prometheus-like wounds rather than 'healing' them. When is the act of remembering life affirming and when is it self-destructive and outwardly aggressive? Can these questions even be given definitive answers? For example, Selma at first wears a handkerchief around her wrist to hide her camp tattoo. She chooses not to have this signifier of the past removed even though she obviously wishes to conceal it. Her relationship to the past, whether she wants to remember or forget it, is highly ambiguous. Like the character of Yosel in Yehuda Amichai's 1963 *Not of This Time, Not of This Place* who sports a mermaid tattoo to cover the one inflicted in Auschwitz, Selma's predicament over 'remembrance' and 'letting go', like Israel's, is perhaps insoluble.

Themes of remembering and forgetting inevitably touch on the nature of narrative.

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<sup>1</sup>Rokem, 'Cultural Transformations of Evil and Pain', pp. 26-7.

Is the tattoo, as an inscription of the past, on Smadar's body (representative of the present body-politic of Israel) necessarily a good thing? Is it even related to the quest for historical integrity? One by one, 'Smadar/Selma' challenges the audiences preconceived notions and narratives: about the Holocaust, the imperative for the Israeli collective and, more importantly, Israeli attitudes to the Palestinians. After all, it is the Palestinians who bear the brunt of the anger generated by the wounds of a past that will not go away. *Arbeit Macht Frei* is an inquest into the Zionist master-narrative in much the same manner as Danny Horowitz's *Cherli Ka Cherli* is. In many ways, Horowitz's play was the stylistic and thematic forerunner of *Arbeit Macht Frei*. In both pieces, the audience is led around a set of exhibits by guides who ask questions to force the spectators to query received images and histories. Notably, *Arbeit Macht Frei* utilizes the photograph of the boy in the Warsaw ghetto, arms aloft (seen in *Cherli Ka Cherli* and Hanoch Levin's *Ha Patriot*). Selma, standing before this photograph, expands on the hierarchy of Holocaust survivordom. 'Every one claims to be this boy', she states, insinuating that the Israeli narrative has emphasized the role of the Jewish partisans in the continuum of Jewish identity and conveniently stigmatized those who behaved with 'sheep-like' acquiescence. That is why Selma, a 'victim' of the camps, hides her tattoo: it is the stigma of a coward rather than the stigmata of a martyr.

The fourth theme is the aggressive policy Israel has adopted to ensure that the Holocaust is never repeated. In contemporary terms this is manifest in the Israeli treatment of the Arab minority. Stopping by a model of the Warsaw ghetto Selma asked the spectators whether they knew of any other ghettos today. Someone hesitantly volunteered the analogy of the Palestinian refugee camps. Selma neither approved nor disapproved of the answer, even though it seemed to be the one she expected. The analogy of Israelis as Nazis and Arabs as dispossessed Jews is highlighted by other means, particularly through military music. In *Cherli Ka Cherli*, Horowitz had made the same parallel by depicting his Israeli and Nazi soldiers drilling to the same repetitive drone of 'links, rechts, links, rechts'. In the museum Selma and later Khaled establish the leitmotif of nationalistic music, highlighting its dramatic and emotional impact. Whilst watching *Ambulance* for example, 'Selma' asked the audience to note the dramatic quality of the music, how easily it can be used to manipulate audience response. 'Why did they play music in the camps?' Khaled later asked. 'To hide the screams of the Jews', he told us. Military and nationalistic music covers a deep bestiality. It cloaks the horror of war. It operates on the same level as linguistic euphemism and diverts popular attention away from the savagery of nationalism.

The fifth level, which was further developed in Akko, is the experience of being a

victim, specifically a victim of the Third Reich. Selma lays the first 'mine' for this thread when the audience passes by a collection of contemporary artistic interpretations of the Holocaust. Looking at them, she noted, 'real creativity is where to hide a piece of bread when you have no hair and no clothes'. Hunger, disorientation, the environment itself and deprivation will be used later to force the audience into the shoes of Hitler's persecuted. For example, another point at which this strategy came into play was when Selma instructed the audience to descend a flight of steps to meet Khaled. 'Keep to the right', she warned. As we descended, she stood at the top of the stairs, smiling knowingly at us. We were re-enacting the Jews' arrival in Auschwitz. We were the lucky ones, unlike 'those on the left' who walked from the selection process down the 'stairway to heaven' and into the gas chambers.

Selma had led us to the steps with the phrase, 'Now we are going to Khaled who knows everything about the concentration camps.' Again perceptions were challenged: what could an Arab possibly teach an Israeli audience about the Holocaust? Khaled, speaking with a thick Arab accent, stood before a large three-dimensional model of Treblinka with a baton in his hand and instructed the audience in the workings of a death camp. Selma's tour had been roughly structured on the history of Nazis' quest to refine the elimination of 'an alien segment of society'. Khaled informed us that the camps constituted the 'final' method. The image of an Arab standing before a model of Treblinka, brought to mind the earlier image of the Warsaw ghetto, particularly the analogy made to the Palestinian refugee camps. The question raised by the picture of Khaled and Treblinka begged the question of whether a similar final solution awaited the Palestinians.

*Arbeit Macht Frei* proposes a different kind of nationalism based on mutual understanding and respect in a multi-cultural society. Khaled told us that he never knew anything about the Holocaust until he went to Yad Vashem where he was so shocked that he cried. He then described his subsequent reactions. First he hated the Germans, then he began to hate Man. Now, he told us, he just relates to people as human beings rather than as groups or types. His attitude reflected the need to destroy stereotypes. The audience was encouraged to understand, not only the Jews and the Arabs, but also each other. Understanding can only come through individual contact in daily life. There was a deliberate attempt to make the spectators share their own stories, memories and compassion. For example, in the museum, Selma stopped at Eichmann's glass booth. One of the spectators revealed that his father had been one of Eichmann's guards. Another finally admitted he was a German tourist. Thus these two strangers shared a bond and a relationship was formed.

The audience was then taken back to Akko by bus. At the theatre centre, we were led into a darkened antechamber. A guide with a torch abruptly instructed us to leave our belongings and go to the toilet as this would be our last opportunity. Again the audience was placed in the position of victims. It was a theatrical 'game' which we were now highly conscious of being involved in. None of us 'protested' and 'sheep-like' we walked into what was to become our journey into Auschwitz.

We were led into an even darker room smelling of incense. The only light came from the usher's torch as she brusquely placed us against the wall. Again the question of emplotment, narrative and the nature of memorials as generators of national identity were highlighted as the space recalled the children's memorial at Yad Vashem. This particular memorial is a darkened cavern through which the spectator makes his way by grasping onto a handrail and the only guide is a seemingly infinite number of candles twinkling and reflecting in a myriad of mirrors. Each reflected light represents a child murdered in the Holocaust and is designed to have a deep emotional impact. In the corresponding space in Akko, the flickering light was provided by the usher's torch and a cinematic projection which fell across Selma who sat in the centre of the room. Again, she was allowing her body to be inscribed. Slowly and sensuously Selma removed the handkerchief from her wrist to expose her camp tattoo. Spitting on the fabric, she tried to wipe the tattoo from her skin, the past from her present. The tattoo, like the past, remained. The action of rubbing expressed the desire to forget the past. Yet she could have had the tattoo surgically removed. Instead, like Yosel, she remains in an insoluble quandary between remembering and forgetting. The dilemma exhausted her. She fell forward, face down on the floor, remaining there as we shuffled into the next room.

This next space had an atmosphere of decay. Paper peeled away from the walls. School benches lay against one wall. We were told to sit. A larger scale model of Treblinka was spread out on the floor before us. Around its edges ran a model train. The miniature huts became pedestals on which the actors stood and performed. At either side of the 'stage' were television screens. One showed female guards forced to bury corpses in a death camp, the other was a documentary film of Smadar having her tattoo done and the audience became aware that the actress's tattoo was real. It was also revealed that the sequence of numbers she chose for the tattoo was the date of her father's death, a pain which, like the Holocaust, she neither wholly wants to eradicate nor totally remember. Smadar then entered the room and stood by an electric keyboard. The female guide on the bus (the actress Miri Tsemach), Moni and Khaled appeared dressed as schoolchildren. They proceeded to satirize a school Yom Ha'Shoah ceremony. The children, bored by this empty ritual, poked fun at each other and fooled around with toy

trumpets. Sirens started to sound and the upstage-left monitor showed a real school ceremony, with equally bored children. Sirens blare out across Israel on the Day of the Fallen Soldier and other days of national mourning such as Rabin's funeral. The audience was therefore invited to reflect on its own cultural inheritance, its socialization and the ritualistic nature of Israeli collective memory. Smadar accompanied the scene playing kitsch nationalistic songs on the keyboard.

At the end of this playlet, the curtain at the back of the 'stage' rose to reveal a further space. Between the two spaces was a large metal gate with the inscription *Arbeit Macht Frei*. We were ushered through the grill and instructed to go either right or left. I went right. The two sets of audience were piloted into two long and narrow corridors which ran parallel to each other with a third space in between. The corridor spaces were confined by suitcases and shoes dangling overhead. Many had to bend as they walked. The wall to our left (i.e. nearest to the other group of spectators) was an amalgam of glass and barbed wire which overlooked the intermediary empty space. A thin wooden bench stretched along the wall to our right. We were told to sit down. Through our partition, the other half of the audience could be dimly perceived across the empty space in the same position. In the semi-darkness we heard a voice on a loudspeaker instructing the actors to go to different windows. And so began our interrogation. Miri Tsemach came up to our window and asked each of us why we were there and what our connection to the Holocaust was. Family histories and personal stories were drawn out of us. Through this act of sharing, we drew together as a group. What we did not realize was that some of our answers would be used later during the more improvised moments.

After the interrogation, the audience was reunited in the next room which was about four and a half feet high with benches around the edges. It resembled a barrack in a concentration camp except for the incongruous inclusion of Smadar reclining on a piano inviting us to sit down. She sang a nationalistic Israeli song to candlelight and the audience was offered cognac or water. Again, our attention was drawn to the music. Smadar talked about the socially unifying effect of music as she sang a Hebrew song. She then unobtrusively slipped into a Nazi one, thereby connecting the Nazis and Israelis. In this cramped space, a number of scenes were played. The room became Selma's 'apartment' in an Israeli 'ghetto' where the latest wave of immigrants had congregated. A recently arrived Russian immigrant to Israel came in to meet Selma (her neighbour) and was surprised to discover that she never took any reparations money. This scene was accompanied by the sound of immigrants beyond the walls arguing in a cacophony of languages. The Russian immigrants who had come to Israel in the late 80s and early 90s were the latest wave. Because they had their own culture and language they remained

unassimilated. The sabras consider them outsiders and *déclassé*. But even the lower class need to create a degree of self-respect for themselves by denigrating the 'other'. The Russian immigrant, for example, condemns the Arabs, particularly the Arab boy whom her daughter is currently dating. The scene shows how everyone, like the Nazis, has his own *Untermensch*.

The scene between Selma and the Russian escalated and a cabbage appeared. The two women fought over it, Selma trying to hide leaves in her hair and her stockings. Meanwhile the audience became aware of the smell of food. It had been about four and a half hours since we had boarded the bus at Akko. Many of us were quite hungry. Smadar and the immigrant chased each other out of the room and a section of the ceiling fell down to form a table laid with a meal. However, the food was withheld from us.

'Selma' having chased the Russian out of her apartment, returned with Moni who was now playing the role of her grown up son, Menashe. He invited us to eat in their 'home' but it became obvious that his character was anything but a genial host. Menashe was a right-wing, chauvinistic, reserve-officer in the paratroops who winked to his old 'Mossad buddies' in the gathering and lewdly suggested to the foreign female members of the audience what a good Israeli man could do for them. Repeatedly, Moni's garrulous character, grabbed the food away from the audience as he elaborated on various subjects, particularly stories the actors had gleaned during our interrogation. A political argument then ensued between Moni and the more sanguine Selma. Moni, expanding on the Lebanese conflict, blamed the Arabs because 'they started it'. His repeated rhetorical question, 'who started it?' became increasingly ludicrous as his argument rescinded further and further back in time until son and mother were disputing who started the French Revolution. This satirical approach highlighted how present conflicts are rooted in outdated animosities. It also emphasized the fatuous nature of historical analogy.

*Arbeit Macht Frei* does not highlight the parallels between the Arabs and Holocaust Jews or between the Nazis and Israelis to advance one cause to the detriment of the other. Nor does it seek to make facile comparisons to impose an all-encompassing framework of understanding. To understand the Israeli/Palestinian situation through the lens of the Holocaust would be myopic. The purpose of the paralleling is to enable mutual understanding. Only when both sides have been educated can progress be possible. This was made apparent in the next scene.

The table rose again into the ceiling. Khaled was revealed waiting on the floor with a tray of coffee and sweatmeats. He must have been sitting under our 'table' for quite some time. There was silence and then he asked, 'What are you waiting for? Do you expect an Arab to bring you your coffee?' There was immediate laughter. He was

mocking the Israeli perception of Arabs as second-class citizens. Khaled then talked about his life as a Palestinian as we drank our coffee. His tone was neither aggressive nor self-pitying. He sought neither to condemn nor condone.

After he left us to our sweatmeats, the genial atmosphere was shattered and we were reminded that we were on a journey into Auschwitz. The ceiling once again lowered to reveal Smadar lying naked and spreadeagled across the table. Her now exposed body was painfully thin. Pulling a piece of bread out of her vagina, she proceeded to eat it. The comment she had made in the museum about 'real creativity' in relation to the concealment of food came back to haunt us. It was a shocking image in itself but coming as it did after we had finished eating, we felt responsible for her condition. We had eaten. Smadar, weighing thirty-nine kilos, had not.<sup>1</sup> The table and Smadar then flew out of sight and, after a further scene involving Arab and Israeli fanatics, trap doors appeared above our heads and we were invited to climb up and through, a feat which required the spectators to help each other. We had shared our histories, our personal space and our food. Now we shared each others' help as we hauled each other through the small openings.

Once through the 'ceiling' we found ourselves in a Dante-like inferno. Loud music, flashing lights and smoke assaulted us. Miri Tsemach lay naked in a revolving metal basin, covered by the left-overs of our meal. Using her hands, she stuffed her mouth with the food which she immediately threw up again. It was an image which worked on two levels: it encapsulated the spectacle of Israel's underclass (the Palestinians) living off Israeli handouts; and it commented on the distance the image of the Jew has travelled in fifty years, from starvation (Selma, the Holocaust and Diaspora poverty) to gluttony, greed and bulimia (the Israeli consumer society and its attendant materialism).

Meanwhile Smadar, stood in a sandy pit exhibiting herself like a freak in a circus show. She invited us to stare once again at her thin body. But the central and most ambiguous image was that of Khaled. Whether he was now playing a Jew or an Arab was uncertain. Running naked on the spot, he held a rubber truncheon with which he repeatedly beat himself. Around his neck, on a string, was a bottle opener. We were handed bottles of beer and encouraged to enjoy the 'show'. Khaled then offered the truncheon around, inviting us to beat him. One embarrassed man, in the spirit of audience participation, agreed but hit Khaled only lightly. The way in which this spectator

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<sup>1</sup> The actress's physical state was a conscious decision. She had deliberately lost weight for the 'role'. This had been further aggravated by a form of anorexia that had taken hold of her through her experience of playing Selma.

participated in the 'game' was intended to highlight how easy it is, in a collective society, to become the persecutor. In the background, Moni as a concentration camp Kommandant, high up in a harness against the far wall conducted the proceedings as if conducting an orchestra. The location of this man-made hell was ambiguous. Were we in Auschwitz or a nightmare vision of Israel? The music and the action escalated with Khaled frenetically beating himself. The scene was unbearable. There was no obvious exit. Eventually we were released while the scene carried on behind us. As we were led away, Khaled collapsed and Smadar comforted him in a pieta-like embrace: Jew and Arab as twin victims of the Holocaust - 'Selma' because of her torture under Hitler and Khaled because of the way the Holocaust had been emplotted and utilized in Israel to suppress non-Jews. We then found ourselves back in the antechamber where we had left our belongings and we were expelled into the Israeli evening air. There was no curtain call, but we were given programmes. Many of us sobbed uncontrollably, some wanted to be alone, most needed to stay and talk with the people we had met along our journey.

*Arbeit Macht Frei* operates on many levels and touches many themes, all of which are interrelated. Primarily, it is about the memory of the Holocaust, how it has become subsumed within the Zionist narrative and utilized by Israeli politicians. 'The Holocaust is a new religion, it is the opium of the masses in Israel', said Ma'ayan. 'For me this kind of theatre is a form of blasphemy. I am desecrating a sanctuary.'<sup>1</sup> Social ritualization, he argues, has created a vast gulf between a real sense of mourning and the political reality of the Holocaust in the Israeli collective memory. Like Danny Horowitz who wanted to 'start from the very beginning and decide', Ma'ayan said he 'could only devise *Arbeit Macht Frei* through total blindness, helplessness and by forgetting'.<sup>2</sup> Like Horowitz, he concentrates his attack on symbols, images and narratives. The Holocaust is 'enmeshed in taboos, clichés, patterns of thought and ideologized feelings'.<sup>3</sup> Sobol said he wanted to take an axe 'to break the frozen ocean of tears' and *Arbeit Macht Frei* achieves this by directly confronting the spectators and making them the subject of the play, as Horowitz had done in *Cherli Ka Cherli* and *Uncle Arthur*. *Arbeit Macht Frei* physically assails the spectators, bombards them, and forces them to participate. 'Fifty per cent of the responsibility for a performance rests with the audience', said Ma'ayan: 'The passive spectator does not exist.'<sup>4</sup> The aim of the production is to provoke catharsis through confrontation with the Holocaust and by forcing the audience into the shoes of the victim,

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<sup>1</sup>Hannah Hurtzig, 'An Interview with David Ma'ayan, Hamburg 1993', in *Theaterschrift* (5 June 1993), pp. 248-63, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 248.

physically. The space is deliberately disorientating. The interrogations and use of our personal stories are deliberately invasive. Privacy is stripped away. A handful of people, in such a claustrophobic environment, cannot hide their reactions, especially when it is they who are at the heart of the performance and the discourse.

Gad Kaynar writes that, traditionally, Israeli drama had been an 'identity generator'. Since the establishment of the Habima which saw itself as a Hebrew/Zionist forum, Israeli theatres were conceived as lecture-halls intended to disseminate political ideals, codes of morality, patterns of behaviour and narratives of history. With *Arbeit Macht Frei*, the audience is forced to look at the type of theatre and patterns of response it has engendered. As Kaynar writes, the spectators themselves are 'the originators of those assumptions that have led to this artistic response'.<sup>1</sup> The viewer is invited to question just how far he is a product of his society without even knowing it.

The production asks the audience to question its narrative of the Holocaust and its by-product: the subjugation of the non-Jew in Israeli society. The handing around of the truncheon in the final scene makes the audience complicit in this oppression. But Khaled does not exist in the play purely to remonstrate the Israeli audience. Khaled sought to educate himself about the Holocaust and he chose to participate in the play. He demonstrated his willingness to understand and empathize with the 'other'. By his example, the Israeli audience is asked to do the same.

*Arbeit Macht Frei* illustrates the Holocaust as a 'rupture' in history and, at the same time, seeks to heal wounds. It is truly cathartic and, as Tabori intends his theatre to be, functions in the same manner as Greek theatre: it recreates the tragedy in order to mourn the dead and then stop the pain. It prepares the ground for a positive and purged future:

The past is commemorated, the memory kept alive, but dealt with as something finished and closed.<sup>2</sup>

When *Arbeit Macht Frei* premièred in Israel it was condemned by the critics as tasteless and blasphemous. Only gradually has it become accepted by the establishment as a seminal piece in the development of Israeli theatre.<sup>3</sup> The company has no sponsors and it receives no state subsidies. Protest theatre still exists on the fringe.<sup>4</sup> Yet both *Arbeit*

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<sup>1</sup> Kaynar, 'Get Out of the Picture, Kid in the Cap', in Ben Zvi, *Theatre in Israel*, p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> Heike Roms, *Time and Time Again*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 59-62; p.59.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Neil Wallace, December 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Rebecca Rovit, 'The Theatre Akko Centre Opens its Gates to Auschwitz', in *The Drama Review*, Vol. 37. (summer 1993), pp. 161-73; p. 161.

*Macht Frei* and Akko Theatre Festival have remained influential with new Israeli writers. For example, Avishai Milstein's *Piwnica* (1994) traces the lives of three ambitious, young Israeli film makers, Joel, Mark and Beatrice who use the real story of Joel's father's experiences in a concentration camp to launch their careers in Hollywood.<sup>1</sup> Thus pain is utilized for self-serving ends. Importantly, one of the play's themes is the nature of Holocaust 'representation'. The Hollywood studio boss strives to devise the most flamboyant and novel cinematic depiction of the Holocaust to date.

The country where *Arbeit Macht Frei* had the biggest impact is Germany. It was performed in Berlin (April 1992), Hamburg (July 1993) Recklinghausen (June 1995) as well as Vienna (May 1995), predominantly in a mixture of German, Yiddish and Hebrew. A German documentary film, *Balagan*, was also made. During the interrogation scenes in the German productions, the actors asked the audience similarly intrusive questions such as, 'what did you father do during the war?'<sup>2</sup> According to Heike Roms, *Arbeit Macht Frei* 'initiated discussion about the politics of commemoration'.<sup>3</sup> For example, at Neuengamme concentration camp, outside Hamburg, the politics of guilt and atonement were played out in a wreath laying ceremony which paralleled the Yom Ha'Shoah ceremony in Akko. Performances both in Israel and Germany sought to emphasize the crippling effect of a politically emplotted past on the present. Hermann Kurthen writes, 'The question of how to deal appropriately with the past has plagued the Federal Republic of Germany since its foundation fifty years ago.' The question of how one should remember, commemorate and deal with the Holocaust remains a sensitive issue:

Since the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany, Germans have walked a fine line between suppression and remembrance, between the desire to distance themselves from deeds of the past and acceptance of collective guilt, shame and responsibility. For some the awkward past has been a reason for defiant ignorance, revisionism, or amnesia. For others it is a constant embarrassment and moral conflict leading to a serious examination of conscience.<sup>4</sup>

Kurthen concludes: 'Austria externalized the past as a German problem; Communist East Germany universalized Nazi Fascism as part of a global struggle; and West Germany normatively internalized (i.e. fully accepted) moral and material liability for Nazi crimes.'<sup>5</sup> The perceived success or failure of remembrance is important because it is taken to indicate Germany's reintegration into the community of civilized nations.

Since the mid 1980s a steady stream of non-German plays and films dealing

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<sup>1</sup>Gad Kaynar, 'What's Wrong with the Usual Description of Extermination?', p.201.

<sup>2</sup>Heike Roms, *Time and Time Again*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>4</sup>Hermann Kurthen, 'Antisemitism and Xenophobia in United Germany', p. 40.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 41

with the Holocaust have been seen in Germany. When *Ghetto* was performed at the Berlin Volkstheater, Sobol said that the play received the most extraordinary emotional reaction he had ever seen: 'It was almost frightening', he said, 'the audience applauded for a quarter of an hour, standing and shouting and calling for the actors... I felt it was a frank reaction not a false one.'<sup>1</sup> Since 1984, the *Ghetto* trilogy has been performed at the National Theater Mannheim, Berlin's Maxim Gorki Theater, in Stuttgart, Weimar and other German cities. The Maxim Gorki Theater chose to stage the trilogy to celebrate its fortieth anniversary.<sup>2</sup> After the fall of the wall, the war and the Holocaust are now re-investigated by a new generation who are trying to rediscover history for themselves. With an influx of 8,000 Jews from USSR, Jewish culture has been revived especially along Berlin's Oranienbergstrasse, the former Jewish quarter. In 1994 the first postwar Jewish secondary school in Germany was opened, fifty-two years after the last one was closed. And in April 1992 the Berlin Festival of Jewish Culture took place. Among the attractions was Britain's Towering Inferno who performed their rock opera, *Kaddish*, described by Germany's *ZAP* magazine as a montage of 'Jewish folk songs, metal guitars, Hitler's speeches, industrial sounds'. Brian Eno proclaimed that Towering Inferno's composers, Richard Wolfson and Andy Saunders, had written the 'most frightening' sound track known to man.<sup>3</sup>

But the most singularly important artistic event in the 1990s was *Schindler's List* :

If one of Steven Spielberg's aims was to stir the German conscience, he struck home more tellingly than any one ever before.<sup>4</sup>

The example of Oscar Schindler, the German Catholic entrepreneur who saved his Jewish workers from the gas-chambers acted as an example of a 'good German' like Gerstein in *The Representative* or Meryl Streep's character in *Holocaust*. However, Schindler was a morally complex character with many moral failings. This was emphasized by his direct paralleling with his evil *Dopplegänger*, the SS Officer Amon Goethe. Schindler was no angel. Moreover, unlike Hochhuth's Gerstein or Zuckmayer's Harras, the example of Schindler shows that it was possible to resist the regime successfully.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, *Schindler's List* did not serve to condone ordinary Germans' inaction as, for example, *The*

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<sup>1</sup> Sobol interviewed in *The Daily Telegraph* (24 April 1989).

<sup>2</sup> *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (6 October 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Bernard McMahon, ed., *Towering Inferno* Press Pack.

<sup>4</sup> Adrian Bridge, 'Spielberg Brings the Holocaust Home to Berliners', *The Independent* (5 March 1994), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Although it can be argued that Oscar Schindler's financial position made it easier for him to dupe the regime and give sanctuary to the Jews in a way that many Germans at the time could not.

*Representative*, but it served to highlight individual choice in the same manner as *Dr Korczak and the Children*. As the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* wrote, "The viewer is forced to ask, "why didn't others try to do what he did?""

Dieter Stolz writes that true national identity can only be derived from within, from the culture and not be imposed by the politicians: 'Art gives spirituality where politicians have failed.'<sup>1</sup> Since 1945, national identity in both East and West Germany was generated from the outside - from the Americans and the Russians. According to Wim Wenders, Germans became 'foreigners' after November 1989. They had to 'colonize' their own land and become their own identity-generators.<sup>2</sup> German identity and German narratives of history are the main topics of German writing in the 90s. For example, Hochhuth's *Wessies in Weimar*, directed by Einar Schleaf in 1992 for the Berliner Ensemble, looks at issues of 'east meets west'. *Schulz and Schulz*, a television series in five parts, was about twin brothers Wolfgang and Walter, growing up on either side of the wall. It was shot in August and September 1987 and screened in December 1989, one month after the collapse of the wall. It was so successful that a sequel, *Aller Anfang ist schwer*, went into immediate production and was shown in 1991.<sup>3</sup> Germany, for the first time has been dealing with the past on its own terms.

### Conclusion

As the century approaches the millennium, people are taking stock, selecting the narratives which will accompany humanity into the twenty-first century. More than fifty years after the liberation of the camps, the historical frameworks which 'contained' the story of the Holocaust are now being dismantled and subjective memory seems to be replacing formal historicist structures. 'Over the past fifty years we have done very well not hearing what survivors have had to tell us', writes Hank Greenspan, a playwright and psychologist. His play *Remnants*, a series of survivor monologues, is a 'half hour voice play that is the fruit of fifteen years of conversation between its author and Holocaust survivors'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dieter Stolz, 'Deutschland - ein Literarischer Begriff: Günter Grass and the German Question', in Arthur Williams, Stuart Parkes and Roland Smith, eds, *German Literature at a Time of Change 1989-1990 German Unity and German Identity in Literary Perspective*, Bern: Peter Lang/University of Bradford, 1991, pp. 207-24; p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony S. Coulson, 'New Land and Foreign Spaces: the Portrayal of Another Germany in Post-unification film', in Durrani, *Literature and Society After Unification*, pp. 213-30; p. 213-4.

<sup>3</sup> Andrea Rinke, 'From Motzki to Trotzki: Representations of East and West German Cultural Identities on German Television after Unification', in Durani, *Literature and Society After Unification*, p. 234.

<sup>4</sup> Hank Greenspan, *Remnants*, unpublished, 1991. It was performed in 1992 as a radio drama on 'Michigan Radio Theatre', directed by Hank Greenspan and Ann K. Lautsch, Michigan Radio WUOM-FM Ann Arbor, Michigan. Since then it has been staged in theatres in the U.S. and Canada.

Part of this drive for memory-collecting comes from the simple fact that this gathering process is now a race against time. The Holocaust will soon be beyond living memory. The British Library's talking book series of survivor testimonies, video interviews that accompany Holocaust exhibitions and particularly the Spielberg and Yale University video databases of survivor testimonies affirm this overwhelming desire to preserve subjective memory. At the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., for example, visitors are given an identity card with the name of a Holocaust victim on it and a package which charts his/her life through the war. The visitor follows a single narrative of the Holocaust from entrance to exit in the museum which is chronologically and historically driven. The story of the individual is thus pitted against the more conventional historical narrative: the subjective against the weight of historical evidence; the single victim against the meaningless numbers. Only at the end, does the visitor discover whether his or her victim survived or perished. In addition, the last room continuously screens video testimonies which again emphasize individual memory against the historically led narrative of the rest of the exhibit.

With the breakdown of historicisms comes the multi-narrative possibility of representation. Simultaneously presenting the Holocaust from several conflicting angles not only highlights the magnitude of the event but illustrates the possibility that the event may indeed not be understandable at all. Such a representation also allows choice on the viewer's part. The Imperial War Museum in London, for example, splits its exhibit of World War Two into different 'arenas' which have no particular order of importance. The visitor, therefore, is allowed to create his or her own narrative by the routes he/she arbitrarily chooses. Thus no single narrative dominates over the others.

Yet choice is also ambiguous and potentially dangerous. The moral responsibility of historical and especially artistic representation is increasing as the century comes to a close. In our age of information overload an increasing proportion of the 'facts' we receive about the world and its history are based on fiction especially those images recorded on celluloid and video. The possibilities of information technology and the internet will, I hope, redress this imbalance but for now the image of John Wayne is superseding that of the western pioneer; *Ben Hur* and *Spartacus* that of the Romans. Just as the history of the murder of the North American Indians and the early Christians have been consumed by the narratives of such films, so the real faces of the Holocaust run the risk of being eroded. Any fictional interpretation of the Holocaust therefore carries a moral burden. History will always be articulated from a subjective point of view and, through consensus, by a master-narrative. The function of the arts should always be to question that narrative and provide other possibilities, whilst keeping the personal stories

of the Holocaust alive.

## Appendix

### A NOTE ON THE HOLOCAUST

Semantic and chronological issues arise in the attempt to define the exact parameters of the Holocaust. When did it begin? Did the deliberate destruction begin with the SA's murder of eight Jews in Berlin on 1 January 1930,<sup>1</sup> Hitler's election in 1933, the deployment of the first SS death squads in Poland during the winter of 1939, or the arrival of the first *Einsatzgruppen* in Russia in June 1941? Does the method of death define the Holocaust? Did it begin with the experimental gassing of 600 Russian POWs and 300 Jews with Zyklon B in Auschwitz on 3 September 1941?<sup>2</sup> Is the Holocaust exclusively synonymous with the term 'Final Solution' which was only confirmed by the delegates of the Wannsee Conference in January 1942 and put into widespread practice in the five death camps, Sobibor, Chelmno, Treblinka, Belzec and Birkenau during the spring and summer of the same year? Is the Holocaust a matter of scale? Is the death of the eight Berlin Jews in 1930 any less than the death of the six million who followed?

When did the Holocaust end? In 1945 with Germany's unconditional surrender? Or did it continue with the postwar murders of the survivors? In Poland, for instance, 350 Jews were murdered by Poles between V.E. Day and the end of 1945.<sup>3</sup> Does it not follow, therefore, that an exact definition of the perpetrators' identity is required? Were the murderers solely German? If so, were they the Reich's leaders and the SS or was the Wehrmacht involved? And what of the German people who democratically elected Hitler and then participated in the slow but deliberate destruction by boycotting Jewish businesses and filling recently 'vacated' university chairs and other positions previously held by Jews, socialists and other 'undesirables'? What of Germany's allies who helped in the slaughter? The Croats, for instance, who murdered half their Jewish citizens in their own camps?<sup>4</sup>

What part was played by those countries fighting Germany who participated complicitly in the slaughter by the suppression of information,<sup>5</sup> the placing of restrictions on immigration<sup>6</sup> and their omission to bomb the railway lines which carried the sealed box cars to their final destination?<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 816.

<sup>4</sup> Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders*, p. 77.

<sup>5</sup> *Document: The Unpseakable Atrocity*, BBC Radio 4 (9 December 1995): the BBC decided not to transmit news items about the death camps because the British people 'had their own catastrophes to deal with'.

<sup>6</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 41: Palestine at that time was under British mandate. The British Government, in reaction to Arab/Jewish riots in Nablus, Jaffa and Jerusalem, passed a white paper in October 1933 limiting Jewish immigration. Ships loaded with European refugees were turned away and several sank at sea. For

Finally, who were the victims? Until the late 1950s, the murder of Jews, non-Aryans and political opponents of National Socialism was a crime with no name. Jews referred to it as 'the catastrophe'. Then writers began to use the term 'Holocaust'. For many Jews, this word was unsatisfactory. First, 'Holocaust', derived from the Greek word for 'burnt offering', limited the tragedy to the period when the gas chambers and crematoria of the death camps were operational. Second, the phrase 'burnt offering' has religious associations and suggests the idea of mass Jewish martyrdom. Third, the word 'Holocaust' is used to refer collectively to all victims of the Third Reich who perished in the camps of Eastern Europe. The Jewish case was ontologically different from that of other victims, they argue: one cannot choose whether one is Jewish or not.<sup>1</sup> Finally, it was felt that the generic nature of the word 'Holocaust' was too often used in association with other cataclysms ('nuclear', for example). Many Jewish writers instead used an old Hebrew word *Shoah* (catastrophic destruction) to refer to the specific Jewish tragedy.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the Jews were not the only ones to suffer at the hands of the Nazis. The Communists, for example, were equally wronged by the Germans.<sup>3</sup> Soviet civilian deaths totalled around fourteen million, more than twice the number of Jewish dead.<sup>4</sup> However, comparisons in numbers only lead to comparisons in suffering. If one is to look at the Holocaust in terms of numbers alone, writes Alan Bullock, then more adults and children died under Stalin through mass execution and starvation (approximately forty to fifty million), than died in Hitler's camps or in front of the machine guns of the Einsatzgruppen.<sup>5</sup>

The question of defining the Holocaust lies in intent. Was the motivation behind the murder of eight Jews by the SA in 1930 the same as the murder of the six million that followed? Were these eight individuals killed spontaneously out of race hatred that had more in common with the anti-Semitic blood-lust of, say, the Cossacks in previous centuries or were these eight people murdered in the full knowledge that it was National Socialism's intention to exterminate all the Jews of Europe? The answer is found in establishing *when* the decision to eliminate all European Jews was taken and *who*

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example, the *Salvador* from Bulgaria was denied entry into Palestine and sank on 12 December 1940 with 160 adults and 70 children on board.

<sup>7</sup> In 1942, the Polish spy, Jan Karski, who had witnessed the horrors of Belzec and Treblinka met with both the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, and the American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, to incite them to act. Nothing came of these meetings, even though underground movements had supplied the two governments with maps of the railway routes into Auschwitz.

<sup>1</sup> A similar case, however, could be made for the gypsies and homosexuals.

<sup>2</sup> Holocaust is derived from the Greek *Holokatoma* meaning burnt offering in the Temple of Solomon.

<sup>3</sup> However, once the Final Solution was implemented, the majority of Jews were killed immediately on arrival at death camps whereas the Communists were put to work.

<sup>4</sup> Leiser, *A Pictorial History of Nazi Germany*, p. 194.

<sup>5</sup> Alan Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin. Parallel Lives*, London: Fontana, 1993, p. 1056.

constituted this new generation of German anti-Semites. Both these questions have become the subject of widespread debate among historians and to date they remain unresolved.

### ***When was the Final Solution Decided?***

Intentionalist historians, such as Alan Bullock, argue that the extermination of the Jews had always stood at the core of Nazi ideology but its progression had been limited in the early years by pragmatic considerations. Full scale massacre, argues Bullock, was initially curtailed by the need for Hitler to consolidate power and avoid international condemnation. This was at a time when Hitler still believed he could re-build the German empire and keep Britain as a neutral ally despite the threat of the intervention of the League of Nations. By 1938, after Chamberlain agreed to the annexation of the Sudetenland, Hitler knew that the League of Nations and the British Prime Minister would prove ineffectual should he choose to invade Poland. This allowed him to increase pressure against the Jews; hence Kristallnacht and, for the first time, the imprisonment of Jews for the 'crime' of being Jewish. The paranoia and hysteria produced by the war in day-to-day life reinforced the Jews' image as enemy of the State and permitted mass murder on a scale hitherto unknown. By 1941 real practical problems had to be confronted: the Einsatzgruppen were ordered to render the Soviet Union both *Judenrein* (empty of Jews) and Communist-free by machine gun alone. The scale of the proposed massacre not only created a logistical nightmare but psychological trauma among the German troops. Therefore, Christian Wirth, the man who created the first gas chambers for the German euthanasia programme in the early 1930s<sup>1</sup> was requested to design large scale killing installations far from centres of population. Years of racial and political indoctrination, the chaos of war and the building of camps in desolate areas of Europe's countryside enabled Hitler to do what he had intended all along: murder all European Jews.

Did Hitler envisage the extermination of non-Aryans in a practical sense when he wrote *Mein Kampf* or was it realized only eighteen years later when the first guard pushed the first Jew into the first gas chamber, in the full knowledge that this was the beginning of the slaughter? When the National Socialists published their twenty-five point programme in Munich, February 1920, Hitler stated his plans for the Jews of Germany:

None but members of the Nation may be citizens of the State. None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the Nation. No Jew, therefore, may be a member of the Nation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gitta Sereny, *Into That Darkness*, pp. 53-4.

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, pp. 23-4.

The publication of *Mein Kampf* in 1923 only reiterated what Hitler had already stated. In 1933, when the Nazis passed the first legislation to curtail activities of German Jews,<sup>1</sup> Goebbels commented that the Government's intention was to 'annihilate German Jewry... Let no one doubt our resolution'.<sup>2</sup> Alan Bullock argues:

Long before he came to power, Hitler's obsession with preserving the health of the Volk from degeneration had attracted him to the idea of eliminating those who were physically or mentally impaired. Less than three months after becoming Chancellor (in 1933) he introduced a law for the compulsory sterilization of the 'hereditarily sick'.<sup>3</sup>

Bullock goes on to argue that the euthanasia programme was the first stage of the Holocaust. Many death camp personnel, such as Franz Stangl, Kommandant of Treblinka, began their careers on the euthanasia programme.<sup>4</sup> The April 1933 boycott of all Jewish businesses and the expulsion of Jews from the civil service, universities and the legal and medical professions, followed by the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 (preventing intermarriage) acted as clear signals to the future fate of the Jews in Germany. They were systematically cut out of society, denied the right to work and all means of self-expression.<sup>5</sup> One would have thought that no one, either in Germany or the rest of the world could have misunderstood Hitler's attitude towards the Jews. Steven Katz, like Alan Bullock, argues that National Socialism's anti-Semitism was genocidal from the very beginning.<sup>6</sup> German anti-Semitism, in the 1930s and 1940s, writes Katz, was characterized by 'the premeditated Nazi plan to murder all Jews'.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, it can be argued that for the 1930s such anti-Semitic rhetoric and legislation were neither unusual nor unexpected. Nor was it limited to Germany. 'No doubt the Jews aren't a loveable people', commented Chamberlain on the plight of Germany's Jews in 1939, 'I don't like them myself'.<sup>8</sup> Much of Hitler's language regarding the Jews was derived from a religious hyperbole that had a long tradition in Europe. Günter Lewy documented how anti-Semitism had been part and parcel of western civilization since the arrival of

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<sup>1</sup> On 28 February 1933 The Law for the Protection of the Nation, was passed followed on 7 April by legislation compelling the 'retirement' of all civil servants of non-Aryan descent. The boycott of Jewish shops and businesses ensued. In September 1933 the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour legalized the anti-Semitic belief that the Jews were an inferior race.

<sup>2</sup> Joachim Fest, *Hitler*, p. 422.

<sup>3</sup> Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin*, p. 810.

<sup>4</sup> Sereny, *Into That Darkness*, pp. 50-90.

<sup>5</sup> Karl A. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz. Nazi Policies Towards German Jews*, Chicago/London: University of Illinois Press, 1970, p. 102.

<sup>6</sup> Steven T. Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context*, p. 390.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>8</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 81.

Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Continued Judaism after Christ's birth was a direct contradiction of Christianity's validity and a challenge to the Christians' social and cultural pre-eminence. The only way Christians could respond was either to persuade the Jews they were misguided and convert them or vilify them as Martin Luther had done.<sup>2</sup> The ultimate solution to the Christian Church's ongoing dilemma was to remove the Jews all together. Hence the mass expulsions of Jews from many European countries during the early part of this millennium.<sup>3</sup>

But functionalist historians, such as Christopher R. Browning,<sup>4</sup> argue that the 'Final Solution' was only agreed upon when no other option was available to the Nazis in their quest to establish a *Judenrein* Germany. Until that moment, emigration and expulsion were the main weapons in establishing a purely Aryan homeland. In other words, until 1941, Hitler's treatment of the Jews was nothing novel in European history:

German Jewish policy was not the result of a conspiratorial plot hatched in Hitler's mind following Germany's defeat in World War One and then carried out with single minded purpose and patient cunning through the instrument of a monolithic dictatorship. It evolved from a conjuncture of several factors of which Hitler's anti-Semitism was only one. To deny the existence of a longstanding Hitlerian blueprint for the extermination of the Jews does not deny the centrality of anti-Semitism in Hitler's Social Darwinian ideology.<sup>5</sup>

Browning and Karl A. Schleunes argue that the route to the Final Solution was a 'twisted road'. Two features of the Nazi regime contributed to this gradual progression in policy and application. First, the Third Reich was not a monolithic state where 'everything was decided at the top and carried out through a chain of absolute obedience running downward to the lowest echelons'.<sup>6</sup> Rather, Hitler stood as a 'feudal monarch' surveying his 'Nazi chieftains' as they vied for power and tried to ingratiate themselves with their Führer. Second, as Hitler wanted a *Judenrein* Europe above all else, Jewish policy was one area where individual Nazis could advance their careers. Browning cites the rivalry between Göring and Goebbels who battled for pre-eminence in spearheading the *Judenfrage* (the Jewish question). 'Given the dynamics of the Nazi political system,' argues Browning,

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<sup>1</sup> Günter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany*, trans. Noah Jonathan Jacobs, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1975, pp. 150-1. See also Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Ian Bild, *The Jews in Britain*, London: Batsford Academic and Educational Books, 1984, p. 8: England's Jews were expelled in 1290; Richard David Barnett, *The Jews of Spain and Portugal Before and After the Expulsion of 1492*, London: Valentine Mitchell, 1971: Spain's Sephardic Jews were expelled in 1492 and Portugal expelled its Jews five years later.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher R. Browning, *The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office*, New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Browning, *The Final Solution*, p. 2.

"final solutions" inevitably became the only ones worthy of submission to the Führer, and it was not surprising that the most final of all solutions, extermination, eventually prevailed.<sup>1</sup> But Browning also stresses the pragmatic considerations involved in shaping the Jewish policy. He argues that the Nazis first concentrated on making life as unbearable as possible for the Jews in Germany to encourage emigration.<sup>2</sup> When that failed, they resorted to expulsion. The seriousness with which the Nazis earnestly considered emigration can be judged by their participation in the Evian Conference of 1938. Göring, head of the department for Jewish Affairs, sent the minister of economics, Hjalmar Schacht, to negotiate what later became known as the Schacht-Rublee Plan. The Evian Conference was an international forum to examine the problem of European, and specifically German, refugees. However, the executive committee of the Evian Conference could find neither areas of settlement for Jewish refugees nor the monetary resources to fund such a settlement, even though the Nazis, by placing an emigration tax on the Jews, hoped to generate part of the necessary assets demanded by other countries to facilitate settlement.<sup>3</sup>

Browning argues that the final attempt at mass expulsion was the Madagascar Plan. Adolf Eichmann, the man who was to be entrusted with the *Endlösung* (Final Solution) tried to devise a workable plan to expel Germany's Jews to the island of Madagascar.<sup>4</sup> The idea was to create a 'superghetto'. However, the conquest of Holland, Belgium and France in May and June 1940 brought increasing numbers of Jews under the Reich's control. The problem was that Nazi racial policy conflicted with foreign policy. Hitler wanted a *Judenrein* Germany but each conquest only increased the number of Jews under his jurisdiction. It was the decision to invade Russia that compelled the Nazi policy makers to re-think their Jewish policy altogether. Browning writes:

Some time between the fall of 1940 and the spring of 1941, however, Hitler made the fatal decision that the conquest of Russia would not further aggravate a final solution to the Jewish question. Instead the Russian Jews would be systematically exterminated as they fell into German hands. This decision was a quantum leap in German Jewish policy. The previous final solutions to the Jewish question all meant physical removal; henceforth the Final Solution meant physical destruction.<sup>5</sup>

However, some historians argue that the Madagascar and the Schacht-Rublee plans were smoke-screens to hide Hitler's true intentions. A.J Nicholls, for instance, argues that the first SS Einsatzgruppen were roaming the Polish countryside and shooting Jews as early as

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Yet Hitler had also made emigration very difficult for the Jews by curtailing the issue of exit visas and by the Emigration Tax. In addition, Jewish families were only allowed to take a minimum amount of financial assets out of the country.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Gitta Sereny, *Into That Darkness*, p. 96.

<sup>5</sup> Browning, *The Final Solution*, p. 8.

winter 1939.<sup>1</sup> But Raul Hilberg, like Browning, argues that the first ghettos established in Poland in 1939 were a 'temporary measure' to segregate the Jews for as yet 'only a nebulous conception of the ultimate purpose'.<sup>2</sup> When the idea for extermination was first formulated is therefore difficult, if not impossible, to establish and is the subject of ongoing historical research. The watershed dates in the development of the Jewish policy are: 1933 (Hitler's election); 1938 (Kristallnacht); September 1939 (the invasion of Poland and the establishment of the first ghettos in October followed by the first Einsatzgruppen); 22 June 1941 (Operation Barbarossa and the deployment of further Einsatzgruppen)<sup>3</sup> and January 1942 (the Wannsee Conference). All these dates mark very clear phases in the progression of the 'solution' to the Jewish question.

Increasingly, however, the evidence confirms that the stages of the plan (and even whether there was a 'plan' in the first place) were not so well-defined as originally believed. As Hilberg points out, there was neither a centralized organization nor even a budget to deal with the Final Solution.

No agency had been set up to deal with Jewish Affairs and no fund was set aside for the destruction process. The anti-Jewish work was carried out in the civil service, the military, business and the party. All components of German organized life were drawn into this undertaking. Every agency was a contributor; every specialization was utilized; and every stratum of society was represented in the envelopment of the victims.<sup>4</sup>

More Jews died by machine gun execution during the first five weeks of Operation Barbarossa than in the previous eight years of Nazi rule, writes Martin Gilbert.<sup>5</sup> Yet he identifies the first gassings in Chelmno on 7 December 1941 as 'the first day of the Final Solution'.<sup>6</sup> In fact, on 31 July 1941, a dispatch from Göring to Heydrich, the Nazi Reichsprotektor of Poland, had instructed him 'to make all the preparations in organizational, practical, and material terms necessary for the total solution to the Jewish question in territories under German influence'.<sup>7</sup> This is the earliest historical document that speaks of the extermination of the Jews in practical rather than ideological terms. Yet evidence suggests that the gassings may have started a few months earlier. At the Frankfurt-Auschwitz Trial in 1965 some witnesses testified that the first gassings took

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholls, *Weimar and the Rise of Hitler*, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 175: On 22 July 1941, Hitler broke his non-aggression pact with Stalin and invaded Russia.

<sup>4</sup> Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders*, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 175.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>7</sup> Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, p. 255.

place in spring 1941.<sup>1</sup> The architectural plans of Auschwitz released from the Kremlin Archives in 1995 reveal that there appears to have been a muddled and *ad hoc* system at work before December 1941, the official start date of the gassings.<sup>2</sup> Hilberg and the Auschwitz curator, Franciszek Piper, agree that recorded documentary evidence regarding the bureaucratic decision to build the gas chambers and the engineering plans of the camp conflict. They both believe that the gas chambers may have been operational by early 1941, five to six months before the invasion of Russia and nearly a year before the Wannsee Conference:

The Birkenau facilities were built as mass killing installations from 1941. The Final Solution decision was taken by Hitler in early 1941 before the invasion of Russia.<sup>3</sup>

For the purposes of my thesis, I am content to accept that the Holocaust began in July 1941. Until further information is gleaned from the Russian-held documents, only the existence of Göring's memorandum of July 1941 establishes the first firm date for the Final Solution. This together with the scale of murder initiated by the Einsatzgruppen in Russia indicate for the first time, in a practical sense, that the Nazis intended to wipe the Jews from the map of Europe. The utilization of gas by the end of the year was a mere technical refinement designed to shield the murderers from contact with their victims, and the mounds of corpses from the eyes of curious civilians.

### **Who were the Perpetrators**

Violent anti-Semitism was part of European culture and not limited to Germany. Ernest Levy, a survivor who grew up in Bratislava, witnessed the first physical attacks on his own family by German nationalists about 1934-5.<sup>4</sup> When they were expelled in 1938, they fled to Budapest where their welcome was not much better. Christabel Bielenberg's experiences in Austria during the war are similarly elucidating.<sup>5</sup> Bielenberg, an English woman, whose German husband eventually became involved in the July 1944 Generals' Plot against Hitler, visited Austria on numerous occasions where she witnessed spectacles of public violence against the Jews. Some onlookers participated in the beatings, others stood by watching or laughing. Violence towards the Jews was not only tolerated in other European countries, but some segments of the population actively participated: the Arrow Cross Party in

<sup>1</sup> Bernd Nauman, *Auschwitz*, trans. Jean Steinberg, introduction by Hannah Arendt, London: Pall Mall Press, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> *The Guardian Weekend* (21 January 1995), pp. 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20, quote from Franciszek Piper.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Ernest Levy, November 1995. Bratislava was then a mixture of cultures: Slovak, German, Czech, Hungarian and Jewish.

<sup>5</sup> Christabel Bielenberg, *The Past is Myself*, London: Corgi Books, 1984.

Hungary from the 1930s; the Austrian and Vichy governments from 1938 and 1941 onwards,<sup>1</sup> and the Ukrainians and Lithuanians who joined the Einsatzgruppen. Other countries such as Britain participated complicitly by their silence. This is important to bear in mind as the West's narrative to have emerged over the last fifty years (with, not surprisingly, the exception of Germany) is one of sole German responsibility for the Holocaust. Many governments were unwilling to become embroiled in the Jewish-German conflict because they believed that immigration created racial tension. At the Evian Conference, for example, the Australian delegate T. W. White told his colleagues, 'It will no doubt be appreciated that as we have no racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one.'<sup>2</sup>

The question remains as to whether Nazi anti-Semitism was any different to the historic Jew hatred chronicled by Günter Lewy. With the exception of those who emulated the Nazis (the Austrian Nazis and the Arrow Cross Party in Hungary, for instance) many European anti-Semites jumped on the Nazi bandwagon, the Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Croatians being the main examples. Nazi anti-Semitism was a different phenomenon entirely, argues Steven Katz, who differentiates between historical European Jew hatred and Nazi racial doctrine. Even though Christianity may have provided fertile ground for the growth of modern anti-Semitism, he writes that it cannot be placed in the same category as Nazism: 'Auschwitz is emblematic of the revolutionary overthrow of Christian dogma.'<sup>3</sup> The Nazis did not acknowledge Christian morality and they viewed the Jews as *Untermenschen* (sub-humans). Even the Christians had viewed the Jews as human beings with souls that could be saved.

Daniel Goldhagen argues that the historically innate religious anti-Semitism was propelled in a new direction by Hitler. It was given a structure and logical foundation that was 'actively' harnessed by the Government. The irrational racial hatred was absorbed into German identity, mysticism and national destiny. The violence was both Teutonically inbred and government sanctioned:

Ordinary Germans were poised in 1939 to have their racial anti-Semitism channelled in a genocidal direction and activated for a genocidal enterprise.<sup>4</sup>

Hitler, by using language which couched German destiny in terms of biblical apocalypse managed to give his people an identity, a destiny and a new religion.<sup>5</sup> His *Weltmacht oder*

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<sup>1</sup> See Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and The Jews*, New York: Basic Books Inc., 1981.

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context*, p. 234.

<sup>4</sup> Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 128.

*Niedergang* (World Power or Ruin) was messianic in its argument. As Hannah Arendt wrote, 'Nazi propaganda was ingenious enough to transform anti-Semitism into a principle of self-definition.'<sup>1</sup> The crucial element, argues Goldhagen, was that the German people did not just turn a blind eye to the violence occurring in their own communities; some participated and many initiated it. This is important to remember as, increasingly, the postwar German narrative of the Holocaust has been to place the noose of responsibility for the genocide around the necks of Hitler and the Reichskabinet with the general population portrayed as innocent dupes and even victims of a savage, totalitarian regime. As Tom Segev emphasizes, people joined the SA and the SS out of choice. At the beginning the Nazis could not afford to pay the members of their military wing and many SA and SS had to buy their own uniforms.<sup>2</sup> The narrative of demonic Nazis and a victimized German nation has been further encouraged by postwar European and American politicians who, realizing that the Germans were necessary allies in the re-construction of European commerce and the establishment of NATO, could not afford the German people to be ostracized or demonized.

The extent to which ordinary Germans were involved in anti-Semitic activity and knew of the plan for extermination is still fiercely contested. It has long been proposed that the popular onslaught against the Jews did not gather momentum until Kristallnacht, November 1938. Many historians have challenged this and recent research shows that, after Hitler's election, vandalism, confiscation of Jewish property, public humiliations, beatings and spontaneous executions were more widespread than originally believed. Daniel Goldhagen illustrates that in the five-year run up to Kristallnacht ordinary Germans were not averse to causing bodily harm to, and even murdering, Jews.<sup>3</sup> That the majority of Germans displayed anti-Semitic tendencies cannot be denied. Yet, apart from those who were ideologically motivated, it is doubtful whether such violence was undertaken in the knowledge of the future extermination of all the Jews.

Lawrence L. Langer argues that to refrain from confronting certain facts about the German people between 1933 and 1945 is to avoid reality.<sup>4</sup> George Steiner has devoted

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<sup>5</sup> See for example, Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim, London: Hutchinson, 1969, p. 60: 'Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.'

<sup>1</sup> Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 356.

<sup>2</sup> Segev, *Soldiers of Evil*, p. 3. Bertolt Brecht wrote a satirical playlet about an SA man lying to his friends and fiancée about having to buy part of his uniform in 'The Chalk Cross', in *Fear and Misery of The Third Reich*.

<sup>3</sup> Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 92-7.

<sup>4</sup> Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust*, p. 26.

much of his writing to solving the riddle of how Germany, 'the seat of European civilization', could produce such a frenzy of bestiality:

The blackness did not spring up in the Gobi desert or the rain forests of the Amazon. It rose from within, and from the core of European civilization. The cry of the murdered sounded in earshot of the universities; the sadism went on a street away from the theatres and museums. In the later eighteenth century Voltaire had looked confidently to the end of torture; ideological massacre was to be a banished shadow. In our own day the high places of literacy, of philosophy, of artistic expression became the setting for Belsen.<sup>1</sup>

Alvin H. Rosenfeld puts forward a persuasive argument to explain why a confrontation with the reality of the German psyche between 1933-45 remains so problematic. Ironically, it is based on the inherent racism of caucasian Europeans. Unlike other perpetrators of genocide, such as Stalin and his henchmen, who could be dismissed as 'Asian' or at the very least 'alien', Germans were caucasian Europeans. Rosenfeld argues that this proximity invites an unpleasant and unwanted personal epiphany and is an unsavoury reflection on the 'supremacy' of white European culture.<sup>2</sup> In addition, what singled Hitler and his people out from the very beginning was the fact that educated Germans legally elected him, and continued to support him. Nazism's popular appeal was marked by streets of cheering, smiling people. Hitler was a totalitarian leader who was loved by his public.

Therefore, when referring to the perpetrators, I specifically mean the German and Austrian nation. Many SS and Nazi leaders, for example Stangl, Eichmann and Hitler, were Austrian by birth. Their anti-Semitism was of the Nazi, ideological variety that had never been witnessed before.

### **Who were the Victims**

Hitler envisaged an Aryan Europe. Non-Aryans were defined as the mentally and physically disabled; non-whites such as blacks, Jews, gypsies and 'Asian' Bolsheviks; religious opponents such as Jehovah's Witnesses; political opponents such as Communists and clerics; and a raggle-taggle group of homosexuals and criminals. All were put to work, starved, tortured and murdered. From 1941 onwards, Jews were sent to the gas chambers directly on arrival in the camps. Crude as it may sound, other groups at least 'stood a chance' of survival. The Jews did not. Anti-Semitism stood at the core of Hitler's ideology from his earliest Munich speeches and it was the Jews that incurred the Nazis' most sadistic wrath. The Jews were hunted and exterminated like rats. Emil L. Fackenheim argues that what differentiates the Jews from the other victims of National Socialism was the

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<sup>1</sup> George Steiner, preface to *Language and Silence*, London: Penguin, 1969, pp. 13-17; pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> Rosenfeld, *Imagining Hitler*, pp. 15-16.

immutable nature of being a Jew. One cannot become a Jew and one cannot stop being a Jew. The category is both religious and racial. The Nazis did not draw the line at those Jews converted to other faiths. There was no escape and no choice open to the victims. The fact that inordinate reserves of manpower, rolling stock and construction materials were concentrated on the elimination of the Jews right up until the end of the war, when Germany was economically crippled, testifies to the centrality and ruthlessness of anti-Semitic policy. The crusade to rid Europe of the Jews defied logic.<sup>1</sup> It defied logic because it was a fanatical campaign and fanaticism cannot be fought, bargained with or even understood.

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<sup>1</sup>Fackenheim, *Quest for Past and Future*, pp. 18-19.

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