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The Trickster at Auschwitz

## *The Trickster at Auschwitz*

**Lisa Herman, Ph.D.**

It might be argued that where genocide occurs in the new 'global village,' there simply are no bystanders. - Berel Lang

In fact, the Holocaust - in art as well as literature - has become a symbol of man's inhumanity and destructive capabilities and its applications have become very broad and far-reaching. - Ziva Amishai-Maisels

'The word 'Auschwitz,' once merely the (Germanized) name of a town in Poland (Oswiecim), is now equated with the concentration camp and customarily stands for the entire Holocaust. "Auschwitz" is often used in a metonymic sense, as a synecdoche, a part-particularly an important part - which signifies the whole. Theodor Adorno's dictum, that it is barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz, is a widely quoted example of the same synecdoche. - Mary Lagerwey

Not only is the word 'Auschwitz' virtually synonymous with 'Holocaust' but the word has become virtually synonymous with evil. - Tim Cole

The trickster challenges social order. I intend in this paper to lead the reader through some thoughts about a dark challenge to social order that is Auschwitz. I am particularly interested in how Auschwitz is remembered and I approach the acts of remembering as occurring in an evolving system.

I have noticed as those of us who experience and record the Holocaust move further from the event, our ways of engaging with our data have evolved. I understand that the record of efforts to engage the disturbing images of Auschwitz unfolds within an evolving, increasingly complex and inclusive epistemology as we attempt to grapple with the material. I notice an evolving system, where I place myself emerging from the second iteration of inquirers into the third. I will outline below my understanding of the system and its three iterations, but first let me give an example of personal third iteration research.

*The last day of the meditation retreat I remember I wandered alone to the far reaches of Auschwitz – Birkenau. Down a tree-lined path I found the*

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*ruins of a crematorium that was not blown up like the others, by the Nazis in retreat, but rather by inmates – the Sonderkommando. These were Jews who has been chosen to staff, under threat of death, the gassing of the victims and disposal of the bodies. Women inmates had smuggled them explosives to blow up the building. All these prisoners were, of course, executed for their acts. This particular place of fallen bricks and ashes feels different to me than the others – as if I can experience the rebels' resistance in the rubble. I am less sad at this site. I feel pride and anger and gratitude to these men. I kneel and say thank-you. I walk on. In a display case, under glass, are three photos of women's bodies being flung into the fire. The sign says: "Here the Greek Jew Alex took photos of corpses burning." How did he get a camera? Somewhere I've read the photos were smuggled to the outside. Alex is long dead in the camp and with no last name lives in these pictures. I say thank-you to him. My paternal grandmother's name was 'Elias,' which is a Greek Jewish name. Maybe we had family in Auschwitz and maybe Alex was one of them. There are no records. I arrive in my walk to the asshole of Auschwitz, the very back, and a vast open field with some round buildings. The sign here says, in Polish, Hebrew and English:*

"The pools and round buildings in view are a group of a (sic) sewage plants built for the constantly rising number of prisoners brought to the camp reaching 90,000 and for the planned extension of Auschwitz."

*The planned extension of Auschwitz. What am I remembering in this moment? I look at a photo of this sign. I remember how cold I was at the retreat and even colder when I read those words. How frightened. I am still cold and frightened now as I look at this photo and type this paragraph into my computer. My body trembles and I am clenching my teeth. My mouth is dry. I am trembling at an idea... at an idea that was not realized by the Nazis... I am sitting in my home in Toronto, looking at a photo of an empty field ready for an extension that did not get built but was planned. I am sick, nauseous, paralyzed looking at a photo of a sign I felt similarly there in Auschwitz and that afternoon drew a picture because I did not know what else to do. I wanted to remember what was happening to me.*

As a third iteration researcher, I record how the planned extension of Auschwitz is effectively happening **now** in my co-existence with its images; however, not in the way the Nazis imagined.

## The Three Iterations of Auschwitz Remembrance

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### *The Event*

First, there is Auschwitz.

And there are those affected by it. These include the deceased, survivors, perpetrators and bystanders who lived temporally and geographically through the events. They recorded their testimony through screams of pain and silence, rationalizations and explanations, attempts at reconciliation and forgiveness, denial: their own physical experience.

### *Iteration 1*

The first iteration of non-participants as inquirers are those who directly witnessed the events of the Holocaust: liberators, front-line caregivers, journalists, diplomats...They and the participants **pass on** the story of what actually happened.

### *Iteration 2*

The second 'generation' of engagement with the Holocaust traditionally includes children of actual participants, and their grandchildren who are categorized as 'third generation.' Sometimes known as 'memorial candles,' in the literature, these direct descendants are considered to carry their own special burden of memory and experience, having a need to encounter the Holocaust through their childhood and family histories. I am suggesting a second 'iteration' in Holocaust engagement that eliminates the need for the subject's engagement criteria being a blood or chronological requirement. It is then the psychological relationship/distance to the original occurrence that determines the iteration. A member of the second iteration in this epistemology includes anyone who attempts to understand, identify or resonate with actual participants' experience. The second iteration brings an imaginative element to the engagement with the actual stories that happened. For us, information has been accessed through images created by the participants and the first iteration: photos, stories, music and other art forms, and also non-verbal communication. Those that are in the first iteration as well as actual participants may be included in the second. All who are of the second iteration engage participants' experience by either trying to identify with that experience or by disavowing: "I could never, I would never, how could 'they'..." We attempt to imagine what it was like; as if we were there; as if we were someone other than who we are. Our acts of engagement can be performed in conversation, through art, in academic discourse...

### *Iteration 3*

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The emerging third iteration of recorders/remembers of the Holocaust inquires how and why we and our predecessors are remembering and recording, and what effect this has on us. In this third iteration are those that have had physical and imaginative encounters with participants and those that have not. The third iteration also includes actual participants. We are interested in memory and understanding and whether those concepts are appropriate. We engage through our own experience and responses and do not aspire to be who we are not. We have moved more into artistic practices in our inquiries and away from linear language. Some of us write linearly about those who are engaged in the arts and sometimes we try and do both.

### How we received our images

#### *Iteration 1*

We must remember and *never* forget what happened at Auschwitz (Zelizer, 1998). Cultural critic, Walter Benjamin, says: "Every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns, threatens to disappear irretrievably" (quoted in Zelizer, p.1). War atrocity is a present concern. The images of the Holocaust have become "... a lasting iconic representation of war atrocity and human evil" (p. 1) and thus are appropriate areas of study. Public concern for events is influenced by these images that are presented to us and it is important to know how images of war atrocity are preserved in our memory. They "... creatively pop up in ways that challenge what we think we know about the past and how we think we know it" (p. 2). By studying the images of the Holocaust we may learn something about collective remembering.

Those of the first iteration who first conveyed images of what had occurred in the concentration camps to non-participants in the Holocaust were newspaper reporters. They often had no words to describe what they were seeing. They could not understand it. "...Journalists struggled to find metaphors powerful enough to capture what they were seeing in words. (By bearing witness, they tried to make) the horrific more imaginable" (p. 71). Dealing with their own shock and horror at the same time as they tried to convey their messages, left the reporters moving "rapidly back and forth between shock, disgust, and fear for their own health" (p. 71). Photography, which until this time had taken a back seat to written text journalism, now came into its own. Though also irrevocably changed by their experience, sometimes "in a stupor" (p. 88), photojournalists better than print journalists could, in visual images, capture a less-mediated version of the events.

Zelizer reports readers of newspapers were sickened by these pictures. Previously, reporters had given eye-witness accounts, and told of their own response to what they saw. With words the press restricted the act of bearing witness by closing off

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interpretation and grounding the narratives in the here-and-now. With photos, the press helped the world bear witness more effectively by opening the documents to interpretation (p. 108). The visual images became universal shared symbols. Often without date, correct place or credit to the photographer, these visual images of atrocity entered us as timeless truths. They became our reality.

"The atrocity photos were such a credible representation of the atrocities that they turned up as reality markers in other modes of Holocaust representation. Artists, for instance, began to use photos of the dead as visual cues: Pablo Picasso's famous painting *The Charnel House* was based on atrocity photos... Early fictional representations of the camps wove in visual scenes that had already etched in memory by the press; Joe Hersey's *The Wall* for example, invoked early atrocity photos as starting points for the seemingly unconnected narrative..." (Zelizer, p. 147).

As time has passed, we have moved away from the flashbulb photos of the camps. We have forgotten the details that horrified the world.

"By adopting the always larger framework, the always greater explanation, the always more encompassing paradigm, those remembering dismissed detail in favor of the belief in abstract principles and historical coherence. We gloss over details in order to arrive at some intelligible and coherent patterns... (fueling) a preference for rational explanations to irrational phenomena" (p. 157).

We forget how to live with horror and personal experience.

### *Iterations 2 and 3*

Images authenticate personal experience and stand in for the absence of experience. Thus, they are suited to the 'inexplicable' as well as the non-participant's inquiring. Rational explanations, the 'explicable,' require less connection for us. After the initial exposure to the camps, public consciousness moved away from desiring relation to the Holocaust and we began a "bracketed period of amnesia toward the atrocities of Nazi Germany" (Zelizer, p. 163). This lasted from the end of the forties until the late seventies. In the seventies, the trial of the captured Nazi war criminal, Adolph Eichmann, in Israel and the publication of a number of books on the Holocaust indicated a bifurcation in Holocaust consciousness and the emergence of 'the third memory wave' as it is called by Zelizer. People were now remembering without the demand to understand. "Bearing witness... took on a retrospective quality that allowed publics to move back and forth in time, attending both to the atrocities and to contemporary agendas: people were remembering to remember" (p. 175). This is the second and the emergence of the third iteration.

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Zelizer suggests that photographic images have ceased to help us remember. We have become immune to our newspaper and TV images and she asks, what is the point of photographic images of atrocity if they do not help prevent atrocity from happening? "The act of attending through memories has come to stand in for real action" (p. 239). Perhaps, Zelizer has not considered that photos are not the only form of images of the Holocaust. A new system of images birthed through photographs of the Holocaust is presently influencing who and how we are.

### *Iteration 3: How Auschwitz is now*

In her edited collection of essays *The Americanization of the Holocaust* (1999), Hilene Flanzbaum represents what I call third iteration scholarship on how we continue to be influenced by photographic and other images of the Holocaust. The nature of American knowledge of this event "... has rarely been delivered by direct witness. It comes to us by way of representations, and representations of representations, through editors and publishers, producers and directors" (p. 4). There is growing research interest in third iteration American academic communities in the topic: published books, new fields of related study, dissertation topics, scholarly journals and paperback academic books become bestsellers. Also, in popular culture, the "Shoah Business" is big business (Cole, 1999). Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* grossed \$96 million by 1996 and won seven Oscars. Two survivors won Academy Awards "merely for telling their stories on film" and the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. "boasts the largest attendance figures in history for a national museum: two million in its first year and five thousand a day (62% are not Jewish)" (p. 7).

The Holocaust is increasingly represented on television (Shandler, 1999). That medium's distinctive character "viewed primarily in intimate, domestic settings; providing large audiences with an endless multichannel flow – has played a strategic role in establishing the Holocaust as one of the most powerful moral paradigms in contemporary American discourse" (p. 34). The Holocaust has become a moral fixture in Americans' daily lives. The Spielberg generation's (my generation) attachment to the Holocaust, as for other ethnic groups in the 70's through their own histories of suffering, helped renew our identity (Flanzbaum, 1999). This is a controversial statement. Is there a Jewish identity outside of suffering? Have we replaced God with the Holocaust? Some say American Jews are secure in their American identity and thus as the exploration of this generation's attachment unfolds, it is inevitable that the Holocaust become Americanized.

It was in the 1970's that my generation awoke to the Holocaust. It was 1975 when I co-created and performed a show about remembering the Holocaust in Los Angeles: *Survivors*. At this time images of 'survival' and 'survivors' emerged everywhere in American popular culture, manifest in all sorts of seemingly disparate contexts... But whether invoked with irony or with dead seriousness, being 'a survivor' – more

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specifically, being known as 'a survivor' – became a kind of fashion (Greenspan, 1999, p. 57). Did we as young Jews, re-discover our own contemporary survival story so we could fit into the general American discourse?

*Non-Participant Experience of an Evil Event*

How do we remember and present an event at which we were not present, this being "our preeminent reality now, no less than the Holocaust was the victims' preeminent reality then" (Young, 1999, p. 77)? When we imagine Auschwitz, which is the only way we can summon that place - and represent our knowledge artistically, which is the only way images can be represented - scholars and critics cast a wary eye (Furman, 1999, p. 85). Are we not then aiding those who would claim the Holocaust did not happen and that all its events were imaginings? But it is through artistic representation – films, books, museums... that we "forge connections between that event and present-day people" (Hungerford, 1999, p. 106). Contemporary Jews increasingly feel they were present at Auschwitz (Kremer quoted in Furman, 1999, p. 88). We have, according to Furman, assimilated the suffering of the Holocaust into our own experience. Whether scholars continue to argue about whether the Holocaust can or should be represented by those not there, it has become part of popular memory and the recounting of the events is now "as much about the present as about the past" (Horowitz, 1999, p. 145).

There is high interest in the Holocaust even in places like a mid-west predominantly white, Christian student body (Steinweis, 1999). Though many visible minorities live in Lincoln, Nebraska, a young student there "put her finger directly" on the discussion point of why they are interested in the Holocaust more than in the history of the oppression of Native Americans in their own community. The student said that for young Nebraskans like herself, "studying about the Holocaust is a 'safe' means of learning about 'other peoples' victims" (p. 170). Holocaust themes are also being appropriated by some Christian group agendas, such as the "pro-life" movement who compare aborted fetuses to Jews killed at Auschwitz. "Such heartfelt sentiments testify to the extent to which the Holocaust has been absorbed into the American consciousness as a paradigmatic evil" (Steinweis, p. 173).

From a Black American perspective, we are reminded that history gives us memories of other lives lived long ago. "And it is in giving us these memories that history gives us our 'identity'" (Benn Michaels, 1999 p. 183). Benn Michaels tells how Toni Morrison's description of 'rememory' in her novel *Beloved*, shows how we remember what we have not experienced:

"'A house can burn down,' Sethe tells Denver, 'but the place – the picture of it –stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world.' Thus, people always run the risk of bumping into a 'rememory that belongs to somebody else,' and thus, especially Denver runs the risk

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of a return to slavery: 'The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there – you who never was there – if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you.' Because Denver might bump into Sethe's rememory, Sethe's memory can become Denver's; because what once happened is still happening – because as Denver says, 'nothing ever dies' – slavery needn't be part of your memory in order to be remembered by you" (p. 185).

Even Nike's flagship store in Chicago, *Nike Town*, has been deconstructed as symptomatic of the Americanization of the Holocaust to show how deeply the Holocaust is embedded in the American unconscious (Levy, 1999). The inside and outside décor (have) far too many resonances to Third Reich design. "(Are) these resonances of the 'wrong 1939' ... the kind of accident that happens more often than we can recognize" (p. 216)? Nike presents symbols without content "... in which marketing strategies offer no explicit symbols of victimization, no evident scapegoat, no *loser* - a kind of radical pop retelling of World War II in which Holocaust denial manifests itself as the expression of relentless power with the complete absence of a victim..." (p. 222). Is this how Auschwitz lives dangerously on outside of our awareness replaying the Nazi plan to destroy all evidence of the destruction of their victims - the Jews?

### How we represent Auschwitz is now

*"Some people want to forget where they've been; other people want to remember where they've never been."*

- Eli Cohen and Gila Almagor, from their film *Under the Domim Tree* (quoted in Young, 2000, p. 1).

Those who came of age after the Holocaust were indelibly shaped by it and ... (do) not attempt to represent events (we) never knew immediately but instead portray (our) own, necessarily hypermediated experiences of memory" (Young, p.1). My third iteration, when accused of self-indulgence and evasiveness, says we can do no other than represent our own experience of the Holocaust. And what is that experience? "Photographs, film, histories, novels, poems, plays, survivors' testimonies" (p. 3). In our work, the third iteration rejects any redemptory message that is the traditional realm of art. We believe any beauty seen in or salvaged from Auschwitz is an extension of the evil done there. How we choose to represent Auschwitz must not be beautiful in the traditional aesthetic sense of having coherence, balance, transcendent meaning... We must represent how the images of Auschwitz have disturbed us.

Foucault says that all history is represented history and its study is one of commemorative forms, but he adds we must study both *what happened* and *how it is*

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*passed down to us.* The third iteration is more interested in the how it is passed down. It is our own experience of the Holocaust that is expanding, evolving and we are the "memory-artists" who pass this knowledge to future generations

"... These memory-artists may even lead the next generation of historians to a more refined, if complex kind of history-telling, one that takes into account both events and how they get passed down to us. In turn, I would like to see their works force scholars to reflect on their own academic commodification of Holocaust history, how the next generation simultaneously feeds on the past and disposes of it in their work. Although academic critics have been quick to speculate on the motives of filmmakers, novelists, and artists, we have remained curiously blind to our own instrumentalization of memory, to the ways an entire academic industry has grown up around the Holocaust. It is time to step back and take an accounting: Where does all this history and its telling lead, to what kinds of knowledge, to what ends? For this is, I believe, the primary challenge to Holocaust art and historiography in an antiredeemptory age: it is history-telling and memory that not only mark their own coming into being but also point to the places – both real and imagined – they inevitably take us" (Young, 2000, p. 11).

It is possible to distinguish between 'common memory' and 'deep memory': common memory trying to give meaning and coherence and perhaps a redemptive slant to history, and deep memory holding that which is unrepresentable. It is the narrator's own voice which bridges the gap between common and deep memory and reminds the spectator that what they are witnessing is being told by one person in one particular time and place. Thus the memory-artist presents a "... gesture to the existence of deep, inarticulable memory and (their) own incapacity to deliver that memory" (Friedlander, quoted in Young, p. 14).

Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1986, 1991), written as a 'comix' (words and comic-style illustration), is a two-volume work about Spiegelman interviewing his survivor father. Jews are portrayed as mice and Germans as cats. It is, perhaps, the most referred to third iteration artistic piece in all of the scholarly literature. In *Maus* "... meaning is not negated altogether, but whatever meaning is created in the father's telling is immediately challenged in the son's receptions and visualization of it" (Young, 2000, p.23). Moving forward and backward in time, Young says Spiegelman allows entry into "silence and spaces between words" (p. 31) and tells the story of absence. In the CD-ROM version of *Maus*, Spiegelman enters interior space and shows how images for his work arose to consciousness: "... the memory of this memory-text's production... reveals the interior, ever-evolving life of memory – and makes this life too part of the text" (p. 34).

Spiegelman integrates images of Auschwitz into his daily experience. And we might ask

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"...what do these stories do to the rest of the lives in which they are embedded? Shouldn't they foul everything they touch with their stench? Can we keep such stories separate or do they seep into the rest of our lives, and how corrosive are they? Maybe, just maybe, we can live with these stories after all" (Young, p. 37).

Spiegelman and others have an "... uncanny middle voice of one who is in history and who tells it simultaneously, one who lives in history as well as *through* its telling" (p. 41).

### *Engaging the Images of an Evil Event*

We make, we seek, and finally we enjoy, the contrivance of all experience. We fill our lives not with experience, but with images of experience. Daniel Boorstin, *The Image* (quoted in Young, 1999, p. 42)

Some of us in the 1950's grew up playing with the Holocaust. As a child, I embodied the picture I had seen in the newspaper, of what I came to call a Jewpile, while others found their ways to remember history that was not their own. In representing our experience, members of the third iteration tend to invite the viewer into the images created to become a participant and imagine their own story from the image. It is an invitation to play. James E. Young, professor of Judaic Studies and English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and a leading authority on Holocaust memorialization, serves on the international board of directors of Auschwitz and Terezin. He is interested in the 'after-images' of the Holocaust and what I call third iteration work. He researches the work of contemporary artists.

David Levinthal photographs tableaux made from toys of Nazi and Auschwitz images and in his *Mein Kampf* series, creates this response in a viewer:

"... Rather than concentrating the mind on the toy object, the focal plane takes us into the space between the object and its once-worldly referent, into the space between it and us – where the mind is forced to imagine and thereby collaborate" (Young, 2000, p. 52).

The spectator is asked to collaborate in history, in the living of our own history and not the history of the other. In the work itself, we are asked not to mistake now for then. Our experience of reading Young's book is an 'after-image' of the events Young explores in the book; as the artistic events he presents, are themselves after-images of the Holocaust. We bring our knowledge and an intent to remember to our remembering and imbue our sites of exploration with the sense of "having been there before" (p. 74). The third iteration knows where our images began – in the actual occurrence - and knowing this, we impose our own meaning on its images. We do not let our hypermediated experiences of the Holocaust displace the Holocaust (p. 89). We are sometimes more concerned with our own experience of the absence and the void left by the Holocaust, than with the Holocaust itself.

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Young speaks of 'countermemorials' that "...remain a process, not an answer, a place that provides time for memorial reflection, contemplation, and learning between departing and arriving" (p. 118). Artists of the third iteration ask for an exploration of the liminal space between the then and now. Daniel Libeskind achieves this invitation to explore the liminal in his design of the Jewish Museum in Berlin:

"Indeed, it is not the building itself that constitutes his architecture but the spaces inside the building, the voids and absence embodied by empty spaces; that which is constituted by those spaces between the lines of his drawings. By building voids into the heart of his design, Libeskind thus highlights the spaces between walls as the primary element of his architecture... a negative center of gravity around which Jewish memory now assembles" (p. 165).

As Young contemplates his own involvement in the design for a Holocaust memorial in Berlin, he wonders if he can find his own liminal space between "... being oppressed by memory and being inspired by it, a tension between being permanently marked by memory and being disabled by it" (p. 198). He wonders if young Germans explore a similar process.

#### *Inventing new rules for knowledge*

"With Auschwitz, something new has happened in history, which is a sign and not a fact... *Phrases are in abeyance of their becoming event* But the historian must then break with the monopoly over history granted to the cognitive regimen of phrases, and he must venture forth by lending his ear to *what is not presentable under the rules of knowledge*. Auschwitz is the most real of realities in this respect. Its name marks the confines wherein historical knowledge sees its competence impugned" (Lyotard, 1984, last page).

But are we to be left to memory without phrases? A retired Canadian general who commanded the United Nations mission to Rwanda during the 1994 genocide of up to a million Tutsis by the Hutus, describes the dangers of silence for him: "I can't sleep. I can't stand the loudness of silence" (Dallaire, 2000).

If we choose not to remain silent, then how do we engage with what we want to know, when what we want to know is not part of the measurable world? When what we want to know are the disturbing images of evil? When what I want to know are images situated in the liminal space between history and imagination, what is the nature of my exploration? And how do I creatively present what I find? I do know my engagement in liminal space is a physical mind/body experience. I know I enter into this physical reality through and with my body/mind. I know, "No image satisfies me unless it is at the same time, knowledge" (Artaud quoted in Steinman, 1995, p. 105).

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And I know this imaginal knowledge I learn in liminal space is knowledge that I feel compelled to share.

Paying attention to my physical body/mind in physical space is my way of this liminal exploration. Understanding that when I enter the liminal, I enter a physically experienced domain with all that I am, is how I access *knowledge that has not yet appeared*. Bringing my awareness and attention through being in a liminal state, is how I access *knowledge that is already present*. In both these ways, through the felt senses of my body, I engage the images of Auschwitz. I work to present both the 'goneness' and 'the historical real' (Petra, p. 6). I enter the 'Holocaust performative,' a term adapted by Petra from Judith Butler's definition of the performative as 'that power of discourse to produce effects through reiteration' (p. 6). For Petra, the Holocaust performative supplements Butler's definition by also insisting on the historical 'real', as well as discourse 'real', about the Holocaust. The Holocaust performative

"disallows the kinds of questions, methodologies, reading strategies, theoretical paradigms, and observations that we typically might deploy in relation to representation, forcing us to ask new questions and re-ask old ones. What are our own stakes (including not only scholars and playwrights, but also readers and spectators) in thinking and writing about these events" (p. 7)?

The Holocaust leaves no choice but to follow the ways of the trickster. When dealing with the Holocaust we must disrupt previous structures and tread new ground. A space with no ordering is the only space for Auschwitz now: the space between history and memory, between history and art, between ethics and aesthetics, between researchers and what is researched. Ways of inquiring must suit this space and continue to be discovered.

"Suppose that an earthquake destroys not only lives, buildings and objects but also the instruments used to measure earthquakes, directly and indirectly. The impossibility of quantitatively measuring it does not prohibit, but rather inspires in the minds of the survivors the idea of a very great seismic force... Its (Auschwitz') name marks the confines wherein historical knowledge sees its competence impugned" (Lyotard, 1988, p. 56).

We are physical bodies in pain when we approach Auschwitz in liminal space. Petra presents Auschwitz as giving us the 'economy of bodily injury' as the truth of the human species as opposed to 'fragile culture.' In Auschwitz images were prevented "from crystallizing as images of desire and/or nightmare and ... (broke) out into sensation (suffering) and denial (horror), into a blasting of sight and sound (fire, uproar)" (Kristeva quoted in Petra, 1999, p. 91). The body was acted on in violence and horror in the Holocaust and thus becomes a necessary instrument for its inquiry. Deb Margolin, not a child of participants in the Holocaust, "whose childhood was

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mapped by film images of atrocity, portrays (in her theater piece *I/Not I*) the live Jewish body in the present as it grapples with the history of slaughtered Jewish bodies from the past" (Petra, p. 103). In her third iteration research, Margolin embodies thought to remember Auschwitz.

As does Margolin, I feel I must engage with the disturbing images of Auschwitz through my body, and at the same time, know "how liberating and limiting our words, our bodies, and our memories really are" (p. 108). I recognize myself as co-creator with the disturbing images of evil and through creative engagement work to shape them so I can bear their weight. I also try to live between hope and despair, knowing I "cannot trifle with the gaps between and within" (Eigen, 1993, p. 242). I am trying to live respectfully in those holes between horror and creativity.

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