TRANSMISSIONS OF NON-MATERIAL FAMILIAL JEWISH LEGACY

LESLEY SIMPSON

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN HUMANITIES
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

JANUARY 2020

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Abstract

This study explores acts of non-material familial Jewish legacy, beginning with the Jewish ethical will of Yiddish comic writer Solomon Rabinowitz in 1916, and closing with a collaboration of wordless music with legend in the contemporary moment in Canada. This research provides a modality of Jewish familial legacy that highlights individual voice to illuminate how individual memory moves as an active force, a dynamic Aleida Assmann describes in her essay, “Canon and Archive” as “active remembering” (*Collective Memory Reader* 334-337). This individual voice functions as a strategic disruption that has an impact on what is remembered, what is transmitted, as well as what is excluded and forgotten.

In positioning the concept of transmission as its primary organizing principle, the dissertation examines four modes of transmission : the democratized machinery of oral performance embedded within Rabinowitz’s ethical will, the impact of an accidental transmission upon Canadian novelist Alison Pick, a counter transmission by Canadian teacher Henia Reinhartz linked with a postwar counter memorial movement and, in conclusion, an embodied transmission through wordless melody. Looking at individual strategic acts of non-material legacy as components of Jewish cultural memory, the project redefines what memorialization and modes of transmission can explore, upend and suggest. In its totality, this dissertation argues against a passive model of storage by examining these strategic creators and the reception of their works. In so doing, the project illuminates the field of individual acts of cultural memory. Reception reveals the intriguing and unpredictable afterlives of the transmissions. In moving voices from the periphery into the centre, this project explores the creative possibilities of historical remembrance as a form of moral witnessing, and reveals a spectrum of acts of resistance against erasure.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Mark Guttman who cheered me on with his calm loveliness, astute vision, and generous heart, as well as my son Ira Halpern, who has been with me, in too many ways to enumerate, from the beginning.

Lesley Simpson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The education I have received enriched my life beyond measure. So, too, have the people I have met along this route. I was fortunate Marty Lockshin admitted me into the program. Adele Reinhartz assisted with my admission strategy. And when Sara Horowitz agreed to supervise me and Julia Creet and Ruby Newman joined my committee, I hit the home run. Sara Horowitz has been an anchor, support and guide. She created opportunities for me throughout the process. If a PhD could be compared to a marathon, Sara Horowitz functioned as that competent coach who was positioned at the next water station, advising about the route ahead.

So many people helped along the way. Markus Reisenleitner assisted with practicalities of navigating the university. Scott McLaren, the humanities librarian at York University opened his office at the library. Yedida Eisenstat gave me a crash course in *midrash* and was so generous suggestions and resources from the moment I met her. Librarians at York University as well as the Azrieli Foundation's Arielle Berger were generous with time, material and support. Brian Katz was beyond generous with resources, e-mails and long conversations about music. The Reinhartz and Walfish family went above and beyond. I want to thank Mordecai Walfish in particular for too many things to count here. Yael Seliger functioned as my *unofficial* committee, mentor, coffee pal, reading buddy as well as a library disguised as a human. My son Ira and I had many conversations about this project. I will be forever grateful for his intellect, company and questions.

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This project began as an examination of Jewish ethical wills and paradigms of Jewish familial memory. I am defining an ethical will as an act of non-material legacy that has at its core an ethical concern, principle or transmission. Unlike a legal will, an ethical will does not concern itself with material assets, but is preoccupied with non-material legacy. The ethical will is not legally binding; it can be cherished or ignored, celebrated or forgotten. As I was investigating contemporary Jewish ethical wills, I became increasingly intrigued by issues of transmission, reception and interpretation.

I want to explain the background of this dissertation briefly and how it evolved into its present form. In my original proposal in 2016, I had planned to create a national repository of Jewish ethical wills, and focus on material by Canadian Jewish women. There has not been any English research yet about Canadian Jewish ethical wills, and how they constitute a window into the inner lives of Canadian Jews, as a repository of modern experience. I imagined I would discover voices that had been unknown, silenced, or marginalized. Prior research includes Ruth Panofsky's *At Odds in the World: Essays on Canadian Jewish Women Writers* (2008), as well as a Julie Spergel's PhD dissertation *Canada's 'Second History' The Fiction of Jewish Canadian Women Writers* (2009). I observed thematic overlap in representations of displacement, discrimination, and marginalization. Canadian Jewish women had been described as existing in a double ghetto, one from lack of full participation in Jewish community structures because of patriarchy, coupled with challenges of anti-Semitism. They were discriminated against twice, for gender as well as ethnicity.

In *Narrativity and Uniqueness in Canadian Jewish Women's Holocaust* Memoir, a PhD dissertation by Stephen McCullough (2006), the author examines Holocaust memoirs of eight

Canadian Jewish women. He argues from a feminist position to grapple with and understand Holocaust testimony and its implications for readers. He discovers that the writers do not make extensive explicit reference to their lives *as Canadians*. He argues that they wrote memoirs primarily to provide testimony about wartime injustices and that it is likely that their immigration challenges after the war pale by comparison.

Like McCullough, I have found that the writers here do not foreground Canada as a place, except that it provides the site from which writers (and a musician) remember, recollect and interpret experience. Nor do they foreground any sense of what it means to be a Canadian. It is the site from which they are able to construct the transmission.

McCullough also notes the spectrum of opinion about Canada ranges from writers who are grateful to the country, to others who find the level of anti-Semitism coupled with the robust Holocaust denial in the 1980s "disturbingly familiar" experiences that make this new world "insufficiently different" (407). In *Between Gods,* Alison Pick's paternal grandparents flee Prague in 1939 by bribing a Nazi officer, and settle in Kitchener, Ontario. When they join the United Church, their conversion is driven not out of a belief in Christian doctrine, but as a price they would pay to be free from terror. The historical record illuminates the power of the terror in Canada. Michael Brown notes that Canada admitted fewer Jews per capita in the Nazi era than any other Western country (61), and that it was easier for a Ukrainian veteran of the Waffen SS to immigrate than a Jewish veteran of the death camps. Brown cites Harold Troper's *Old Wounds: Jews, Ukrainians and the Hunt for Nazi War Criminals* (1988) . In this dissertation, Canadian places are included—Brian Katz dreams a melody in Elora, Ontario, Alison Pick recalls going to church with her father in Kitchener, Ontario and attends a conversion course in Toronto, Henia Reinhartz finds work in Montreal and then in Toronto at Tip Top Tailors, but

these sites function as chronological placeholders to tell another story. The issue of Canadianness is *almost* absent. I note the observation of Hannah Wirth Nesher who, in relation to the work of Solomon Rabinowitz declared: Yiddish says it best: *Das wort macht das ort,"* during the Sholem Aleichem 100th Yortsayt Conference in Israel (Wirth-Nesher, Video 5:28). The word *creates* the place. Canada functions in the background, almost an accident of geography.

As I read more contemporary Jewish ethical wills, my thinking about the direction of the dissertation changed. I became increasing intrigued by issues of transmission and reception. Because of the nature of the ethical will as an act of legacy, the issues of transmission and subsequent reception required foregrounding. I wanted to follow the flight paths. I decided that the national repository of letters of Canadian Jews would best be positioned as a separate research project. The dissertation would be richer if I could probe a range of transmissions and their trajectories.

As my research developed, the focus evolved to illuminate the contours of the afterlives of transmissions, to see how and if the legacy was deployed in new contexts, how it travelled, and was reimagined, adapted, interpreted and deployed, or ignored and forgotten. The heart of the enterprise of this research project is a moral transmission from Jewish parents to children as well as grandchildren. Sometimes the temporal direction is reversed, and the transmission moves instead from children to parents. The final project has taken this idea of transmission as its organizing principle and has examined a series of transmissions by looking at the mode of representation, reception, and interpretation.

I organized the project around the idea of transmission because it provides a way to see how cultural memory unfolds and explore reception. In addition, this organizing principle of transmission allows us to examine the mode of representation as well. This project examines

intergenerational storytelling. All the transmissions considered here unfold as acts of non-material legacy: beginning with Solomon Rabinowitz's ethical will, the stories that unfold in Canadian novelist Alison Pick's memoir *Between Gods*, to the personal history Canadian teacher Henia Reinhartz selects in her Holocaust memoir *Bits and Pieces* and, concluding with a wordless melody combined with a story from Canadian storyteller Dan Yashinsky. The dissertation takes Rabinowitz's ethical will as its departure gate because it sets up a democratized paradigm of engagement, an intersection with modernity that helps to thematically frame the dissertation. It is my argument that Rabinowitz reimagined the concept of the Jewish ethical will, and revolutionized what non-material legacy could become. A Jewish ethical will was no longer restricted to a didactic list of instructions from parents to children. What then, might it include? The remaining three chapters pose a response to this question and explore non-material Jewish legacy in Canada, both inside and outside of a parental paradigm.

In "Introduction: The Migration of Memory and Memories of Migration" Julia Creet asks how do we understand memory exiled from its origin? (3) Canada "a nation in large part formed by migration and the memory of migrants" (3) functions as the place from which we can see how non-material legacy may unfold and be reimagined.

Context for Transmission

Jeffrey Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy point out in *The Collective Memory Reader* that as a field of inquiry, memory studies has a history (6). Plato positioned memory as a wax tablet that could be imprinted, wiped, and inscribed again. Transmission, too has a history. I would like to provide a contextual overview of transmission and how it has been defined, conceived, and positioned. I have chosen the following thinkers because they have been the most illuminating, but this modest selection represents only a tiny fraction of a complex and

emerging field within memory studies. Memory studies includes national memory, collective memory, traumatic memory, political memory, psychological memory, *lieux de memoire* or places of memory, as well as social, embodied, and cultural memory. This dissertation explores individual memory within the rubric of Jewish cultural memory. In "Media and Modes of Transmission" in the *Collective Memory Reader*, Jeffrey Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy argue that "conventional images of memory portray it as a kind of storage and retrieval. But memory is more a crucible of meaning than a vessel of truth. As such, many contemporary social memory scholars have highlighted, the role of memory as a medium of identity and the role of various technological media in the transmission of memory" (311).

For my purposes, storage and retrieval *are* useful because they illuminate what is canonized and what is archived, as Aleida Assmann has argued. Canon and archive function as a "mode of transmission" (Olick et al., 311). That factor matters because it helps to reveal how the past is constructed, as well as what remains forgotten, undiscovered or unknown. What is transmitted has meaning for the sender. Whether it resonates with the receiver, and how it will be interpreted as part of the process of reception, is a phenomenon this project will explore. In addition, this project examines the role of memory as a medium of identity, as well as the role of different media, including family members themselves, in the transmission of memory. Finally, in the last chapter about wordless melody, I position transmission as a phenomenon Paul Connerton describes as embodied memory that leaves no physical trace. Embodied memory has not been as well represented in academic discourse (Olick et al. 311). I wanted to gesture to embodied memory as a way of "hearing" the non-material legacy that unfolds outside of textual transmission, and to acknowledge, however briefly, that legacy can unfold when language fails.

Scholars have recognized that the move from oral to literate societies is connected to a shift from circular to linear temporality (Olick et al. 311). Assmann's "Canon and Archive" shows how canon and archive function as methods of transmission, but in addition, she illuminates the mobility between the canon and the archive. The canon and archive paradigm is another way of positioning storage (the archive) and retrieval (the canon). Such movement between canon and archive is connected to Stephen Greenblatt's "mobility manifesto" because it helps to understand how cultural products may be deployed from backstage to centre stage, and conversely moved from foreground to background. Mobility is ongoing. This project privileges what Aleida Assmann calls "active remembering" and constitutes an argument against passive storage.

Some "active remembering" is influenced by media representation. Barbie Zelizer argues that because social memory is usable, it is often contested. Zelizer examines the role of journalists in creating social history in a profession described as the first rough draft of history. To provide but one example, the fact that Solomon Rabinowitz's ethical will was reprinted on a page in the *The New York Times* May 17, 1916 was a way for the newspaper to try to process the mass appeal of the attendance at his funeral the day before, May 16 1916. Rabinowitz was referred to as the American Mark Twain (Mindell). Unsurprisingly, he had become Americanized for readers of the *The New York Times*. Zelizer argues social memory constructs a representation of the past, but it also helps to position the future. That ethical will is digitized and accessible for readers beyond the Rabinowitz family, more than one hundred years after his death. Would the ethical will have achieved such prominence without being published? The publication helped to construct its history *and* create a robust trajectory for its future. The publication helped this letter jump from archive to canon, and subsequent digitization functions

as a creative route to reclaim the original Rabinowitz repertoire as Jeremy Dauber has argued. The online site that upended the familial paradigm of transmission also allowed for his wish to be fulfilled with readers of his repertoire.

In "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of method" Alon Confino identifies a gap. He sets up contributions of memory studies by looking at how construction of the past affects power within society. He defines collective memory as a subjective experience of a social group, as "who wants whom to remember what and why" (*Collective Memory* 199). He argues against memory as *exclusively* political. "We miss a whole world of human activities that cannot be immediately recognized and categorized as political although they are decisive to the way people construct and contest images of the past" (*Collective Memory* 199). Confino constructs a list that includes family, voluntary associations, workplace, tourism and consumerism. I am adding acts of non-material legacy to his list, and targeting what would otherwise be relegated to the periphery. Sometimes these categories of classification between the political and the cultural are porous. Consider Reinhartz's portrait of resistance in *Bits and Pieces*. She describes what she remembers as a Polish Bundist. Her work helps to fill in our own understanding and ongoing construction of the past. And ironically her portraits of resistance (both singular and collective before, during, and after the war) constitute part not just of the cultural component but highlight the strategies and operations of *political* Bundist resistance. Conversely, the silence of Canadian novelist Alison Pick's Jewish-born grandmother, the woman who escaped from Prague in 1939 and refuses to talk about her Jewish history, pushes up against her granddaughter's longing to try to understand what happened. Names on war memorials in Czechoslovakia do not reveal the texture, sound, and character of Pick's murdered Jewish

ancestors. For Pick, this act of remembrance remains forever unfinished and riddled with gaps. Writing *Between Gods* constitutes Pick's way to both fill and expose the gap at the same time.

Reception

Confino targets a second problem. He looks at what happens when cultural history is sacrificed to the political—and that is the issue of reception. "Many studies of memory are content to describe the representation of the past without bothering to explore the transmission, diffusion and ultimately the meaning of this representation" (199). He argues that reception is not just about adding knowledge: "The meaning of memory's evolution commingles with, and is dependent on, the story of its reception" (199). Reception targets this intersection between the creator and audience. This project highlights a trajectory of reception beginning with stories chosen by the Rabinowitz ancestors, the reception of accidental disclosure of Jewish ancestry for Pick, to the responses of Reinhartz's six grandchildren to *Bits and Pieces* and, finally, to the reception of wordless melodies in the contemporary Canadian moment. By making reception a fundamental component, this dissertation is in part designed to address this gap regarding reception in scholarly discourse, and to follow the trajectory and possible afterlife of the transmission itself. For my purposes, this issue of reception is relevant because these acts of non-material legacy are often but not always addressed to a specific audience.

The "mobility manifesto" that Stephen Greenblatt articulates in *Cultural Mobility* includes five components of reception. Greenblatt's components include literal mobility (related to metaphorical movements between centre and periphery); secondly, to illuminate hidden movements including how cultural goods are concealed; thirdly contact zones where cultural goods are exchanged; fourthly the way a path is disrupted by a strategic act ; and finally the phenomenon of rootedness which may be a recent invention. Because my research examines

non-material legacy, I wanted to follow transmission's trajectory. Could it be heard, traced, and followed the way one might hear a radio signal? How did the transmission migrate through space and time?

As a body of literature, the Jewish ethical wills are often positioned from parents to children. At their core, they contain a wish to be remembered, and they collectively function as a plea against forgetting. Avishai Margalit's concept of the "moral witness" illuminates the ethical component. I argue the moral witness helps to calibrate the function of the witness in terms of what is shared, how it is represented, and what remains excluded. This choice of the moral witness as to what is transmitted directly is connected to Jay Winter's concept of "historical remembrance." Winter's work contextualizes the moment we have arrived where we have the opportunity to highlight individual acts of "active remembering." He points out that after 1914 it was important to have soldiers' names on war monuments, and not just the names of the commanders, and that the "democratization of suffering" meant other voices that had been silenced would become audible. The landscape of remembrance had begun to shift because war itself had become more democratized with military conscription. This "democratization of suffering" means that there are more moral witnesses who offer forms of remembrance that were previously ignored, excluded or silenced. Winter's work helps to expose how the memory of war became democratized, and altered understandings of the past. This notion of historical remembrance *now* included the victims whom the perpetrators were trying to erase (Winter *Collective Memory* 426). "Historical remembrance is a way of interpreting the past which draws on both history and memory, on documented narratives about the past and on the statements of those who lived through them" (*Collective Memory* 426). Reinhartz's *Bits and Pieces* includes memories of her Polish family as a way of memorializing their lives. When faced with silences,

Pick imagines possibilities for the ancestors she never had the opportunity to meet. Winter points out that the desire to acknowledge loss from victims of war and violence begins as an individual acknowledgement but that it “never ends alone” (*Collective Memory* 427). “It is a public act, a kind of remembrance expressed by groups of people prepared to face their shared past together. When they come together remembrance becomes performative” (*Collective Memory* 427-8). The impulse that begins with an individual act and moves to public performance is not the exclusive domain of victims of war and violence. This performative aspect will be presented with the comedy of the Solomon Rabinowitz repertoire, and in the final chapter, in the performance of wordless music and legend. Pick’s conversion to Judaism could be seen as another performance, one that repairs her past with a public commemoration of retrieval. In this project, that performative impulse functions as a response to loss and can be positioned as a type of ethical repair.

Overview of Transmission

Solomon Rabinowitz's ethical will functions as the departure gate for this project which examines Jewish ethical wills and acts of non-material legacy. The Russian-born Yiddish writer Rabinowitz (1859-1916), better known by his pen name *Sholem Aleichem*, wrote one of the most famous Jewish ethical wills, which was read into the Congressional Record of the United States. Rabinowitz democratized and radically reimagined the transmission of Jewish memory. Moreover, the Rabinowitz ethical will introduces foundational themes about remembrance, mobility and recipient experience. In each of the four chapters I explore how Jewish familial legacy is represented and revised: through Jewish comedy in chapter one, the recovery of identity in chapter two, the transmission of personal history in chapter three, and wordless music combined with legend in chapter four. Each chapter explores a different medium of familial memory. In its totality, the final project illuminates the trajectory of acts of familial Jewish legacy beginning in 1916 with the death of Rabinowitz, and closing in the contemporary moment with a Canadian collaboration. In *God In Search of Man,* Abraham Joshua Heschel argued the Jewish experience needed to be imagined as a living fountain instead of a historic heirloom. His choice of the metaphor of a fountain gestures to fluidity and mobility (*God In Search* 3).

Cultural Memory

This research explores personal memory as a form of Jewish cultural memory. I was drawn to the repertoire of Jewish ethical wills because I was intrigued by the integrity of the individual voices of the authors. The collection of voices, whether learned or simple, angry or joyful, traditional or innovative in tone suggested a *vox populi* of memory, of democratized memory as it was envisioned by ordinary and extraordinary individuals, private citizens and

public figures, in a lively conversation.[1] My contribution is to offer a modality of Jewish familial legacy that highlights individual voice to illuminate a strategic deliberate dynamic Aleida Assmann describes as "active remembering" (*Collective Memory* 334-337). This individual voice disrupts remembrance because it has an impact on what is remembered, and what is transmitted. Assmann delineates the dynamics of remembering and forgetting as active and passive. She compares the archive to a "lost and found office" albeit one that is selective, and one that functions as a society's "reference memory" (*Collective* 337). Assmann delineates active forgetting (trashing, censorship, destruction) as well as passive forgetting that may occur through neglect, loss or abandonment. Passive forgetting might include a neglected cemetery, pottery shards in a museum's storage closet, or a forgotten letter. As she argues, "active remembering" includes the objects a museum may privilege for an exhibit. Conversely, passive remembering preserves the *past as past*. She argues the canon *makes the past present*, and the archive *makes the past past.* This project foregrounds active remembering, but instead of looking at institutional forms of remembering (a university syllabus, a monument, or a national commemorative war ceremony) the project targets individual voices. This research constitutes an argument against the passive storage model of memory because strategic actors function as disruptors to the memorial landscape.

[1] A premodern selection of these voices in English and Hebrew can be found in the collection selected and edited by Israel Abrahams called *Hebrew Ethical Wills*. In this collection transmission is often traditionally conceived in the didactic style of a list of instructions. A contemporary collection of ethical wills includes *So that your values live on… Ethical wills and how to prepare them* by Jack Riemer and Nathaniel Stampfer.

Cultural memory as defined by Jan Assmann looks at the past not as it is envisioned by historians or archaeologists but the “past as it is remembered, that is the past with an identity-index. Cultural memory reaches back into the past only so far as the past can be reclaimed as ‘ours.’ That is why we refer to this form of historical consciousness as “memory” and not just as knowledge about the past” (‘Communicative and Cultural Memory’ 38). This idea is connected to Confino’s observation about reception being *not* just about more knowledge but about examining what was meaningful for recipients. Here is the intersection between transmission and reception and in this intersection we see what crosses the divide, and what is transmitted, interpreted as well as what is excluded. I think of it like a radio signal that can cross time zones, but when it is rebroadcast, it is recalibrated. For example, Shoshana Walfish creates a painting about her great grandmother, a bridge between past and present. Henia’s mother Sima Rosenfarb (the great grandmother of Shoshana) is the person Henia credits with saving her life, as well as the life of Henia’s sister Chava Rosenfarb.

In “Communicative and Cultural Memory” Jan Assmann argues that cultural memory functions like a renewable resource and is also one that where, “the distinction between myth and history vanishes” (38). In “Communicative and Cultural Memory” he argues that cultural memory includes portable components such as rituals, feasts, texts, archives that can be objectified and disembodied, because in order to function as a symbolic memory, these forms need to be not only transmitted from one generation to the next, but need to have the capacity be “circulated and reembodied” (37). When Rabinowitz created his ethical will, his recipients chose what would be read aloud, and in so doing, they would then influence what was remembered, as well as what was forgotten, and they became part of this circulatory system. The story repertoire functions as a “portable component.” Rabinowitz was not asking his ancestors to gather to weep.

Laughter itself is a compelling lure. Assmann highlights how cultural memory deploys recyclable texts, images, and rituals as a specific as a way to create cultural meaning. In the final chapter I examine how wordless melody also has the power to be *literally reembodied* in the mouths of new singers.

The study of memory is not new. In *Zakhor*, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi points out that the verb *zakhar* appears in the Bible 169 times, "usually with either Israel or God as the subject for memory is incumbent upon both" (5). The Israelites are commanded to remember they were once slaves whom God delivered from Egypt (Exodus 20: 2 as quoted by Yerushalmi 9). They are commanded to remember their enemies: "Remember what Amalek did to you (Deuteronomy 25: 17 as quoted by Yerushalmi 9). Yerushalmi observes that "only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to remember felt as a religious imperative to an entire people" (9). The frequency of the commandment unfolds because the natural tendency is to forget. "If we concede that forgetting is the normality of personal and cultural life, then remembering is the exception, which –especially in the cultural sphere –requires special and costly precautions" (Aleida Assmann *Collective Memory* 335). However, memory in the Hebrew Bible functioned *as a commandment*, and not as a subject of philosophical discourse. Thus, remembering can be positioned as a behaviour grounded in remembering and remembrance. How does an individual remember? What is the mode of transmission? What is lost and what is found?

In *The Art of Memory,* Frances Yates illuminates the ancient art of memory that connects remembering with a place. Her book begins with the story of a banquet in which a poet named Simonides recalls the identity of people who were killed when the banquet-hall roof collapses by remembering the location in which each guest sat. The seat location functioned as a mnemonic, a strategy that leveraged the power of spatial organization and architecture. Yates points out how

powerful memory could be in society that did not yet have a printing press. Memory is associated with memorization as well as cognitive capacity. This dissertation examines the art of memory *after* the printing press, and, in so doing, these chapters primarily explore memory that does not depend on stability of place, or spatial architecture (such as monuments, tombstones, or city structures) but rather memory unfolding through a fluid temporal spectrum through storytelling. The chapter that *does* confront spatial architecture directly is The Counter Transmission, a chapter which probes the limits of this spatial strategy, failed mnemonics in physical monuments followed by creative reinvention. The reinvention is not simply an aesthetic revolt, but a *cri de coeur* about the purpose of memory itself as something that requires engagement. In the contemporary moment, there are different ways of transmitting cultural memory. A government may designate Holocaust Remembrance Day and institutions, cultural organizations, and communities may create public events as forms of commemoration and celebration. These public events, however, may be vulnerable to political agendas and they tend to disregard, suppress or ignore the individual voices that this project moves into the foreground. In his work about memorial art forms, scholar James Young identified postwar artists who rejected the traditional monument and constructed counter monuments. The counter memorial movement was part of a democratization movement. The movement considered not just the artist but privileged the experience of the viewer. The art invited participation. So, too, the following works constitute democratized forms of active remembering. They open up a strategic *vox populi* of Jewish memory. Let us begin.

Chapter One: The Democratized Transmission

The Yiddish writer Solomon Rabinowitz (1859-1916), known by the pen name of Sholem Aleichem, wrote an ethical will for his family in which he said he wanted his name to be remembered with laughter. His will, written on 11 *Tishre* 5675 (Sept. 19, 1915) is linked to the Jewish calendar in its date of composition. He directed a plan for how his family should remember him:

> At my grave and throughout a whole year, and then every year on the *Jahrzeit,* my remaining son, and my sons-in-law, if they are so minded, should say *Kaddish* after me. And if they do not wish to do this, or if they have no time for it, or if it be against their religious convictions, they can be absolved from this duty only if they all come together with my daughters and my grandchildren and with good friends, and read this my will, and also select one of my stories, one of the really joyous ones, and read it aloud in whatever language they understand best, and let my name be mentioned by them with laughter rather than not be mentioned at all (sholemaleichem.org/ethicalwill/).

By way of introduction, this chapter will explore what it means to be remembered with laughter. He deployed the ethical will to create an experience characterized by narrative, oral performativity *and* communal laughter. In so doing, he created memorial innovation that continues to unfold into the contemporary moment. His parting gift for his descendants becomes the obligation of interpretation. Interpretation is required in two areas: the descendants choose

the material, and, in addition, interpret the material in oral performance with the vocal dynamics required of public reading. In addition, interpretation was required because the test for whether the material would be included was whether or not the story created laughter. In this way, the annual public reading created a joyful community of listeners. The criteria for laughter *seems t*o exclude darker material. However, the power of laughter in a story such as "The Haunted Tailor" is something Rabinowitz played with as a response to despair. The way he is remembered becomes inextricably bound to the repertoire, and not to a biography or autobiography. Rabinowitz reimagined the ethical will and created a mechanism for democratized transmission.

This chapter will begin by exploring the "comedy of interpretation." The first section will situate that comedy within a larger chain of tradition of transmission, and examine the hallmarks of this comic vision. The comic response is positioned here as part of a larger paradigm to navigate catastrophe, an idea illuminated by David Roskies in *Against the Apocalypse*. In order to chronicle the life of the ethical will as well as its afterlife, this chapter will also include an examination of the chronology of the life of the ethical will, and chart its path and impact as it was transformed from a private letter into a public performance. The chapter will then pull back to situate the ethical will within theoretical models of Jewish memory. The Rabinowitz memorial paradigm is connected to Yerushalmi's idea of memory as re-enactment in *Zakhor*. Rabinowitz's descendants deliver the oral performances, choosing which stories to share or *re-enact*, and will be transformed into interpreters who will re-enact a changing repertoire, one that resonates with generations over a trajectory of a hundred years. Recipients are transformed into engaged actors, tellers, and choosers who then construct a creative machinery of democratized memorialization. The chapter's concluding material will explore digital afterlives to examine another mode of amplification, and the impact of technology that upended a familial legacy. The final section will

situate questions about memory within the context of the role and impact of the recipient, and make room to consider questions about the relationships between text, oral tradition, and performativity.

Remembering with laughter

What does it mean to remember with laughter? What is the "Jewish" component of such instruction? And what finally, are the ethics of Jewish comedy? In "Jewish Humour and the Domestication of Myth," Robert Alter argues that the Jewish comic vision rejects the Christian premise of redemption through suffering (*Jewish Wry* 25-36).The Jewish response is implicitly— at least from the outset— a way of responding to catastrophe by *rejecting* catastrophic thinking. Laughing delivers deflation. Alter argues the Jewish comic vision does not create characters as tragic figures within literary representation. Alter juxtaposes Hamlet with Tevye, Rabinowitz's most beloved creation. Alter suggests that Jewish comedy operates by puncturing power through the representation of mundane, often physical reality: "If you want to forget all your troubles, runs another Yiddish proverb,' 'Put on a shoe that's too tight.'" One could argue that new pain will increase suffering. Alter argues the new pain creates a paradigm shift. He argues that it is not just that the old pain will be forgotten by the new pain, but that suffering will look strange when one is dealing with "crushed bunions" (*Jewish Wry* 26). Suffering may be inevitable, but it is "incongruous with dignity" (26). In the Jewish comic vision, the body becomes a *source* of comic material, not a vehicle for tragedy.

It is perhaps necessary to pause here briefly to make a distinction between this comic vision and literary definitions of tragedy. Aristotle's definition is that "tragedy, then is an imitation of an action that serious, complete and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in

the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the *proper purgation of these emotions*" (Fergusson, 7 *emphasis mine*).The pleasure from tragedy comes from catharsis after suffering. The Jewish comic vision rejects that position by refusing to deify suffering. In the Jewish comic vision, catharsis *comes from laughing*. In response, the Jewish comic vision reverses the narrative trajectory. This comic position argues that there is another perspective, there exists a possibility at least of *imagining* a better life. This act of radical imagination is fundamental to the comic response. Catastrophe is *not* inevitable. So what then does the comic response look like? The comic response is sometimes predicated on an imagined alternative reality. Sometimes the comic response appears preposterous, bordering on absurdity. Sometimes this imagined reality stretches credulity. Consider the motto of David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister: "In Israel in order to be a realist you must believe in miracles" (Gordis 1).

Let us look in more detail at how this comedy of interpretation operates. Sara Blacher Cohen shares a version of the too tight shoes story. This version is found in *Jewish Wry*'s "Introduction: The Varieties of Jewish Humour":

> Two woebegone Talmudic students came to their rabbi and made a shamefaced confession. "Rabbi, we've committed a sin."
>
> "A sin? What kind of a sin?"
>
> "We looked with lust upon a woman."
>
> "May God forgive you!" cried the holy man. "That is indeed a serious transgression."
>
> "Rabbi," said the students, humbly, "what we can do to atone?"

"Well if you sincerely seek penance, I order you to put peas into your shoes and walk about that way for ten days. Perhaps that will teach you not to sin again."

The young men went home and did as the rabbi had ordered them. A few days later the penitents met on the street. One was hobbling painfully, but the other walked easily, his manner calm and contented.

"Is this the way to obey the rabbi?" asked the first student reproachfully. "I see you ignored his injunction to put peas into your shoes."

"I didn't ignore him at all," said the other cheerfully. "I just cooked them first."

(Blacher Cohen 5)

Blacher Cohen characterizes this humour as a "comedy of affirmation" (6). "The joke tells us that in life we must inevitably step upon hard peas, but it also tells us that we have the power to transform them or alter our response to them" (6). The joke also suggests that it is the comic *interpretation* which makes it funny. The response —cooking the hard peas -— functions as an imaginative act. The joke trumpets cerebral agility. In addition, the joke functions as an act of subversion. Suffering *too much* is for fools. It recalibrates punishment and mocks the student who hobbled. Interpretation determines outcome. One student has interpreted the decree literally. The other student has imagined another reality by cooking hard peas until they are mushy, and softened (no pun intended) the decree. The joke deflects attention away from the crime. If a joke can function as a hidden blasphemy, as Blacher Cohen argues, it can also work as a way of rejecting a fundamental premise of Christianity, that of achieving redemption through suffering. In this way the joke also deflects attention away from the sin itself, and thus the punishment can

include levity. The catharsis here comes in laughing with the student who has followed the decree *and* cooked the peas.

Rabinowitz confronts suffering directly in “Schprintze,” a story about the suicide of one of Tevye’s daughters: “Why should human beings bring suffering to one another as well as to themselves when they could all live together in peace and good will? Could it be that God created man on this earth just to make him suffer? What satisfaction would HE get out of that?” (*Tevye’s Daughters* 160).There is no mythologizing of the dead daughter. Tevye reports seeing her dead, her eyes open in the water. The suffering comes without comfort; in its wake there is only an appeal to God with the forever unanswered question, “What satisfaction would HE get out of that?”(*Tevye’s Daughters* 160). There is no reply. Suffering has *no* utility.

Rabinowitz also explores suffering in “Tevye Reads the Psalms,” (*Old Country Tales* 27-32). Tevye tries to talk a gang out of beating him up, deploying the book as a weapon against the gang of peasants. To be clear, he is not hurling the book and using it as a *physical* weapon. His strategy is to deploy theological authority to determine what God has decreed. He is looking to this book while there is a mob bent on beating him up, as well as political authorities who have ordered a pogrom. In this wild interpretation, he challenges his enemies to consider a higher authority than the current political regime, and challenges them to imagine, if but for a moment, an alternative way, an understanding predicated on this mob and the governing political authorities being able *to imagine* an alternative. He redirects them to their Christian liturgical tradition by asking them to think about the Biblical psalms. They want to fight. He responds by talking. He chooses a book known in Hebrew as *tehillim*, meaning songs of praise. The juxtaposition is absurd. “Isn’t Tevye right when he says that we’ve got a great God and that as long as a man’s alive he mustn’t give into despair, especially a Jew, and especially a Jew who’s

no stranger to our good friends, the little letters in small print?" (*Old Country Tales* 31). Language will provide refuge. The "little letters" have been transformed into friends, and, as good friends, those letters will be mobilized, However, Tevye's strategy, in the end, will fail. He will be forced to leave.

The comedy of interpretation operates in multiple layers with the joke raising loose ends and more questions. Among the Rabinowitz descendants, one of the perennial favourite stories that emerged during the last one hundred years is "On Account of a Hat" (Kaufman). The story is sometimes read as a tale about the Jew in exile, and illuminates the problems of Jewish identity as a sleepy businessman picks up the hat of a uniformed officer in error. When he boards his train to get home for Passover, he is treated like royalty, and ushered quickly into a first class carriage where he finds himself alone, and away from the crowded noisy cars. However, he does not recognize himself in the mirror. At this crisis, he returns to the station to retrieve his hat, and winds up not making it home. He had sent an earlier telegram that he would arrive home "without fail" (*The Best of* 109). Instead, he finds himself at a Passover *Seder* in another community. The story is a meditation about Jewish identity, and the difference between Jews and non-Jews. The narrator paints a portrait of the absent-minded Sholem Shachnah Rattlebrain.

What I would like to highlight is the comedy as it plays out regarding the translation of a Biblical quotation. The narrator sets up the scene by explaining that while the train was supposed to bring progress, prosperity, and mobility to the village of Kasrilevke, the train system falls short. Because of poorly designed schedules, travelers are stranded in the middle of the night with nowhere to sleep or sit down. The floor is covered in soot and spit. This is how the sleepy Rattlebrain, a real estate broker, happens to squeeze himself into a small pace on a bench where the uniformed official snores. When the sleep-deprived Rattlebrain wakes up, he grabs the

official's hat in a daze. The narrator declares with the delivery of a stand-up comic: "When the wise men of Kasrilevke quote the passage from the Holy Book, '*Tov shem meshemen tov*,' they know what they're doing. I'll translate it for you: We were better off without the train" (*The Best of…*105).The quotation from Ecclesiastes means a good name is better than good oil (Rosenfeld). A good name is the most precious jewel one can possess, and the goodness of one's name is understood to be correlated to one's moral integrity. A good name *is* better than a false promise, in this case a poorly designed train system. The promise of progress is an illusion. However, Rabinowitz ups the comic ante here because where does that leave *Rattlebrain*? The joke tests the limit of the wisdom of the "wise men" *and* exposes the false promise of technology. Was it also a "false promise" he made to arrive "without fail" or was such a mission beyond his capacity? Or is the telegram a send up of the failure of language or testing the limits of human power as it regards the always unknown future? Roskies notes that in the 19th century the train was already functioning as a harbinger of death during the tsarist pogroms of 1881-1882 (*Against The* 174). Recently "liberated serfs" left their villages to live near the train stations were mobilized for attacks against the Jews (174).

Blacher Cohen characterizes the comic response as "verbal retrieval" where *the word trumps the situation (5, emphasis mine*).One could go further and argue that with Rabinowitz's stories the word *is or becomes* the situation. Physical reality is radically reimagined. In *The World of Sholom Aleichem,* Maurice Samuel observes the power of interpretation in Rabinowitz's repertoire. "Not what happens to people is funny but what they themselves say about it. There is nothing funny about Tevye the dairyman as a character and nothing funny ever happens to him. What Tevye does is to turn the tables on tragedy by a verbal ingenuity: life gets the better of him but he gets the better of the argument" (Samuel, 186 as qtd by Blacher Cohen).

Tevye's daughters' marriages wind up in disasters, ranging from widowhood to bankruptcy. Tevye struggles economically to feed his family, suffers discrimination from wealthy Jews, flees from his beloved village of Kasrilevke to escape religious persecution and murder. Rabinowitz grew up in poverty, lost his mother as a child, lost an inherited fortune, escaped religious persecution, suffered from tuberculosis, and was predeceased by his son. His own life suggested more than enough material with which to write stories devoid of laughter. The comic response affirms resistance.

The comic response also privileges a self-conscious mode of textual interpretation. Roskies points to "The Great Panic," a story in which the people of Kasrilevke learn about a pogrom through a letter. People must interpret a code where the "weather" stands for something other than the weather. The story's narrator remarks "sages and savants have long noted that the Jews are incomparable at the art of reading between the lines" (*Old Country Tales* 101).The joke functions as a type of reading *and* telling, an interpretive act that requires reading between the lines or *outside of the lines*. For example, the joke may be predicated on a radical act of imagination, an act of imaginative interpretation that subverts physical reality. That subversion functions on two levels: reimagining another universe, coupled with a tenacious refusal to succumb to despair. In so doing, the joke functions as a paradigm shift: Blacher Cohen argues humour functions as a "life preserver" (14).This joke also positions the Jew as a veteran in the art of adaptation: An Englishman, a Frenchman, an American, and a Jew are in the midst of a philosophic discussion. The problem is posed how each would act when it became unmistakably clear that they had only a few hours to live. They imagine a situation in which a flood inundates the land, there is no means of escape and they prepare for the end:

> The Englishman speaks first: "I would open my best bottle of port. Sit and enjoy every sip. Think of the live I've lived, the experiences I've had, and the let the waters come and take me."
>
> The Frenchman says "I would drink a great Bordeaux, prepare some coq au vin, make love, and let the water overwhelm me thus."
>
> The American is next: He would eat, drink, make love, try to improvise a raft and finally swim until his strength gave out, and he drowned, "fighting to the end."
>
> The Jew says: "I would do all you have described and when the water got over my head, I guess I would have to learn how to live underwater." (*Jewish Wry* 13)

Rabbinic Precedent for Comic Interpretation

Blacher Cohen argues that Jewish humour is a modern phenomenon despite comic fragments in the Hebrew Bible. However, the comedy of interpretation *in particular* has rabbinic precedent. There is a famous rabbinic story in the Talmud. The story is without a title, but is sometimes referred to as "The Oven at Akhnai" The story features a debate where rabbis argue about whether a particular oven is kosher or not (Steinsaltz 323-325). The respected Rabbi Eliezer presents proofs. If the law is on my side, he says, let the carob tree prove it. The tree uproots itself. Rabbi Eliezer asks for the aqueduct to prove his position, and water moves backward. He asks the walls of the study academy to prove his position, and the walls incline. The other rabbis, however, dismiss these proofs as unconvincing. Shortly after, when a voice from heaven comes down, presumably the voice of God, to come to Rabbi Eliezer's defence, the rabbis dismiss God. The rabbis argue that interpretation is no longer in God's hands. This interpretive challenge is "not in heaven" because it is their role to interpret the law. God has no

voice in what has become an exclusively human and more particularly, rabbinic enterprise. When God is asked for an opinion, God smiles, and replies, "My children have triumphed over me " (Steinsaltz 325). The story creates a precedent for radically creative interpretation. The story can be read as a rabbinic fantasy. The story can also be read as a paradigm about the primacy of interpretation with a comic impulse, one that privileges the agility of the mind, and one that privileges interpretation as a sacred *obligation.* In this story, the proclamation, "not in heaven" becomes the *modus operandi* of interpretive agency. This position allows the rabbis power in determining the meaning of the text, and in so doing, their position creates a precedent for creativity that includes humour. In addition, this position creates potent interpretive agency with the power to ignore what might be considered higher authority. The position empowers subversion. Furthermore, that rabbinic interpretive strategy can be repurposed and deployed as an exercise that has the power to ignore not just the voice of God, but one's physical situation. That robust capacity to ignore the immediate environment (either through the ear or the eye) permits a vision of an alternative reality.

I am constructing a thematic trajectory that links Rabinowitz's comic interpretation with the Talmudic story because of an association of wildly inventive and agile interpretive acts. In "Jewish Humor and The Domestication of Myth," Alter observes that within Jewish humour there is a "persistence of a Jewish modality of imagination even in the total absence of Jewish realia" (27).

Alter does not investigate the origin. James Kugel provides a clue. Kugel's illustration of the interpretive system of the ancient interpreters is helpful. Kugel illuminates the interpretive process in his explanation of the "four assumptions" with which ancient interpreters read sacred text in *How to Read the Bible.* These assumptions are important because they govern the

interpretive system. One of those reading principles is that "they assumed that the Bible was a fundamentally cryptic text: that is when it said A, often it might really mean B" (14). To reclaim Tevye but for a moment, if a mob is primed to beat you up, *why not* try to see if the mob requires education about their Christian tradition instead? Kugel shows how these ancient interpreters deployed a detailed examination of words with an "interpretive freedom that sometimes bordered on the wildly inventive" (*How to Read* 12).These assumptions still influence modern understandings. Kugel provides an example with the Biblical story of God asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Kugel highlights the phrase "And it came to pass after these things" which usually signals a transition. However, since the Hebrew word for "things" also means "words," one explanation is that the phrase meant "after these words," and suggests Abraham and Isaac spoke together. That possibility, however, raises another question, and it is *What did they say to each other? What words passed between Abraham and Isaac?* And since the text is cryptic (with its meaning hidden) the interpreters set about figuring out what those words were, and inventing something (14). This way of reading text is related to the art of comic interpretation because both privilege invention. The rabbis argue that the interpretive task before them no longer requires God. Lacunae in sacred text create opportunity for inventive *midrashim*. Gaps function as a departure for creativity.

It is psychologically compelling to imagine that something bad could turn out to be something good, that the world *as it is* could be transformed. *What if that agility, the search for meaning where A equals B is transposed onto the interpretation of life?* What if that inventiveness is psychologically internalized? What if Tevye interprets the world around him in a way that recalls how the ancient interpreters examined a puzzling text? Consider Tevye's response when a mob is rushing to beat him up in "Tevye Reads the Psalms." The mob is primed

for a pogrom. It is necessary to briefly pause here to emphasize what was at stake for Russian Jews. In 1903 in Kishinev, attackers armed with axes and iron bars smashed windows, destroyed property, raped women, and murdered thirty-four men, seven women, and two babies. Violence included attackers hacking human bodies into pieces, bellies sliced and stuffed with feathers, nails driven through heads, and a child's eyes gouged out. The chief of Secret Police Levendal had encouraged the gangs, and the Orthodox bishop riding his carriage in the street blessed the attackers (Monty Noam Penkower "The Kishinev Pogrom of 1903" as qtd by Gordis 48-49). Kishinev emerged as a paradigm for Jewish vulnerability, and rallying cry for the Zionist movement: "Kishinev exists wherever Jews undergo bodily or spiritual torture, wherever their self-respect is injured and their property despoiled because they are Jews. Let us save those who can still be saved," argued Theodor Herzl at the Sixth Zionist Congress that year (Gordis 47). So faced with the mob, what does Tevye do? The unruly mob is required to be stopped *by thinking about what they cannot see*, and that is a notion of God that includes all human beings. He appeals to their understanding of the Christian liturgy in what they call the Psalter, the Biblical psalms. Tevye's response *is* wildly inventive, verging on absurdity. He "reads" the mob in a way that ignores their immediate aim, and tries to divert their campaign. What is surprising is that they even pause. His strategy creates a momentary reprieve, as well as an opportunity for his enemies to help themselves to his whisky to drink a toast to him before they smash his windows. He will eventually be forced to leave the place he called home. His dwelling may be destroyed and his windows smashed, but his story will remain.

Comic Interpretation

For the Talmudic students, reimagining the punishment with mushy peas requires transforming a literal interpretation of the rabbi's decree. For the joke about the coming flood,

the Jew navigates by swimming underwater and refusing death by destruction. All *is not* lost, even if a flood is coming that will submerge civilization. Within these interpretations, we can see radical adaptation. They have within them an aggressively comic affirmation of life. In this way there is no glorification of suffering and no glorification of death. What is glorified is the interpretative response, and the juxtaposition of deploying imagination to fight disaster. What is most precious is life, and living. These jokes refuse to accept reality. The student refuses to walk on hard peas, the Jew in the international joke refuses to contemplate a watery death, and the rabbis kick God out of the interpretive process. Rabinowitz's parting gift is to give this obligation of interpretation to his descendants.

The Memory Mechanism of Rabinowitz

Rabinowitz's ethical will is traditional in many respects with one exception—and that is *how* he asked to be remembered with laughter. Rabinowitz secularizes Jewish tradition but remains in conversation with the tradition he sends up. He reimagines oral transmission, and substitutes his repertoire for sacred text. In this way, he positions himself as inside and outside the tradition. He can argue and reject *and* he can deploy Tevye to quote or misquote sacred texts as he sees appropriate. Rabinowitz positions his legacy within a larger chain of tradition. The oral transmission remains a powerful vehicle, but he deploys it to share his own literature. It is too simple to suggest that literature replaces sacred text. Rabinowitz's repertoire is saturated with the Jewish textual tradition. Because the reading requested in his ethical will is intertwined with his repertoire, and because his repertoire is intertwined with Jewish textual tradition, the reading directed within the ethical will functions as invitation to become a participant *with* Rabinowitz's own radical conversation with the tradition itself *through the vehicle of his stories*. In this way,

Rabinowitz creates another conversation with the tradition, one that is broad enough to mock, debate and reimagine.

Kugel suggests ancients read a sacred text as a *subject* and moderns read sacred text as an *object.* Kugel frames these processes as ancients read *from* a sacred text and moderns read *about* a sacred text. For ancients, the text is elevated because it is sacred and perfect, whereas a modern reader may read sacred text as something to learn *about* because the text may be flawed, and subsequently readers' insights are privileged. Kugel observes that for an ancient reader the text is elevated. The modern reading response often attempts to repair the text, or fill in gaps. American writer Norma Rosen's *Biblical Women Unbound*: *Counter tales* features inventive midrashim inspired by Biblical texts.

But what if someone interprets text as both ancient and modern, *both* subject and object? Rabinowitz deploys Tevye to set up textual quotations as subjects only to knock them down as objects. He is inside and outside, looking up to the text as a sacred guideline, and then misquoting or distorting it to frame his own experience. He functions like the straight man *and* the punch line. The traditional boundaries between ancient and modern reading become destabilized. To build upon Kugel's observation about the difference between ancients and modern approaches, Tevye has the agile ability to read as both an ancient (looking *up* to the text as perfect and sacred) and as a modern (reading *about* the text and subsequently delivering a ballast of critiques) as well as reading as a radical inventor (including quotes he is making up *as if* they are sacred). Tevye's wife and daughter complain about his quotation reflex. For the female characters, this strategy has failed. They cannot ignore their physical environment because their families are hungry. What is underneath their frustration is the desire for survival.

For other characters, though, this textual sport of provides another nourishment *and* subversion, a form of resistance against despair.

Tevye is not the only character in the Rabinowitz repertoire known for this radical interpretative sport. In "The Haunted Tailor." Tsippa Beila-Reiza wants her husband, Shimon-Eli, to buy a milking goat so she can feed her children. The story revolves around a family struggling to survive. The tailor is presented as a book-loving but impractical father who is in conflict with his wife, the pragmatic mother. She sees her children's bellies distended from hunger. Her husband the tailor is fond of replying to her ongoing crescendo of domestic requests with quotations. His replies are represented as riffs or commentaries on sacred texts, thus bolstering his position with the weight of the authority of Jewish textual tradition. When it comes to her request for a goat, her husband seems to agree that purchasing a goat would be a good idea. He responds with the comment that with a goat she can make butter and cheese. The tailor first deploys what sounds like sacred text as a source of authority (like an ancient reader) deploying the phrase "as it is written," but his conclusion that every Jew should own a goat is his own invention. He deploys "as it is written" to bolster his position *and* placate his wife. His wife rejects this textual play. What good is a book when her children are starving? Her emphasis on food recalls Alter's observation about the physicality of Yiddish humour:

> "You're right, no doubt," said Shimon-Eli gently. "There is a saying, 'Every Jew should have a goat. As it is written.'
>
> Tsippa-Beila-Reiza shrieked, "I say a goat and he gives me a quotation. I'll give you a quotation. I'll give you quotations. I'll quotation your eyes. He feeds me quotations. My fine breadwinner, my *schlimazel*. I'll give you the entire *Torah* for a cream borscht." (Aleichem, *The Best of* 4-5)

Rabinowitz deploys these characters to reject *both* the reading habits of ancient and modern readers. The female characters' pragmatism functions as subversion to throw out sacred text, and in its place have a bowl of soup. This position, summed up in "I'll give you the entire *Torah* for a cream borscht" posits a third option that Kugel does not address: and that is the rejection of sacred text altogether; and with it the rejection of textual learning, play and literacy offering any nourishment, subversion, or resistance. The female characters' arguments privilege immediate needs. In so doing, they subsequently reject textual imagination as providing any consolation *or* empowerment. For them, the humour failed. The tailor's wife is unable to imagine another reality. This failure is dangerous because it exposes the vulnerability and potential demise of the comic response.

Oral Transmission

Rabinowitz requested his descendants read his work out loud within a communal setting. The concept of a communal narrative experience *is* embedded within the Hebrew Bible. The giving of the Ten Commandments, for example, constitutes a central constitutional moment in the emerging identity of the Israelite nation. What connects the modernizing power of Rabinowitz's legacy with Biblical precedent is oral transmission and performativity. Jewish civilization includes what is referred to as the oral *Torah*, a sacred text predicated on a chain of oral transmission. The oral *Torah* is understood to be the sacred text of the Hebrew Bible, but one that has been passed exclusively by voice. The transmission is by mouth. The rabbis 'prove' their authority because of this chain of transmission, and the chain itself testifies as to its authenticity, suggests Yedida Eisenstat (email Dec 2016). The chain is self-validating. Eisenstat points to the first *Mishna* from *Avot* 1:1 "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Yehoshua, and Yehoshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets

transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a fence for the Torah" (*Avot*, Danby 446). Oral transmission is not stenography. Each transmission requires interpretation. What might it mean, to "make a fence for the Torah?" Rabinowitz positions himself as an inheritor of this tradition but he secularizes it by *seeming* to replace sacred text with literature. First a pause to clarify what "oral performance" entails. While weekly oral 'performance' of the written Torah in Jewish communities in synagogue settings is punctilious, complete with a prescribed precise *trop* or musical system, the oral Jewish tradition and the generation of *midrash* within it, is characterized by fluidity, creativity and invention. That fluidity exists both within the composition of *midrash* itself as well as the interpretation. It is a process of expression, reception and interpretation. For the ancients, Kugel suggests that "reading was no longer simply reading" (Kugel, *Midrash and Literature* 83) because of the impact of the text on a community. Reading is intertwined with living: "God's human intermediaries become by necessity students of old scrolls, manipulators of documents, *soferim*, bookmen and copyists" (83). For the ancients, Kugel argues the books' meaning had an impact on their daily life in pragmatic ways. It was not a book of theory but of practice: The book was the map for daily living whether it was an issue about birth, death, marriage, property damage, family issues, criminal issues, or religious observance. Rabinowitz's Tevye is a dairy farmer whose life is also intertwined with sacred texts as an existential map. The text provides guidance even if he disagrees with it, or satirizes its promises. The text is the map of *what is supposed to be* and not a reflection of reality. He creates comic comfort by playing with his text *du jour.* Tevye will often leverage the text as the counterpoint about his own situation. In "Get Thee Out," Tevye mocks God's promise to Abraham (of a promised land). The

passage (in italics) provides an ironic commentary. Tevye is being expelled from the place he calls home:

> Well what portion of the Bible are *you* studying this week in the synagogue? *Vaikro?* The first portion of Leviticus? I am on a different portion entirely-on *Lech-lecho or Get thee out*. I have been told "*Get thee out*-get a move on you, Tevye-*out of the country*-leave your own land-and *from thy father's house*-the village where you were born and spent all the years of your life-*to the land which I will show thee*-wherever your two eyes lead you. (Aleichem, *The Best of* 180)

Just as interpreters and recipients constructed meanings from *midrash* and filled in lacunae, so, too, Rabinowitz's descendants were now free to interpret his texts as oral performance-and move the text *from the page to the human mouth*. Tevye deploys the Biblical quotations as part of his repertoire to upend them. Both *midrash* and the Rabinowitz repertoire constitute a mode of transmitting the values of a culture within a narrative especially when promises of sacred text remain forever unfulfilled.

The Rabinowitz Innovation

What Rabinowitz created was a hybrid: the reading directed within his ethical will was both fixed (the reading of his will) and not fixed (the stories chosen). His ethical will functions as a bridge to the repertoire, and anticipates digital reading. If the ethical will were to be digitally reimagined as a home page online, it refers the reader to the Rabinowitz's stories, functioning as a bridge or paratext, the way links and hypertext operate in a non-linear fashion. I raise digital reading processes because of their relevance to the afterlives of the ethical will.

Many stories such as *The Clock* or *Dreyfus at Kasrilevke* have no classic closure. That fragmentation recalls the lacunae of *midrash.* In addition, his will functions as a paradigm of

Jewish memory at the crossroads of the ancient and modern. He can be seen as a writer who had, so to speak, one foot in each canoe—grounded in ancient tradition, Jewish learning and rhythm of a Jewish calendar on the one hand, *and* recognizing the lure *and* rupture of the promise of modernity. The text of the ethical will itself is positioned as a secular letter until the ending where he retroactively turns the exercise into a blessing, invoking God. "His life is Jewish modernity writ small," argues Dauber in *The Worlds of Sholem Aleichem (*4), suggesting that Rabinowitz created a "modern Jewish homeland in literature" (5). This paradigm of memory is positioned here at the beginning to help lay the foundation for other modes of transmission that this dissertation project will explore.

In "Laughing Off the Trauma of History," Roskies argues 'I talk therefore I am' is a motto for the Jews that populate Aleichem's universe (163). Roskies argues that Aleichem was trying to create a linguistic universe that protected his characters from the destruction of history, and that his characters responded with the only weapon at their disposal (163). Rabinowitz's descendants become the oral performers who interpret those talking voices in the highly animated repertoire – a soundscape of yelling, laughing, praying, singing, inventing, arguing, whispering, and gossiping. In so doing, they become oral interpreters transforming the voices from text to oral performance. For Rabinowitz's characters, the motto may be "I talk therefore I am," but for Rabinowitz's descendants, the motto is double-pronged: "I tell the story, therefore I am," as well as "I laugh, therefore I am." Alter argues that humour became an ironic necessity for a Jewish community in Russia living under the czars where daily life was fraught with miseries: economic depression, religious persecution, poverty, as well as hate. In reality, there was *nothing* funny. In reality, life was miserable. Alter points out that in this rejection of catastrophe there is an implicit belief that suffering is not acceptable (*Jewish Wry* 27).The greater

the misery, the greater the necessity for such a belief. There is, however, no guarantee that the comic response will always deliver the desired outcome.

In "Tevye Reads the Psalms," Tevye listens to a gang, and argues that while it appears the "authorities" wield ultimate power, there *is* a higher power than the political authorities. That higher power is God. The story is a powerful illumination of Alter's observation about the primacy of Jewish imagination. Tevye argues that it is not Tevye's God, but the God of humanity. God includes the mob of peasants before him, as well as the political authorities bent on hurting the Jews. He presents the text as if he is a liberal universalist, intent on dissolving boundaries between people, and more particularly between himself and the mob at his front door. He presents an argument for God. The argument fails: The leader of the mob responds, "We've got to beat you up anyway. That's what our local gang has decided" (*Old Country Tales* 31). But the gang leader first orders Tevye first to make tea and pour whisky for the attackers. "We'll each have a shot and drink to your health, for you're a clever Jew, one of God's own people" (*Old Country* 31). The story is ambiguous in its lack of closure, but one reading suggests that Tevye escapes the beating, and suffers having his windows smashed. Tevye says "*Happy are they who dwell*-in other words, happy are they who dwell among books and know a thing or two" (*Old Country Tales* 31-32). His argument about a God of humanity, a God that includes himself, the mob, and the political authorities has not eliminated the attack. He remains alive. It is Tevye's interpretation that emerges as the strategic weapon, and functions as ironic commentary-he has suffered damage to his property *and* lost the security of his physical dwelling. The notion of a 'dwelling' as a physical refuge has been replaced by dwelling "among books." The texts have been literally embodied, a mode of memory I will explore in the last chapter. The weapon of comic interpretation here, however, provides only a single round of ammunition, a momentary

reprieve from violence. He has read the psalms as a liberal universalist, but the mob is bent on ethnic particularism.

For Rabinowitz, that "modality of imagination" in his ethical will straddled both tradition *and* emerging Jewish modernity. Rabinowitz deployed the ethical will as a way to create an alternative communal ritual, but he anchored the secular reading within the Jewish architecture of time, linking the recitation with the annual anniversary of his death, known by the Yiddish word *yortsayt* or *yahrzeit.* By creating this connection between the Jewish calendar and his literature, he transformed the Biblical obligation to remember into an act of narrative innovation. Literature replaces the memorial prayer, the *Kaddish,* and that connection to the anniversary of his death created a temporal mechanism for recitation and communal experience as well as a strategically robust afterlife for his work. I am deploying this ethical will to illuminate both a paradigm of memory, as well as a mode of transmission to illuminate *how* he modernized the ethical will by reclaiming orality, empowering recipients, and privileging the oral communal experience of comedy. His will illuminates Yerushalmi's argument about the power of re-enactment over recollection. In order to chart this trajectory of impact, it is time to examine how the will began to generate an afterlife, and chart is trajectory.

Rabinowitz's Ethical Will And Its Afterlife

Let us begin with a chronology of the life of the will itself, and trace its impact from first being read in 1916 in his home, at his funeral procession in New York, and then annually for the following one hundred years in a private family ceremony, and finally digitized with annotation. In the will, Rabinowitz asked his descendants to read the will aloud once a year on the day of his

yahrzeit. Rabinowitz wrote the ethical will on September 19, 1915. He died eight months later, May 13, 1916 in New York. "I ask that it be opened and published on the day of my death" (Sholemaleichem.org). In this case, the oral recitation could be considered part of the 'publication,' a process of making the document public. The family had released the letter after the funeral. In *The Worlds of Sholem Aleichem,* Dauber writes that William Stiles Bennett, a member of the New York Republican delegation, had been alerted to Rabinowitz's reputation by a representative from New York, Isaac Siegel (322). He read the will into the Congressional Record in the United States. In addition, Bennett also read an editorial from the *New York Times*, describing the writer as the "Jewish Mark Twain" and commenting that "in the whole great domain of testamentary literature, it would be hard to find a will better deserving to be viewed as a 'human document' in the full sense of the term" than "that of the man whose least apposite title was the 'Jewish Mark Twain' (Dauber 322). Since most of Rabinowitz's work had not yet been translated into English, an American non -Jewish audience would not have been familiar with his work, but heralding him as the "Jewish Mark Twain" generated a mythic 'Americanization.' The creation of that mythology generated momentum up to the production of *Fiddler On the Roof* in late twentieth century America, a musical production which excised dark components but introduced the beloved Tevye. Rabinowitz, whose first language was Russian, made a deliberate choice to write in Yiddish to connect with a wide Jewish audience, and transform Yiddish into a literary language. What *The New York Times* highlighted was the letter's ethical emphasis: of the ten items listed, the newspaper selected the first and the last paragraph in its headline and commentary. The will's first paragraph dealt with Rabinowitz's wish to be buried among the ordinary people and not amongst the rich, as well as his last wish: that his children look after their mother to lighten the burden of her widowhood, and turn her sorrow into joy. His will ends

with his request to his family "to carry with honour my hard-earned Jewish name, and may God in heaven come to your help. Amen!" Here is the paradox: a writer straddling the seam line between tradition and modernization, creating a secular letter transformed into a blessing. One could argue that literature had now become the new religion.

The Funeral and Orality

The will, in its entirety was published May 17,1916, alongside photographs from the funeral in *The New York Times*. The transformation of the letter into an oral performance began immediately where mourners had gathered May 13 in his home, but that first private recitation was ruptured with heartbreak. His friend Judah Magnes read the will to the crowd, but overcome with sorrow he could not finish reading it. Zionist leader Shemarya Levin finished the recitation (Dauber, *The Worlds of* 318).On the day of Rabinowitz's funeral, the coffin procession stopped in multiple locations with multiple eulogies. Dauber describes the procession as a "national pageant" (*The Worlds of* 320) that managed to unite an unlikely collective: Yiddish writers, committed Zionists, Orthodox psalm -reciting children, and secular Jews in "collective grief… "How do you bury, in the words of one of his eulogists, 'the Jewish people in microcosm?" (Dauber, *The Worlds of* 319). Mourners walked to the Educational Alliance, a settlement house for Eastern European Jews. Magnes read the will *aloud* in an auditorium that could only admit six hundred ticket holders. It is at the moment after Rabinowitz's death that we see the emergence of oral performance as well as a private death transformed into intense public grief. In this transition from text to oral performance, the will functions as an alternative liturgy, and suggests another way to mark mourning. In addition, with the will being read aloud, it incorporates two forms of memory Paul Connerton identifies in *How Societies Remember*. The text of ethical will functions as an inscribing practice, and the oral recitation becomes of part of

an incorporating practice, forms of memory I will return to but want to gesture to here however briefly. The oral performance of the ethical will incorporates both of these memorial modes after his death. The letter invites mourners to remember Rabinowitz by reading aloud and listening, a double process of expression and reception. Remembering is linked to listening. Both processes require interpretation on the part of the teller of the tale (issues of emphasis, tone, rhythm, nuance and delivery), and on the part of the receiver. Because the funeral became a public event, and the ethical will became a public document that was shared aloud as well as documented in the Congressional record, one wonders if the mourners who were *not* family descendants also returned home to read his stories aloud in a way that made them laugh.

This orality can be framed by linking it to the idea of an 'ear witness.' An ear witness is someone who can testify to what he or she has heard and functions, as its name suggests, as an alternative to an eyewitness. In a court of law the ear witness could testify as to the sound of a gunshot, the crash of a vehicle, or a siren. There are, however, other considerations for the components and function of a soundscape. Canadian composer Murray Schafer created a language for a soundscape (the aural corollary to a landscape). The ear witness liberates witnessing from the visual field into an auditory landscape. Rabinowitz made clear he had no wish for foolish physical monuments. The descendants of Rabinowitz who choose the texts to read, as well as the listeners and future descendants who gather to receive and interpret become part of this ear witnessing community. I am referring to a textual soundscape of words and not a musical soundscape of sounds and silence. Yiddish says it best: *Das wort macht das ort,"* argues Hana Wirth-Nesher during the Sholem Aleichem 100th Yortsayt Conference in Israel.(Wirth-Nesher, Video 5:28). The word *creates* the place. The oral performances honour the memory, not a "foolish monument" as a failed mnemonic. I am extending here the notion of the 'word creates

the place" to suggest that these words-- as they are transmitted, shared, and interpreted – constitute a Rabinowitz soundscape of narrative characterized by vigorous conversation. The ear witness may hear biblical quotations embedded in the repertoire, and references to biblical characters that the author has reframed for his own purpose, as well as Rabinowitz's lively noisy cast of characters.

At the funeral, police struggled to hold back the crowds (Dauber 321). An article from the *New York Times* describes the police working to organize the people who had lined the streets and taken a day off work (without pay) to be part of this communal goodbye. (Vast Crowds, NYT web). Dauber estimates between 150,000 to 200,000 people constituted the procession that moved through the city, carrying the coffin on a wagon, led by a horse:

http://sholemaleichem.org/ethical-will/

Rabinowitz's ethical will included about ten paragraphs of instructions: he asked to be buried with the common people and not the aristocrats; he included instructions for his tombstone, as well as an epitaph he wrote in Yiddish; the command *not* to erect a monument in his memory, but that the "best monument for me will be if my works are read"; the option he gave his descendants to say *Kaddish,* the memorial prayer *or* to read his merry stories aloud on the anniversary of his death; the requirement that children will be disowned from any inheritance if they leave the Jewish faith and do not guard their Jewish descent; instructions about royalties; the creation of a fund for struggling Jewish writers; and the order that ten per cent of his income be donated to this fund; instructions about creating a tombstone for the son Misha who had predeceased him, as well as his final wish for his children to protect his wife, to ease the burden of her widowhood.

The will itself constitutes an innovative merger of revolution and tradition. The wishes for burial, the command to look after his widow, to say *Kaddish* for his son Misha, the financial commitment to charity for Jewish writers, and the strong prohibition against intermarriage constitute traditional Jewish values. What was revolutionary was the memorial mechanism of democratized machinery of communal oral performance to spread his work and, in so doing, increase joy with the weapon of comedy. Although the comedy is represented as a secular activity, the comedy is predicated on imagining a better world, and constitutes a rejection of tragic inevitability. The comic vision operates as a form of secular messianism. Irving Howe characterized the political movements of socialism and Zionism as secular messianism. I am building on Howe's idea to include the Jewish comic vision within that rubric. It is *not* the Christian messianism built around a human figure. In the case of the Rabinowitz comedy, I am arguing this stance constitutes a secular messianism that operates in two directions: in its aggressive affirmation of life, *and* its aggressive rejection of catastrophe. How else can one explain the radical hope that is maintained under a series of extraordinary but ubiquitous crises?

Empowering Recipients

The performance of comic stories honours memory. Rabinowitz's great great granddaughter Kara Kauffman wrote about the ritual's one hundredth birthday in *Moment* magazine. She linked her own identity to that of her ancestor through writing. She suggested the reason why his stories still make people laugh is that they deliver a universalist appeal. His ancestors literally embody his voice, making him both present and absent:

> To me, my great-great-grandfather's continued popularity rests on the fact that his characters and *narrative voice* touch our lives today. When we read his stories aloud, we feel a palpable familiarity. We listen with bemusement to the story of the man so mixed up that he arrives at three different towns in the wrong order—missing all of his appointed lectures in the process—because we have all been desperately lost at some point in our lives. We relate to Tevye's desire to find suitable matches for his daughters because we are still concerned with relationships, family and status. Threading these narratives together is Sholem Aleichem's own voice, at once sympathetic toward his characters and removed from them, enabling us, the readers, to laugh at life's absurdity. These tales paint a picture of shtetl life to show us where we came from, while, in the process, making us increasingly aware of who we are…
>
> My great-great-grandfather, ever the pragmatist, asked us to take care of his widow, pay his debts if any arise, and remember him with joy. He also asked, "Let my name rather be remembered ... with laughter than not at all." As we remember my great-

great-grandfather for a ninety-sixth year, one thing I can say for certain is this: laughter will fill the room. (Kaufman, *emphasis mine)*

Complicating Rabinowitz's Legacy of Laughter

The issue would seem to end with that roar of laughter. However, in *No Joke Making Jewish Humour,* Ruth Wisse argues that Rabinowitz himself warned against excesses of laughter (28). The warning complicates the comic legacy. Laughter is regarded as medicine. What is the illness? In "The Haunted Tailor," "doctors prescribe laughter" functions as the closing line. Wisse argues that the comic response is part of a collective imaginative response that may erupt from, and be a response to crisis, including anti-Jewish environments. Rabinowitz's story features a tailor fooled by an innkeeper. The innkeeper switches the tailor's milking goat for a billy goat. The tailor has saved his money, and pawned his valued garment to buy the milking goat to feed his hungry family. The tailor stops twice at this inn, and is duped twice. At the close, he loses his mind, and dies. The goat escapes. In conclusion, the tailor's family has lost a husband and a father, and the elusive nanny goat, the source of potential nourishment has vanished. All has been lost. Nothing has been gained. The tailor's pursuit has ended with madness, and death. The story concludes: "What is the moral of this tale?" the reader will ask. "Don't press me friends. It was not a good ending. The tale began cheerfully enough, and it ended as most such happy stories do-badly" (as qtd by Wisse, 102).

Rabinowitz transformed a folktale by altering its ending, changing its frame as well as the title. "The Chelm Goat Mystery," the original folktale, features a sick rabbi. A doctor has recommended milk. The story focuses on the journeys of two rabbinic disciples who are fooled by a rogue innkeeper who continues to switch their milking goat for a billy goat. Each time they make the trip from Chelm they stop for a drink, and it is during their drinking interlude that the

innkeeper switches goats tied up to a post outside. In frustration, they finally go to the trouble to have the goat certified by a respected Rabbi Shmul who signs a document certifying the goat *is* a milking goat. When they return to Chelm, the goats have been switched yet again. The story concludes with the Chelm rabbi's pronouncement: "such is the confounded luck of us Chelm *schlimazls,* that by the time a nanny goat finally reached our town it's sure to turn into a billy!" (Ausubel 221). A *shlimazl* is someone who has no luck. The Chelm story spoofs disciples and the rabbi as fools.

Rabinowitz reframes the story into what appears to be a satire. "Satire, at its most concentrated, therefore is tragedy robbed of all its dignity and nobility…" argues Northrop Frye in "On the Nature of Satire" (86-87). "Both tragedy and satire take us into a hell of narrowing circles, a blasted world of repulsiveness and idiocy, a world without pity and without hope" ….(86-87). In a conversation (with me) Creet points out that it is not that the lines between comedy and tragedy become destabilized here, but that satire intimately navigates *between* both comedy and tragedy. What is the use of what Frye characterizes as this "art of nihilism?" (89) Frye argues the use of the satire depends on the age for which it was intended. Rabinowitz delighted in sending up stupidity, pretention, hypocrisy, excessive wealth, status climbers, and political tyrants. However, in *The Haunted Tailor* Rabinowitz is not mocking the madness that killed the tailor, nor is he mocking poverty. Rather the story exposes suffering as an absurdity. Rabinowitz transformed a folktale spoofing human stupidity into a tale of elusive haunting. It is never fully clear what *precisely* haunted the tailor. However, while the ending may appear devoid of hope, it is *not* without pity because the characters have been constructed with compassion. In this context, the story does not *fully* fit Frye's paradigm. Rabinowitz did not end the story with the death of the tailor, but rather with the ironic prescription for laughter. This

prescription is the key to understanding the ethics of Jewish comedy. This positioning is what Blacher Cohen characterizes as the comedy of affirmation. Affirmation functions as a response to despair even when it would appear despair *is* the more reasonable option. The ironic prescription for laughter *is itself laughable* in light of all the loss. For Rabinowitz, the response to nihilism is laughter, not weeping. Laughter functions as the only weapon. At the same time, there is within this ironic "prescription" an implicit acknowledgment of the limit of the comedic response. The ironic coda at the close, addressing the reader who is searching for a moral, has Rabinowitz recommending laughter. However, there is nothing to laugh *about.* Hence a prescription is required! For this suffering, one requires medication. What kind of medication? Comic intervention is necessary. The goat has fled. The money the tailor saved is gone. The children have lost their father, the wife has lost her husband, and the community has lost a resourceful tailor. The tailor had a reputation as someone with an enterprising imagination. "He could for example, take an old caftan and turn it into a cloak; then the cloak into a pair of trousers; of the trousers he could make a shirt and the shirt something else again" (Howe & Wisse, *The Best of,* 2-3). When he makes clothing, he *imagines* how to transform the raw material. He is not copying a pattern. This resourcefulness applied not only to his profession: "All his life Shimon-Eli had been poor but the fact had never disheartened him. On the contrary, he liked to say "where there is poverty there is life;" and "where there is hunger there is song" (Howe & Wisse, *The Best of* 3). The tailor's impoverished customers did not have the money for fancy garments, but respected a man known as a "genius patch tailor who could make a hole or a patch invisible" (Howe & Wisse, *The Best of* 2). The tailor, then, is a master in the art of repair. He is defined not by what he lacks, but by his vision about life itself. Who will now repair the tears in the community's fabric, and make such brokenness invisible?

Rabinowitz does not romanticize suffering. If anything, Rabinowitz demythologizes suffering. The tailor's radical response transforms *poverty into life* and *hunger into* song, echoing Kugel's explanation of the strategy of ancient interpreters where A might equal B. Like a doctor, Rabinowitz prescribes laughter when nobody *feels* like laughing. Moreover, "The Haunted Tailor" does not deliver the catharsis Aristotle describes. The Aristotelian paradigm is more closely allied with a Christian notion of suffering wherein there is redemption. Herein lies the ethical components of the Jewish comic response—one that will radically privilege living over dying. And while the story appears *close* to Frye's definition of satire as tragedy disrobed of dignity, the story holds steadfastly onto an ironic prescription for hope when there does not appear *any* hope to be found. Laughter is commanded. Hope is prescribed. Imagination is inextricably bound up with the comedic response, the very type of imagination the tailor himself possessed. In "On Sholom Aleichem's Humor" Meyer Wiener argues that Rabinowitz created his own comic genre:

> Sholom Aleichem's humor constitutes a unique category in world literature: it is possible to locate the various influences on the development of his style of humor, but with Sholom Aleichem, a new division of the poetics of comedy begins, a category known as "Sholom Aleichemian humor" to go alongside Aristophenian laughter, Dickensian humor, Heinesque irony, Gogolesque satire, and so on. (43)

Some historical context helps to frame the roots. Howe observes that "strictly speaking Jewish humour is not humorous" ("The Nature of Jewish Laughter" 19). Howe argues Jewish humour took suffering with which it was all too historically familiar in its stride. East European Jews were refugees who had fled anti-Semitism of the Crusades (18).These "wanderers of the middle ages" wound up in Tsarist empire in which their lives were precarious, marginalized and

"steeped in poverty" (18). Suffering was *too* eerily familiar. Howe argues the Jewish joke functions as something double edged, a merger of self-criticism *and* self-justification:

> For here was a people which clung to the myth of the Chosen People despite extreme adversity and persecution. Despite its pride it was too much too realistic not to recognize how grandiose an anomaly was the contrast between its claim and its position. Hence the characteristic strategy of its humor was irony which measured the distance between pretension and actuality and held it up for public inspection and made of it the salt of self-ridicule. (*The Nature of*, 19)

The comedic response functions as a historical muscle that will deflate tragedy, expose absurdity, and prescribe laughter. The laughter can be directed inwards as a source of self-ridicule or outwards as part of the comedic arsenal. The comedic response functions as a tonic that glorifies the imagination, the refuge of language to imagine something that may *only* exist in an imaginary paradigm of a better life. In this way, then the tailor can proclaim what is preposterous: "where there is hunger there is song," and "where there is poverty there is life."

In a lecture, "History and Imagination: The Place of Literature in Holocaust Remembrance," Dara Horn argues modern readers are heirs to a Romantic tradition informed by Christianity in which redemption functions as an expectation. Readers are familiar with this narrative convention in the form of a happy ending. "Traditional Jewish culture says this is a lie and a fraud," Horn argues. She points out that in the Rabinowitz stories the marriages of Tevye's daughters end up in disasters, ranging from widowhood to bankruptcy. Horn argues that Jewish literature delivers "authentic realism," something rare in the Western canon.

Wisse also argues that comedy can be dangerous, and points to "The Haunted Tailor." Wisse observes "prescribing doctors must constantly be mindful of the dangers of overdose. The

careful reader of this tale cannot help noting, that in it, Sholem Aleichem issues a powerful warning against just those dangers" (*No Joke* 102). Wisse reads the goat switching trick no longer as an innocent convention, but a warning. The familiar comic conventions may be deployed, but destabilize expectations. Wisse argues that Yiddish humour does not portray the cause of its anxiety. The cause remains undisclosed, rendering laughter more haunting. The terror unfolds off stage. Readers of the repertoire, whether reading or hearing the stories read aloud, imagine causes of catastrophe. She further argues that in its broadest possibility, *if* Jewish humour exists *only* as a wholesome endeavor it ought to be portable: Muslims would joke about Muhammad, Arabs would satirize *jihad* and the anti-Semites would mock the "politics of blame" (*No Joke* 243). Wisse is arguing that if Jewish humour were operating as a universal impulse it could easily be transported; leveraged by other cultures. If, however, Jewish humour is *not* a universal export, there exists something distinctive about the Jewish condition, history and population, and excessive laughter functions as a warning. Even if laughter *is* a sign of collective anxiety what constitutes an alternative? Is it possible the laughter itself contains buried within it a religious response to catastrophe that has been secularized but, at its essence, is about the necessity of hope? In *World of Our Fathers*, Howe argues that messianism was "the most urgent force in the Jewish tradition" (223). Howe's book is about the Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who moved to New York, beginning in the 1880s. Howe characterized political movements such as socialism and Zionism as secular expressions of messianic belief, sometimes called secular messianism. The socialists and Zionist immigrants mobilized politically as a way to fight extreme poverty, unsafe working conditions, and discrimination. They rejected the notion of tragic inevitability. Is it possible that the Jewish comic vision is also a disguised form of secular messianism in which the weapon is laughter?

Comedy and Community

Since the Rabinowitz ethical will directed a public reading in a community setting, it is necessary to position comedy and its relationship to a collective. Antonin Obrdlik warns about its *disappearance* as a potent weapon against tyranny. I am bringing in this example to complicate Wisse's warning. I would argue that the *disappearance* of laughter would be more perilous than its presence– even if in excess. In "Gallows Humor A Sociological Phenomenon" Obrdlik argues gallows humour can strengthen morale of an oppressed people. This comedy functions as political resistance. Obrdlik's explores gallows humour that emerged during Nazi occupation and annihilation of Czechoslovakia. At its essence, this humour, like the humour of Rabinowitz, constitutes a rejection the inevitability of tragedy. One of its consistent features is that people have to "persuade themselves" that there is another existential option. This stance requires a long term perspective on the movement of time. I include in particular here the poignant tale of the man who collected jokes in a jar. He has refused to accept the political climate. He responds with a secret arsenal of underground (literally) comedic material:

> People who live in absolute uncertainty as to their lives and property find a refuge in *inventing,* repeating, and spreading through the channels of whispering counterpropaganda, anecdotes and jokes about their oppressors. This is gallows humor at its best because it originates and functions among people who literally face death at any moment. Some of them even dare to collect the jokes as philatelists collect stamps. One young man whom I knew was very proud of having a collection of more than two hundred pieces which he kept safe in a jar interred in the corner of his father's garden. These people simply have to persuade themselves as well as others that their *present suffering is only temporary*, that it will soon be all over, that once again they will live as

> they used to live before they were crushed. In a word, they have to *strengthen their hope* because otherwise they could not bear the strains to which their nerves are exposed. Gallows humor, full of invectives and irony, is their psychological escape, and it is in this sense that I call gallows humor a psychological compensation. Its social influence is enormous… Its decline or disappearance reveals either indifference or a breakdown of the will to resist evil. (Obrdlik 712 *emphasis mine*)

The world *as it is* requires transformation. Because the Rabinowitz repertoire is in conversation with a sacred text it often delights in sending up, it too is positioned implicitly and explicitly into the rubric of the long view of time. Tevye and other characters do not have jokes in jars underground—their jokes are always in their mouths because they must be portable. The jokes are literally embodied, a form of memory I will address in the final chapter.

Digital Afterlives

If Rabinowitz revolutionized Yiddish literature, he reimagined the ethical will by privileging the *experience of narrative*. That experience has also undergone redefinition with digitization. What he created continues to unfold now because of the opportunity for participant engagement on a communally organized site such as sholemaleichem.org. Consider the community collaboration that created a digital home for the work of this comic writer in the quest to disseminate information about his work, his life and the Yiddish language that underpinned the enterprise. The collaboration was a way for The Sholem Aleichem Network,[2] a group of descendants to work with digital media as a way to invite participants to contribute to an ever unfolding legacy. Spectators could become creators. The oral tradition unfolds in this digital space with multiple partners, both individuals and organizations, creating an unfinished conversation underpinned by animated storytelling in English and Yiddish:

The chain of transmission has moved from descendants and subsequently grown to welcome a public community. Such a project retrieves the original Rabinowitz repertoire and reclaims Tevye, from *Fiddler on the Roof.* To build on Horn's observation, the American *Fiddler On the Roof* Christianized Tevye. That comedy was a Jewish response to a Jewish problem of Tsarist Russia; pogroms targeted to terrorize Jewish populations. The musical universalized the immigrant. In this way, the musical foregrounds a hopeful song about match making, but excises disasters. This digital project, however, leverages the popular Americanization *as a bridge* to

The Sholom Aleichem Network is designed to be, in the words of its organizers, " the central repository"for the writer's work and aggregates content in English and Yiddish for readers and scholars.

reposition and introduce the original *for the first time.* As Jeremy Dauber has noted, the site redirects the reader *back to the book.*

Rabinowitz *is* rightly associated with comedy: “He was the source of fun, of laughter and love; love and laughter, that was my inheritance,” recalls Bel Kaufman during an interview for the Wexler Oral History project (sholemaleichem.org/will-bella/). Kaufman is the granddaughter of Rabinowitz. She characterizes her ‘inheritance’ as one of love and laughter, making a distinction between the material inheritance that Rabinowitz set aside for this granddaughter. In that will, he directed his heirs to provide Bel Kaufman who was six when he died with a portion of his estate. The interview with Kaufman is part of this communal collaborative project on sholemaleichem.org. The author specified that this tradition was intended for his family and friends. However, the will took on a life of its own and his work inspired his readers, fans and scholars one hundred years later to create rituals of their own. Dauber selected five stories that are “fun, energetic and suited to being read aloud” and invited engagement: “Consider doing reading at your next book club meeting, around the family dinner table, in the classroom, or in the peace and quiet of your own company.” Dauber includes *The Yom Kippur Scandal, The Clock,* and *Dreyfus at Kasrilevke.* The site includes a “call to action” as a “fun and participatory way to celebrate Sholem Aleichem’s life and works, and to discover some of the many facts of his legacy in the playful and presciently modern spirit he intended.” Students read his work aloud, in English and Yiddish, fulfilling the wish embedded in his ethical will, but transmitting the repertoire beyond his descendants. Orality (understood as reading from texts aloud as opposed to from memory) is reclaimed and returns in a public digital forum. The bizarre digital afterlife which continues to unfold includes rappers, puppeteers and ukulele players around the world.

The question arises: Does this constitute ‘memory’ or might it be more precisely understood as Alison Landsberg, suggests a form of “prosthetic memory?” Landsberg defines prosthetic memory as memory that does not come from lived experience. How can the site replace “lived memory”? “Lived memory” would apply to the biological descendants but the trajectory for “lived memory” is finite. The family members who knew Rabinowitz personally are now housed in a digital archive. Landsberg illuminates how a technology of mass communication introduces the idea of the ‘experiential’ as a mode of knowledge acquisition (*Prosthetic* 3).This model is predicated on experience of communication that is not dependent on history or biology. She argues that the construction of prosthetic memory is neither “progressive” or “reactionary” but one whose power can be deployed rather than dismissed as a contemporary memory making technology (Landsberg, *Prosthetic* 3). Her priority on *experience as part of the acquisition* is relevant here because the site functions as an invitation *to create* lived experience. The digital project goes further in manufacturing new memory compared to the traditional ethical will because readers are invited to upload videos of their own oral performances, and that material subsequently becomes part of the archive and memory making machinery for a future audience. In this way, an audience member can be transformed into a participant who can ‘manufacture’ future memory. For those readers who are not descendants, the impact of this technological innovation is democratization; those readers too can be invited to a reading albeit in a digital forum, but one that is available each day of the year, and not limited to the annual event of the *yahrzeit*.

Within a broader frame, this activity could be framed as part of a performative orality that is connected to Jewish civilization through the legacy of the oral modes of transmission. Instead of sacred text being transmitted, Rabinowitz’s repertoire is shared as each generation looks into

the mirror and chooses what it finds funny. In this context, the orality here is performative and echoes, for example, the performative orality featured at a Passover Seder where stories are read aloud. Passover can be seen as a paradigm for Jewish memory predicated on re-enactment rather than recollection as Yerushalmi observes in *Zakhor*.

Rabinowitz's Contemporaries: Herzl and Rothschild

Comparing Rabinowitz's ethical will to some of his noted contemporaries helps to situate Rabinowitz's ethical will, specifically Theodor Herzl, a secular political Jewish journalist (1860-1904) and the founder of modern Zionism, with a religious philanthropist and French Zionist Edmond Rothschild (1835-1934). Herzl's and Rothschild's legacies unfold in the political movement with the emergence of Zionism as a national political movement. As much as it was about creating a state, Zionism also functioned as an idea and a conversation Daniel Gordis argues in *Israel A Concise History of a Nation Reborn*. Gordis argues that Zionism was born out a revolution to transform the "existential condition of the Jew" (4) and the movement constituted a rejection of the old Judaism coupled with a revolution against being homeless (5). Herzl is considered the founder of modern Zionism; Rothschild is considered the benefactor who helped turn a dream into a practical reality. Herzl was a secular Jew, Rothschild was a religious Jew and their Zionist visions were part of that conversation about the character and purpose of a Jewish state. Both Herzl and Rothschild are remembered as political and philanthropic visionaries and positioned as pioneers. What made Rabinowitz's ethical will distinctive was the memorial machinery he created.

Herzl and Rabinowitz are both writers who use the ethical will as a vehicle of articulation for their own legacies: For Herzl that concern is about organizing his writing and translating it into other languages. Rothschild's legacy lies in the strategic philanthropic investment of the

Zionist dream of state building. Whereas Rabinowitz and Herzl both wrote ethical wills, it was an oral address of Rothschild's in 1925 that was later framed as an ethical will. Edmond Rothschild spoke May 17, 1925 at the Great Synagogue in Tel Aviv (Riemer 65-67). The text of his speech is framed on the east wall. Because Rothschild's speech was considered his credo, it came to be seen, in hindsight, as an ethical will. What started out as a letter shared in an oral address is subsequently returned to a textual mode of transmission. Both Herzl and Rothschild are recollected as visionaries, and their vision is inextricably linked to a notion of Jewish space. During the First Zionist Congress in August 1897 in Basel, Jews from around the world gathered for a meeting Herzl organized. For the first time in almost two thousand years since Romans had destroyed the Second Temple, they "gathered in once place to take history back into their own hands-reasserting ancient claims that that they were a single people determined to make Jews agents rather than bystanders on the stage of world history (Gordis 15)."We are here," Herzl opened in German, "to lay the foundation stone of the house which is to shelter the Jewish people" (as qtd in Gordis 16).

Herzl wrote an ethical will the year he died, and provided instructions for his writing. The will is exclusively concerned with his posthumous political impact and career: "My name will grow after my death; I therefore believe that a publisher will be found for all my writings" (as quoted in Riemer 63-64).The writing he highlighted included four books, among them, a memoir, Zionist articles and addresses as well as a play, *Das Neue Ghetto*, presciently designed to stimulate public discussion of anti-Semitism. Herzl turned out to be naïve about the possibility of the disappearance of anti-Semitism, but prescient in his dream of the need for a state. In this will, the recipients are given instructions about appointing a literary advisor and given instructions about signing a publishing contract in German and English, as well as details about

organizing and collecting his Zionist articles and addresses. Herzl was a secular Jew whose Zionist vision was influenced by the German Jewish Enlightenment (Riemer 63).

At the other end of the secular/religious spectrum one can examine the will of Edmond de Rothschild, (1845-1934) the French banking benefactor and religious Zionist who invested by sending European agricultural experts to Palestine, and legally purchasing tracts of land (Gordis 77). Rothschild has been referred to as the 'godfather of the *moshavot*" for this investment in agricultural communities, and for supplying early idealistic socialist immigrants with housing, equipment, livestock, and expertise (Gordis 77). *Moshavot* are agricultural communities in Israel. Rothschild's anonymous support began in the 1880's during the Russian pogroms to aid the *Yishuv,* the Jewish community in Palestine, according to Riemer (65). In his speech of 1925, he recalled a land "strewn with stones, full of thorn and thistle, its inhabitants struggling to produce meagre kernels from the poor soil" (Riemer 65). When Rothschild invested in what became the country's emerging agricultural economy, he ignored skeptics: "They used to say to me 'You are building on sand!' "Now, here is the sand, and, in the words of the psalmist it has become a cornerstone in the rebuilding of Israel. The fields are cultivated, the numerous vineyards and orchards are like oases in the desert-all giving testimony to the energy and endurance of the Jewish people" (as quoted. in Riemer, 65).We can see Alter's observation about the power of Jewish imagination ignoring physical reality: Where his contemporaries saw sand, Rothschild imagined vineyards and orchards. Where others saw a homeless vulnerable Jew, Herzl imagined a state as a safe haven *and* national agent of transformation. In "Tevye Reads the Psalms," Tevye imagines a universal God, and not a mob bent on destruction. In Rothschild's speech, the reference to the "cornerstone" was a reference to Rosh Pina, one of the earliest settlements in Israel. It is a reference to the verse, "The stone which the builder rejected is become the chief

cornerstone" (*rosh pina*) from Psalms 118:22 (as quoted in Riemer 65). *What has been rejected has been reimagined*. Herein lies a Biblical precedent for the power of vision over physical reality and the radical imagination required to transform human existence. Rabinowitz's will directs readers to his repertoire. Rothschild's language explicitly directs listeners to his understanding of the Hebrew Bible. Rothschild argues that the Tablets of the Covenant which Moses received at Mount Sinai have remained "to this day the basis of all civilization" (Riemer 67). His will includes Biblical precepts for both personal conduct, and for the country's future. Like Moses' farewell address, Rothschild's will is framed as the address of a leader to a community within a public forum, but within the public arena he also included directions for his son James. The private and the public are inextricably connected, and linked with the building of a state. The vision comes from the Hebrew Bible. He argues, for example, that to create the best relationship with neighbours in Israel it is necessary for inhabitants to be true to the "principles transmitted to us by our ancestors." He concludes. "Love thy neighbour as thyself." (Lev 19:18, as quoted in Riemer 65). Rothschild spoke in 1925, the year when Britain's Lord Balfour visited Israel following the British decision to establish a national homeland for the Jews. Rothschild framed this political endorsement as the fulfillment of the Biblical prophecy (Riemer 66)."Happy are we to live in a blessed time as this when we may add," 'Certainly this is the day that we have looked for; we have found, we have seen it' (Lam 2:16, as quoted in Riemer). Rothschild argues that the "sanctity of the family, founded upon reverence for parents is the foundation of all society" (Riemer 66). Herzl's ethical will is exclusively concerned with his public legacy and makes no mention of his family. Whereas Rabinowitz's children will choose merry stories to read, Rothschild's son James has been tasked with continuing his father's enterprise. In concluding, Edmond Rothschild says "my eldest son James, who is of *one mind with me* will

further my work and will devote himself to the enterprise which I have begun" (Riemer 67; *emphasis mine*).The chain of transmission is characterized by strategic vision, investment and action from one generation to the next. This type of didactic instruction was not unusual in the genre of 19th century testaments. James Rothschild's actions suggest he shared his father's vision: James Rothschild (1878-1975) a British politician, Zionist and philanthropist invested in the Palestine Electric Corporation, Hebrew University, archaeological excavation and, upon his death, his wife donated money to help in the construction of the *Knesset*, the Israeli parliament buildings (Philipp 493-494). Herzl's legacy lies in a political movement, a conversation about Zionism; and the reclamation of an ancient conversation about the vision of a Jewish homeland. Rothschild's legacy lies in strategic investment in the Zionist project, Biblically framed. Both men are recollected as pioneers and visionaries.

What made Rabinowitz's conception radical was the creative memorialization he imagined. Was this conception of memorialization a break with the past, or an imaginative way of reclaiming a classical mode of Jewish memory? I would like to suggest it is both an innovation and a reclamation. Rabinowitz created a hybrid. He did two things: Rabinowitz reclaimed a classical mode of Jewish memory, that of remembering by re-enactment, but transformed it by democratizing transmission. Because he asked that the ethical will be read aloud each year, the letter itself came to function as a prelude to, and introduction to his work. His will functions as a paratext, in what Gerard Genette and Marie McLean refer to as a sort of vestibule which "offers to anyone and everyone the possibility of entering or turning back" (2). Because the ethical will comes to function as an introduction to the chosen stories at the annual memorial, the will itself becomes part of the oral performativity. If Rabinowitz's dying wish held no appeal, recipients could have ignored his ethical will. The chain of transmission—like the

rabbinic chain of transmission—became self-validating. Some his descendants met for the first time in person at one of the annual memorials. In addition, the subsequent unfolding of these oral performances over one hundred years could be seen as a form of publication, of making public. In contrast, Herzl and Rothschild's ethical wills remain historical documents. To borrow the framework of Yerushalmi, they may be recollected in remembrance but as documents they are not re-enacted.

Memorial Paradigm: Shuva and Zakhor

This paradigm of Jewish memory that is fluid and participatory (as opposed to static and fixed) is one that is connected to a paradigm of memory that Yehuda Kurtzer suggests in *Shuva The Future of the Jewish Past.* Kurtzer argues that the "modern turn" left the "mythic imagination behind." He argues that the empiricism of history emerged as the prism of understanding for Jewish modernity as opposed to a vision grounded in myth: "The principal tool in Jewish argumentation is historical. Validity lies in empirical demonstration or borrow Jacob Neusner's felicitous phrase, 'What we cannot show we do not know'" (3). He argues history functioned as the arbiter of modernity: reforming Judaism in the 18th and 19th century, as well as an academic industry deploying the historical method "to deconstruct Jewish myths of origin, nationality, oppression, and uniqueness in seeking the triumph of their own breed of particularism or in championing some denuded universalism" (2). History functioned as a scientific force that would reveal truth. Kurtzer's book argues to rehabilitate Jewish memory, and restore its "architecture of mythology"(3). "The modern Jewish experience has by and large r*ejected this model of thinking* and is therefore less good at remembering …." (Kurtzer 3; *emphasis mine*.).

Kurtzer presents two different paradigms. He compares the biblical holidays of Passover and *Shavuot* and contrasts those days with holidays of modernity including *Yom Hashoah*, Holocaust Remembrance Day and *Yom HaZikaron*, the Memorial Day in Israel (for the Jews who lost their lives since 1860 to help found the state in 1948). The modern holidays were inserted into the Jewish calendar. The central helpful issue is the paradigm for Passover, and how it is connected to storytelling as a renewable resource:

> In any case when we recount the Exodus on the Passover night, we mostly tell stories about how people have told stories about the Exodus as a kind of modelling exercise on how we might tell stories in our living rooms. We learn to get so swept up in the ongoing relevant of the messages of liberation and deliverance that we would not notice that morning had already come. Passover does not feature survivor testimonials; it features the fantasies and the musings of the descendants of those survivors who know very well that memory becomes more magical, fantastical and commanding in the hands of those who are *less bound by what actually transpired and more inspired by what they might learn from it.* (Kurtzer, 5-6 *; emphasis mine*)

What characterizes this form of memory is creativity and invention. Subsequently, creative activity is liberated from constraints of historical precision. Participants fill gaps. Kurtzer argues that the commemoration in modernity is driven by history, and it is a process characterized by spectators listening to a recitation or testimonial; a commemoration characterized by passive reception. In contrast, the ancient paradigm requires participation *and* creation. Kurtzer argues that subsequently the "act of remembering comes to mean two completely different and opposing things" (6). The Passover Exodus is remembered by trying to relive it-not by travelling back in time, but by privileging its message of liberation for an

imagined future. It is the idea itself that is reimagined, renewed or, as Yerushalmi argues re-enacted. By way of comparison, the commandments of memory regarding the Holocaust function as the opposite —a memory that "fears forgetting" (7), and "memory is dictated by listening to the precise recitation of specific events" (6). In the ancient holidays, the recipient is an actor and the remembering may be "malleable and playful" (6). In the modern holidays, the audience may become anxious that history will be lost, and thus there have been cataloguing of Holocaust testimonials and the "furious documentation of experiences" (7).

In the case of the Rabinowitz repertoire, this temporal fluidity is deepened because of Rabinowitz's deployment of Biblical texts. In *Zakhor,* Yerushalmi suggests the rabbis played with Time as though it were an "…accordion, expanding and collapsing it at will" … "there is something rather compelling about that large portion of the rabbinic universe in which ordinary barriers of time can be ignored and all the ages placed in an ever-fluid dialogue with one another…"(7). Rabinowitz has taken the same liberties with Biblical texts. Rabinowitz's ethical will constitutes another form of "ever fluid dialogue" but the dialogue includes not just his narratives and Jewish textual tradition, but the recipients themselves who help construct the experience of what it means to remember.

The Influence of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi

The paradigm of memory Kurtzer describes owes a debt to Yerushalmi. Yerushalmi made a distinction between memory as recollection (which distances us from an event) and memory as re-enactment (which makes us actors in the creation of memory) in *Zakhor.* Yerushalmi deploys the Passover Seder to suggest how past and present are fused temporally in an exercise of Jewish group memory. "Memory here is no longer recollection which still preserves a sense of distance but reactualization" (44). In this context, Jan Assmann makes a

distinction between collective memory and cultural memory. Cultural memory is a social phenomenon that is about creating cultural meaning and is seen in places (archives, museums), concepts (rituals, mottos, commemoration), and objects (inherited property, monuments). Cultural memory is always capable of reconstructing itself based on present needs (Assmann 130). Rabinowitz anticipated fluidity by allowing his recipients to choose texts from a rich repertoire. In contemporary times, the proliferation of *Haggadot* the text read during the Passover Seder suggests evidence of a renewable resource that responds with elasticity to changing circumstances. Similarly, Dauber argues each person discovers a different Sholem Aleichem: the chronicler of the wonders and terrors or childhood, an observer of the rise and fall of capital, or post-Holocaust, the writer who came to be known as creating a portrait of the lives (as opposed to the deaths) of murdered European Jewry. So too, the site sholemaleichem.org includes not only the texts of stories but video recordings of students reading the work in English and Yiddish, video interviews with Rabinowitz's descendants, as well as academic presentations about aspects of his life and work curated in a single digital space. Digitization[2] illuminates the dissemination for the Rabinowitz repertoire, and in this way the site functions as the *communal response* to the ethical will.

[2] For a further discussion about the impact of digitization upon Sholom Aleichem and Yiddish, and the origins of the site sholemaleichem.org, see Cohen, Madeleine, and Diana Clarke. "Sholem Aleichem's Digital Turn." *In geveb*, January 2017: http://ingeveb.org/blog/sholem-aleichems-digital-turn.

What drives that communal response is Rabinovich's power to deploy myth. Karen Armstrong's definition offers a partial explanation. In *A Short History of Myth,* she describes Neanderthal graves that contained a sacrificed animal, weapons, and tools carefully arranged with the body. The burial practice suggests a belief in some future world, and the evidence that for as long as there have been human beings there has been the production of myth (1). Myth has the power to offer some comfort: "…human beings fall easily into despair, and from the very beginning we invented stories that enabled us to place our lives in a larger setting, that revealed an underlying pattern, and gave us a sense that, against all the depressing and chaotic evidence to the contrary life had meaning and value" (2). For Jewish communities navigating multiple catastrophes, manufacturing of myth became essential for survival. However, to complicate Armstrong's formulation, Rabinowitz's work delivers comfort *and* affliction intertwined. To take but one example, in "The Clock," there is the comfort of progress, but that comfort contains rupture. The story is about an ancient clock that has worked well for generations when it suddenly begins striking thirteen times rather than twelve. Repair fails. The clock collapses: "If the story suggests the uncomfortable pull of progress, it also signals the impossibility of stasis," comments Dauber sholemaleichem.org. What are we left with, then, within the rupture? We are left with *a story about rupture and fracture,* broken clock pieces shattered on the ground. For Rabinowitz's recipients, stories built on architectures of Jewish myth provide a way to understand situations that defy comprehension:

> Another peculiar characteristic of the human mind is its ability to have ideas and experiences that we cannot explain rationally. We have imagination, a faculty that enables us to think of something that is not immediately present, and that, when we first conceive it, has no objective existence. The imagination is the factory that produces religion and mythology. Today mythical thinking has fallen into disrepute; we often dismiss it as irrational or self-indulgent. But the imagination is also the factory that has enabled scientists to bring new knowledge to light and to invent technology that has made us immeasurably more effective. The imagination of scientists has enabled us to travel through outer space and walk on the moon, feats that were once only possible in the realm of myth. Mythology and science both extend the scope of human beings. Like science and technology, mythology as we shall see is not about opting out of this world but about enabling us to live *more intensely within it*. (Armstrong 3 *emphasis mine*)

The oral performance allowed people to live "more intensely within" the narratives themselves. Rabinowitz's myth making began with his pen name, '*Sholem Aleichem'*, peace be with you, an ironic moniker for the man whose stories were riddled with rupture. In modernity, history may have come to function as the arbiter of identity, but Rabinowitz's ethical will is attached to Jewish myths in the repertoire of his work. "A Yom Kippur Scandal" is the story of an event in the narrator's town of *Kasrilevke* on *Kol Nidre,* the evening before *Yom Kippur,* the Jewish Day of Atonement. A Lithuanian salesman shows up at a synagogue to pray and gives money to people as is the custom for stranger who wants to join the community's service. The stranger, however, is generous in giving out rubles to people in the synagogue who are poor. The people are grateful. He is honoured with a seat near the front. The man stands for the duration of the service during the night, as well as the following day, a considerable feat since everyone is

fasting. However, at the close of the service he faints, is revived by the crowd, only to cry that someone has stolen his bag of 1,800 rubles. He tells the community he is only a clerk, and the money does not belong to him. The rabbi orders the doors closed and orders all the men (there are no women in this tale) to empty their pockets as the rabbi is embarrassed that there has been a theft on the holiest night and/or day of the year. The story's suspense is built on the momentum of men emptying their pockets. When Lazer Kossel begs for mercy, pleads even that he would rather be cut up in pieces than empty his pockets, the crowd descends upon him, forces him down, and the investigation reveals some "well gnawed chicken bones and a few plum pits still moist from chewing" (sholemaleichem.org). The members of the congregation roar with laughter. But what happened to the money? The thief (*if* there was one) is still at large. It is never clear if the stranger is telling the truth or lying. The mystery remains unsolved.

The story, however deceptively simple, raises unsolved questions. Jerome Bruner argues that great narrative is *not* about the closure: "We are beyond Aesop: great narrative is an *invitation to problem finding, not a lesson in problem solving*. It is deeply about plight, about the road rather than about the inn to which it leads." (*Making Stories* 20; *emphasis mine*). "Sholem Aleichem is suggesting rather slyly here that, really, there are far more important things in the world than the resolution of an external action, suspenseful and exciting though it may be; indeed, what one learns along the narrative journey matters more than the final destination… The bare anecdote on which the story is based becomes an occasion for revealing the deepest feelings of culture," suggests Howe (as quoted on Sholemaleichm.org).

Finally, as part of his ethical will and appended to it at the end, Rabinowitz wrote his own epitaph in Yiddish and it is this text which is engraved on his tombstone in the Workmen's Circle plot in Mt Carmel Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York. Memorialization cannot always

avoid spatial representation. He constructed a poignant portrait of the well-loved comic writer. Rabinowitz created the vision of the weeping author, who created comedy to help readers "forget their woes." He mocked physical monuments in his ethical will, but his epitaph delivers a paradox. The comedy he constructed as a way to forget misery contains rupture, dislocation and disaster. Readers laugh. Only God knows the writer is backstage, weeping. Is that the consequence of too much laughter? If his ethical will had directed his descendants to read only this epitaph, the memorial paradigm would be closer to Yerushalmi's recollection where the recipients become distanced, rather than functioning as engaged memory manufacturers. The memorial machinery would have been recollected biography instead of interpretive orality. He provided his descendants with a vigorous weapon of comedy, and in so doing, helped to create an afterlife for his work, as well as a secularized conversational paradigm for transmission itself:

Here lies a plain and simple Jew

Who wrote in plain and simple prose;

Wrote humour for the common folk

To help them to forget their woes.

He scoffed at life and mocked the world,

At all its foibles he poked fun.

The world went on its merry way

And left him stricken and undone.

And while his grateful readers laughed,

Forgetting troubles of their own,

Midst their applause-God only knows-

He wept in secret and alone.

(http://sholemaleichem.org/ethical-will-epitaph/)

Chapter Two: The Accidental Transmission

Alison Pick's Canadian conversion memoir *Between Gods* can be understood as an ethical will. Not all memoirs are ethical wills. But some conversion memoirs, such as *Between Gods* or American writer Stephen Dubner's *Choosing My Religion A Memoir Of A Family Beyond Belief* are preoccupied with reclaiming, reimagining and transmitting a cultural, moral, historical or religious legacy. The past ruptures the present. Like Stephen Dubner, Pick emerges as the outlier. For most descendants of the Pick and Dubner families, the historical conversion *away* from Judaism to Christianity has been successful. The descendants live as Christians. Some practise their Christian faith, others have rejected it, and many fall in between. These conversion memoirs follow the reverse trajectory with stories of two outliers who reclaim Jewish ancestry.

An ethical will is distinct from a legal will concerned with the division of assets and property. The "ethical resides in the transmission of legacy and is preoccupied with transmitting moral challenges, principles, or problems. In *Between Gods*, legacy is centred around conversion as a way to repair the history of the Holocaust. This chapter will explore what it means to repair history, and examine how the myth of repairing history can function as an interpretive tool. It will be my argument that the myth of repairing history is broad enough to include rupture *and* renewal. Like the myth of Masada for pioneers in the Palestine of the 1920s, the myth functions as a way of *thinking about history*. "The genius of literary study comes in asking questions not in finding answers," argues Marjorie Garber in *The Use and Abuse of Literature* (14). Garber asks "What if we were to understand literature as its own practice?" (15). In this context, literature itself becomes a way of thinking. More particularly the memoir functions as a way to process the catastrophe of the Holocaust and imagine renewal. In *Between Gods* the myth of repairing

history is not functioning as a romantic fable but as a tool of existential navigation. For Pick, this myth functions as a way to create a deeper inner life, and as a way to uncover, recover, and examine ancestry. At the same time, however, the myth is broad enough to include rupture and to provide a place to ask forever unanswered questions. In addition, this chapter will also explore how conversion functions as a memorial paradigm. I asked Pick how she understood the act of repairing history :

> Repairing history, to me, was about undoing the secrecy around our family history. About taking something (our Judaism, and our Holocaust trauma) that had been denied and pushed underground, and holding it up to the light. I think I could have done that without conversion proper, but there was something about the ritual of the conversion that formalized it in a way that was easily recognized by other people, and undeniable to me. And despite my ongoing imperfect Jewish practice, I would say that the conversion essentially 'worked,' to answer your other question--there is no longer any secrecy in my branch of the family at least, and I truly feel Jewish, as does my now 8-year-old daughter. I don't have a sense that anything is missing. (Pick, 14 Nov 2017 email)

The myth of historical repair is linked to the notion of the ethical will. I use the word text broadly to include letters, documentary, memoir, as well as musical composition. Legal wills distribute assets and physical property and are binding upon recipients. Ethical wills carry no legal authority. They can be ignored or honoured, remembered or forgotten. In these texts, authorial intention is foregrounded. Some conversion memoirs function as ethical wills because their primary preoccupation is with a moral or religious legacy, a legacy often defined by the contours of ancestry. Writers' desire to transmit a legacy often but not always coincides with parenthood, loss, or a rite of passage. A religious conversion suggests a shift in identity.

Conversion is sometimes motivated by parenthood. Pick makes the decision to reclaim what her assimilated nationalist Czech Jewish grandparents erased, and converts to become a Reform Jew in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. She wants to give birth to a Jewish child. In the retrieval of ancestry, what being Jewish means and what is retrieved requires distillation. I asked Pick *how* she chose what kind of Jew she wanted to become. Her decision allows her to reclaim her ancestry as a liberal Jew, *and* still be a part of the dominant Canadian culture.

> I decided what kind of Jew I wanted to be sort of by accident--because the rabbi who I serendipitously met just as I began the process was Reform, and I liked her, and also I suppose I had an idea that Reform would be more accessible to me as someone with no prior knowledge of Judaism. During the book tour for *Between Gods* I did have several Orthodox Jews suggest to me that my Reform conversion wasn't worth much or anything in Israel, and ask if I'd considered an Orthodox conversion, but I hadn't and am happy with where I've landed. (Pick, 27 Oct. 2017 email)

This memoir opens with a death wish on the part of the author who is suffering from a crippling depression, and closes with the birth of her first child. Conversion functions as a memorial paradigm that operates across time zones, and like the construction and reconstruction of memory, conversion is characterized by fluidity. I imagine the memorial paradigm of conversion as a temporal umbrella that can pivot to include past, present and future within its rubric. Sometimes there is a temporal fusion where past, present and future coalesce. In particular this chapter will explore how the conversion becomes a way of inhabiting time. The myth of historical repair provides a framework that allows the conversion to be framed as an act of retrieval as opposed to an identity construction *ex nihilo*.

Myth of Repairing History

What is the relationship between conversion and remembrance? How might conversion function as a memorial paradigm? Conversion delivers what Mircea Eliade characterized as experiences of "mythic time." How does the myth of repairing history work? What are hallmarks of its representation? To set up preliminary scaffolding, this myth of repairing history functions as a way for Pick to reclaim her paternal Jewish history, and retrieve the Jewish cultural link that has been broken through historical conversion *from* Judaism to Christianity. The myth also provides experiences that Eliade characterizes as a way of living with intensity as well as concentrated temporality, an experience he defines as mythic time. For Eliade, the experience of mythic time is *not* limited to religious rituals. Eliade argues that secular experiences such as a bullfight, the building of a house, or the birth of a child contain elements of concentrated time. Pick's paternal Jewish grandparents converted to become Christians in the United Church in Kitchener, Ontario after escaping from Nazi-occupied Prague in 1939. They escaped by bribing a Nazi officer. Their explanation as to why they converted away from Judaism constituted *their* way of repairing history. They did not want their children to be subject to terror. As Thomas Pick explains, his parents' decision in 1939 was *their* way of protecting their future. Conversion *to* Christianity was the price they would pay for social mobility, economic integration, and the yearning to be free from terror. Hatred of Jews was not limited to Europe in 1939. Thus, they repaired history by erasing their Jewish identities. Consequently Alison Pick has grown up as an Anglican, in Kitchener Ontario, not knowing that her Jewish paternal great grandparents and other family members were murdered for being Jewish in the Holocaust.

Power of Myth

In *Zakhor*, Yerushalmi argues that post-Holocaust Jewry resembles the generations

following the Spanish expulsion, and will choose myth over history. Yerushalmi characterized history as the "faith of the fallen Jew" (86). If that premise is accepted, what happens when history is in need of repair? Pick's desire to convert is linked to historical loss. When Pick goes to visit the rabbi who will sponsor her conversion, she associates her grieving as well as depression with the loss of ancestors. In this context, her conversion is not framed as a desire to change an identity but as an ancestral rescue. This conversation unfolds in her meeting with the rabbi: "We talk for a while about the legacy of denial about how the grief I am feeling isn't just my own but my father's and grandparents' as well. About how a secret passed down the generations grows until it's impossible to hold. About the sudden desire I have *to fix the past, to undo the wrong that's been done*" (53 *emphasis mine)*. The connection with ancestors here functions as another form of myth that serves a double function: the loss of ancestors can help to explain her profound grief, and to buttress her own Jewish identity. The ancestors can no longer speak. They can, however, be reimagined and mobilized for Pick's present and future.

It is Pick's position that her grandparents' response has been reactionary. She will undo their erasure. In a discussion about the role of the historian, Yerushalmi argues against Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy's description that the historian functions as a "physician of memory" (93). Yerushalmi argues that it is not the job of the historian to heal wounds, nor can the historian fully restore memory. Such tasks are beyond his or her power. Yerushalmi compares the historian to a pathologist (94). It is in this juxtaposition that the memoirist and the 'historian as pathologist' share overlapping concerns. The pathologist examines the cause and effect of disease. Pick explores the cause and effects of trauma. What she foregrounds is the impossibility of illuminating generational trauma. The historian's work is limited because of annihilation— of material evidence and human witness testimony. While Yerushalmi is a historian and Pick is a

poet, novelist, and memoirist, they come to the same conclusion when it comes to the impossibility of *fully* exposing the catastrophe of the Holocaust. She cannot ask questions of her great grandparents or other family members because they have been murdered in Auschwitz. Her paternal grandmother maintains a defiant silence, and refuses to talk about her Jewish past. When Pick travels to Prague, she finds a monument with the names of her murdered family members. She longs for material to reconstruct who these people were, wishing for letters, diaries, correspondence, photographs, stories, gestures, or any memorabilia. "What are the unknown aspects of our family's trauma? I can see their outlines but they won't speak, won't reveal themselves. They lie scattered around me like bodies on a battlefield" (299).

Pick fills in lacunae by imagining. In this way, the writer of memoir (as opposed to the historian) may function as one who can artfully interpret cultural memory as well as the contours of absence. Pick's memoir offers an interpretation on the meaning of the loss. Can the writer of memoir function as a navigator for cultural memory? In her dissertation, *After Postmemory Coping With Holocaust Remembrance in Postmodern Hebrew Literature* Yael Seliger makes an argument about the power of art alongside the *limits* of history. Seliger examines the modality of Holocaust remembrance and collective memory. Seliger frames the process as one of *coping with rather than healing from* the issues arising out of the Holocaust:

> On April 26, 1937 the German Luftwaffe bombed the Spanish Basque village of Guernica. The factual details of unarmed men, women, and children killed in an unannounced attack from the air have little to do with affixing this event into Western civilization's shared cultural memory. Rather, it has everything to do with the event sparking Pablo Picasso's Guernica. *Art does not replace history. Art enhances our understanding of history*. Without artistic expressions, remembrance of the Holocaust is

> curbed in scope, constrained in applicability, confined in meaning, and short-lived in our collective memory. (Seliger 37-38 *emphasis mine)*

I am deploying the term 'myth' as an artful mode of interpretation. Eliade argues that myth functions as the "very foundation of social life and culture" because it "narrates a sacred history" (23). In addition, the myth delivers a way *of being* in time. Because it is repeatable, the myth unfolds as a renewable resource capable of deploying the past. Moreover, that deployment helps Pick navigate an uncertain future.

Here is an example of mythic fluidity that is useful. In "The Recovery of Masada: A Study in Collective Memory" Barry Schwartz, Yael Zeruvabel, Bernice M. Barnett and George Steiner examine how and why the myth of a collective suicide pact became reimagined into a myth about national Israeli dignity. The failed battle in ancient Jewish history in 73 AD had been forgotten for two thousand years. It is understandable why it was erased from collective memory. One would expect that the more conventional pattern would be to memorialize an unlikely military victory, as opposed to the collective crisis characterized as a "mopping up operation" (Schwartz et al. 149) after the fall and destruction of Jerusalem. However, the disaster was retrieved and reimagined when a Ukrainian immigrant named Yitzhak Lamdan wrote a popular Hebrew poem. His poem "Masada" contained moods ranging from defiant optimism to terrorized despair. The authors argue that the poem's popularity in the Palestine of the 1920's is illuminating as social evidence about cultural attitudes. These authors argue that Lamdan positioned the collective suicide pact as a metaphor for spiritual surrender for the emerging state. They reveal how a high incidence of suicide had become an issue for Zionist pioneers. Many were disillusioned. Looking backwards to the first century, the ancient Jews entered into a suicide pact to avoid captivity as well as humiliation. The modern poet reconstructs the mass

suicide, and suggests “Masada will not fall again” while, at the same time, pointing to the *possibility* of failure. The poem’s elasticity pivots between victory and defeat. What is at stake is life or death. The political situation was precarious. Zionist Jews who fled the pogroms of Eastern Europe with the dream of building a homeland felt they had nowhere else to go. The *idea* of Masada becomes reenacted and associated with the future viability of a Jewish state. Zionist failure was a possibility. Jews who had immigrated to Palestine returned to Eastern Europe, the place where they had previously fled. The authors reveal this pattern by examining data about immigration and emigration from 1908 to 1929. They argue that European Jewry ignored Zionism. During this era, European Jews migrated to the United States, not Palestine.

In this way, Zionist pioneers in the 1920’s functioned as a minority surrounded by hostility, just as the ancient zealots had lived as a minority surrounded by Roman enemies. In both eras, these outliers were, for the most part, ignored by the majority of the Jewish populations elsewhere. In terms of the trajectory and anatomy of this myth, what happens is that a mass suicide pact is *repositioned* as defiance. This repositioning constitutes a radical act of imagination. We can hear in this radical reframing (from the first chapter of the dissertation) the echo of James Kugel’s idea of ancient interpreters of sacred text concluding A equals B, as well as Robert Alter’s observation about the wildly inventive hallmark of Jewish interpretation. Whether or not suicide is a courageous act is debatable. A collective suicide could be framed as collective tragedy or cowardice. The poem, however, framed this disaster into an act of collective *defiance* for national autonomy. It functions as resistance against despair while acknowledging failure as a possibility. Although the poem is no longer included in the curriculum of Israeli schools one line ‘Never again shall Masada fall’ remains popular … and continues to be exploited for national demonstrations without regard for the context from which

that line was drawn" (Schwartz et al. 159). And herein lies the essential heart of the argument about this particular reconstruction for my purpose: "The recovery of Masada was the recovery of an *image* and its function was not so much to promote or reduce the hopes and worries of the present as to express them. It is in this specific sense that the recovery of Masada was more *a way of understanding the present* than of understanding the past" (Schwartz et al, 160 *emphasis mine*). In this way, the myth provides the Zionist pioneers with *a way of thinking* with an analogy from history. They are not the first Jews to be placed in a position where survival is at stake. The poem works by deploying Jay Winter's "historical remembrance" as way to connect their precariousness with the ancient Jewish history but, simultaneously to hold onto the resistance required. The poem gains power because its psychological elasticity (allowing for optimism and despair) becomes strategic:

> As we recall, the several years that followed the appearance of Lamdan's poem, a time in which the fortress itself became national shrine, were precisely the years of greatest out-migration. What was remembered of Masada, then, did not promote what the Palestinian Jews most needed namely solidarity, integration, and commitment; *it only provided a way of thinking about solidarity, integration, and commitment.* Its function was not instrumental, in the sense of producing practical effects but semiotic, in that it formulated meaning. Its function was that of a symbolic structure in which the reality of the *community's inner life* could be rendered more explicit and comprehensible than it would have been otherwise. (Schwartz et al, 160 *emphasis mine*)

Herein lies the power of the fluidity of the mythic mind. Armstrong has argued about the power of myth as a way of *living more intensely within life itself.*

Myth as a Way of Thinking

I am sharing the Masada myth to set up a framework with which to understand Pick's myth of repairing history. For Pick, the myth is about undoing secrecy and exposing the limits of probing loss. The myth functions on multiple levels: it allows Pick to retrieve a connection with her Jewish murdered ancestors, to navigate depression through conversion, and to transform her inner life by providing her with what Eliade refers to as mythic time. The *experience* of time becomes central for Pick's conversion because of the primacy she places on *Shabbat*. Pick highlights *Shabbat* as what she most loves about being Jewish. She explains her evolution of Shabbat practice during the rabbinical interview for the conversion, the interview will determine whether or not she is accepted as a Jew.

The myth of repairing history is broad enough to hold contradictions within it, just as the Masada poem holds both joy and despair. For example, repairing history unfolds as a process hallmarked by navigation *as well as* rupture. Pick, who has grown up Anglican, celebrating Christmas and Easter and going to church, tries to process what being Jewish means : "I see every Jew, every survivor as a potential saviour, thinking they might know something I don't, might be the one with the piece of information that allows me to understand the nightmare" (163). The myth does not pretend there is closure: Pick visits Auschwitz with her fiancé. She travels to Prague to try to imagine what was lost. During her first depression, she moved to Montreal to study the Holocaust at McGill. "My nights were dogged with dreams of Nazis" (152). She discovers a Holocaust survivor named Vera in her family, her paternal grandfather's cousin whose two children were murdered. Pick travels to New York to meet Vera. Vera keeps photographs of her children in a travel suitcase fifty years later. She lights a memorial candle *every day*. She is haunted. What emerges is that the myth of repairing history offers a way to think about the *limits* of repair. And it is here that art –in this case the art of memoir –fills the

gap. “As a writer I can take the horrors of the Holocaust-for example-and place them within the strictures of plot, character, tension. I can render them believable and imbue them with a moment of redemption-not in terms of the outcome of the story but in terms of narrative tension” (152). The myth functions as an interpretive tool for the motivation behind conversion.

Myth and Redemption

Saul Friedlander retrieves Yerushalmi’s argument that after the Holocaust, the Jewish world found itself in a similar situation to the expulsion from Spain in 1492, and was waiting for a mythic framework of redemption. I am arguing that the post Holocaust Jewry is *not* in the same position as the Jews expelled from Spain. The response to this catastrophe is ongoing rupture. Friedlander argues that “some fifty years after the events, no mythical framework seems to be taking hold of the Jewish imagination, nor does the best of literature and art dealing with the Shoah offer any *redemptive stance*. In fact, the opposite appears to be true” (255 *emphasis mine*). I agree with Friedlander that rupture is “taking hold of the Jewish imagination.” This longing for redemption, however, is part of a Christian impulse, and in the case of the Holocaust is not appropriate. Consider a nightmare from Pick’s memoir. Pick never met the ancestor who haunts her sleep:

> I sit in Charlotte’s office with tears running down my cheeks. I unfold the crinkled piece of foolscap on which I have written a dream about my great-grandmother Marianne. As per Charlotte’s instruction, I’ve included as much detail as possible. In the dream I am in the cattle car, walking backwards towards my great grandmother but when she finally meets my gaze, she wears my own face. It’s not that she looks like me; she *is* me. (17)

Pick has time travelled so that she in the cattle car. The myth functions in a similar way

to the Masada paradigm as *a way of thinking and trying to process catastrophe*. Pick finds the "concept of intergenerational transmission of trauma seems so fantastical like saying Marianne tripped on her shoelace seventy years ago and my ankle is sprained as a result. My happy life, my privilege: how could things that happened so long ago to people I never knew, affect me?" (58).The dream here allows her to imagine what if it was *her* life at stake?

I would like pause here to unpack an assumption about redemption in its relationship to myth. This issue of redemption arises with Yerushalmi's observation about the power of myth following the catastrophe of the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492. I am arguing, building on Horn's observations from a 2016 lecture "History and Imagination: The Place of Literature In Holocaust Remembrance," that the primacy placed upon on redemption constitutes an inheritance of a Christian perspective, and is *not* a useful paradigm for Jewish literature about or emerging from the Holocaust**.** It is more productive as a starting point to frame myth the way Armstrong postulates in that it offers an explanation. Moreover, and this observation is a central point here, the myth emerges *in the first place* because it is often trying to explain something that will never be *fully* understood. The explanation may always be partial, but it functions as an *explanatory fragment* and constitutes an interpretive strategy. Horn points out that there already exists a 2600- year-old literary template for responding to catastrophe. Horn retrieves the prophet Isaiah: "Can a woman forget her baby, Or disown the child of her womb? Though she might forget, I never could forget you. See, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands " (*Jewish Study Bible* Ch 49 v.15). The context for Isaiah is exile. The prophet is trying to reassure the Israelites that God has not abandoned them. Given the exile, the Israelites feel abandoned. The prophet argues that the relationship between God and the Israelites is comparable to the unbreakable bond between a mother and child. Horn suggests the role of literature is *not* to

provide false uplift but to continue engraving. Engraving functions as a memorial paradigm that requires interpretation. The engraver must select what is included, what is excluded and what is beyond the possibility of engraving. Engraving is part of what Paul Connerton describes as an "inscribing practice" in *How Societies Remember.* In the project's last chapter I will explore "incorporating practice" as another mode of embodied memory for components that can be remembered *without* being physically engraved.

Finally, this tenacious expectation of redemption raises an additional problem, what Horn characterizes as the Jewish "Eicha" illness. Horn argues that Jewish culture and civilization has placed too strong an emphasis for thousands of years on lamentation and self-blame. "Eicha" is the name of the Biblical Book of Lamentations, recited as a reminder of the destruction of the first Temple. It is connected to a fast day in the Jewish calendar. The rabbinic explanation is that the temple was destroyed because of the collective sins of the Jews. Horn cites variations amongst the rabbis in the Talmud suggesting the destruction happened because of enmity between Jewish communities, lack of observance, lack of religious education, as well as other reasons. These rabbinic commentaries can all be classified within the rubric that the destruction was the Jews' fault. Horn asks instead a fundamentally otherwise obvious pragmatic question: what about superior Babylonian weaponry?

She traces how Eicha *as a Jewish myth* has reinvented itself in a robust trajectory from ancient to modern times in what she characterizes as the "the longest-lasting stomachache in the history of the world" for the Jewish people (*Arguing the 688*). The myth has been repeated for thousands of years, and effectively internalized in ancient and modern Jewish culture. She begins her examination with a contemporary children's picture book by William Steig called *Dr. DeSoto* in which a mouse dentist considers treating a fox as a patient with a toothache. As a

predator, the fox makes it clear he plans to eat the mouse dentist once the dentist has provided him with the gold tooth for his treatment. In this way, the mouse dentist will be providing the fox *with an opportunity for his own annihilation.* In the picture book, a clever solution is found. In the picture book, the husband and wife mouse team put in the new tooth by inserting a long stick to keep the fox's jaw open, and then spread a mouth glue on the fox's teeth. When the fox closes his mouth, his teeth are stuck together. He is unable to eat the mice. The husband and wife mouse team pretend this glue is part of the treatment. They have outwitted the fox and protected their own lives through ingenuity.

Horn proposes that it would be more productive to look instead at the Book of Job for a compelling response to undeserved suffering. I am connecting the longing for a myth of redemption to what Horn characterizes as the "Eicha illness." I am arguing that for literature emerging from and about the Holocaust it is not useful to search for redemption. These ideas are connected because the Eicha *illness* contains within it the implicit expectation that it is up to the Jews to fix what is amiss. There is *no* redemption in the work of Primo Levi, Ida Fink, Charlotte Delbo as well as the Canadian Yiddish writer Chava Rosenfarb. In *Against the Apocalypse* David Roskies argues against seeing the Holocaust as an apocalyptic event, and places the event within a trajectory to contextualize the history of Jewish responses to catastrophe. "The greater the catastrophe, the more the Jews have recalled the ancient archetypes" (13). Jews deployed, revised, inverted and interrogated these Biblical archetypes. Roskies illuminates as well the *limits* of those Biblical archetypes because they failed to address Nazi sadism. In his investigation of writings from the ghettos, Roskies identifies what he characterizes as the "breaking point" in 1942:

What a detailed sequential study of the ghetto writings shows is the precise breaking

> point and the way in which the writers began to apprehend the Holocaust as its own archetype… It happened when they took away the children because without the children there was no hope whatsoever. The forcible conversion of the children in Cantonist times, so pathetically invoked in Shayveitsh's poem could not compare with their wholesale annihilation. (221)

The limit of the Biblical archetype suggests that although there is a template of response, the Biblical archetype fails. It is stretched beyond its capacity. In *Zakhor,* Yerushalmi positions literature as a surrogate source of such myth to offer redemption beyond history. "In the Wake of the Spanish Expulsion" Yerushalmi explains the lure of the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria as a way of finding meaning from the 1492 Spanish expulsion:

> It is surely more than coincidence that a people that did not yet dream of defining itself in mundane historical categories should now have found the *key to its history* in an awesome metahistorical myth of pronounced gnostic character. That *myth* declared that all evil, including the historical evil that is Jewish exile had its roots before history began, before the Garden of Eden was planted, before our world exists in a primal tragic flaw that occurred at the very creation of the cosmos itself. (73 *emphasis mine*)

Gershom Sholem argues that this Lurianic myth abandoned the traditional understanding of exile and redemption, and in so doing, reimagined catastrophe. Sholem explores the myth and its trajectory in *Sabbati Sevi the Mystical Messiah*. The myth served a double purpose because it functioned as both as an interpretation of history, as a way of finding meaning in suffering, as well as a factor *within* Jewish history itself (*Sabbati* 44-45). For Jewish existence in the Diaspora, the myth offered power, as well as an explanation of evil. Sholem argues that the

Lurianic myth suggested suffering contained mystery. I am arguing that the same Jewish myth cannot be constructed from the destruction of European Jewry. The Lurianic myth explained that evil was a real force. The world required repair. The origin of that evil emerged as a defect in the "organic unfolding of certain fixed laws inherent in the creative activity of God" (*Sabbati* 44-45) when the universe was made. The fault lay in creation. The world was broken. In response, Jews could heal sickness and restore scattered fragments. The myth transformed the exile from a catastrophe of homelessness into a religious mission. Note here the radical revision of physical reality of homelessness. Like the transformation of the Masada myth, a catastrophe is repositioned into a collective opportunity. The mission provides hope. In the Lurianic myth, the mission for Diaspora Jewry was to create a collectively improved future. Exile now was not a test of faith, or a punishment for sins. Redemption was linked to history itself because Jewish deeds and labour itself carried the power to repair the world, and contained within its mission a messianic component, Sholem argues. A messianic king would arise only *after* the world had been repaired. I would argue, however, that this myth too has inherited the ethos of *Eicha* because it is up to the Jews to fix evil. In its explanation of the origin of evil, Yerushalmi defines the Lurianic version as the "primal tragic flaw that occurred at the very creation of the cosmos itself" (*Zakhor* 73). The creation process is broken. The myth looks inside rather than outside. In its radical ahistorical perspective, the myth ignores the Spanish Inquisition, just as the rabbinic commentaries ignored superior Babylonian weaponry.

Yerushalmi, too, has been unwittingly influenced by ethos of *Eicha*. Yerushalmi is optimistically searching for a redeeming myth and suggests that literature may provide what history cannot deliver. I am arguing that literature can provide what history may not deliver but it constitutes historical remembrance to borrow Winter's terminology. However it is *not* delivering

redemption. I am arguing that when it comes to the construction of myth, the post Holocaust response to catastrophe will differ from the 1492 Spanish expulsion because the destruction of European Jewry is a catastrophe of a different kind. *In short, the Eicha paradigm collapses in the face of post-Holocaust rupture*.

Horn suggests that the Yiddish Canadian writer Chava Rosenfarb's trilogy *The Tree of Life* is one of the best antidotes to the *Eicha* myth because it illustrates *the lives* of the Jews of Lodz. The trilogy features ten characters who are rich and poor, religious and secular, as well as morally complex. The trilogy illuminates the complexity of their lives as opposed to making their deaths sacred. Rosenfarb creates a memorial from which deaths are not "lessons." Horn argues other works sacralize destruction, and in doing so the message may be that the Jews are most honoured when they have no power; they are most honoured when dead.

One can position this issue as a juxtaposition between the paradigm of *Eicha* and the paradigm of the Book of Job in which there *is* no explanation for undeserved suffering. In *Between Gods,* Pick visits a therapist. She is trying to navigate what it means to have relatives murdered in Auschwitz. The paradigm echoes Job:

> "I've been lunging after all things Jewish," I say. "People, classes, ritual. Thinking that the cure for the Holocaust lies in the practice of the religion itself. That by finding my way back there I can somehow save Marianne. *But there is no cure for the Holocaust. Is there*?" "Charlotte looks at me. "*No," she says. "There's isn't "*(136-137 *emphasis mine)*.

The Holocaust is presented as a pathology. If the memoirist can function in a similar way to the pathologist (connecting to Yerushalmi's idea of historian as a pathologist) then this catastrophe emerges as an incurable illness. In the preface, Pick highlights Job: "When I looked

for light, then came darkness" (Job 30: 26). Job's questions are still questions that matter for robbers who sleep untroubled in their tents while good people suffer. The book's ending features a merger of construction and destruction. The final scene is the naming ceremony for Pick's baby, a ceremony characterized by hope, legacy and the promise of a new life. As she creates her future, Pick glances backward to position this new life, her daughter and first child, within a genealogical trajectory. She does not retrieve Biblical matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel or Leah but the great grandmother who does not have the luxury of a tombstone, the woman who exists only in a literary reconstruction. This paradigm is closer to Job where there are no answers for catastrophe: "Somewhere rain falls onto the open sea. *Genocide continues*. *There are no easy answers.* Snow falls on a tombstone, furring it over with memory. My great-grandmother is buried in an unmarked grave in the sky (378 *emphasis mine)*. The great grandmother has been transformed into one of the Jewish maternal ancestors, and the ceremony marks her loss *as well as* new life. In this context, the ceremony allows the time zones of past, present and future to coalesce. *Between Gods* functions, in part, as a memorial to her memory and the other murdered members of Pick's family. In addition, this maternal myth connects Pick directly to the maternal Jewish line that she grew up *without.* To do that she does not explore complications with her own biological Christian mother. Her Christian mother is mostly absent. The Jewish maternal line is now being repaired. In this way, the birth ceremony functions as a myth of ancestral maternal mending.

Marianne's daughter, Pick's paternal grandmother has been erased. And there is a recognition of the complexity of religious mixtures directly linked to the destruction of European Jewry. Thomas Pick had Jewish parents who became Christian as a way to flee from terror. Thomas Pick marries a Christian woman, and their daughter Alison reclaims Judaism. "My

Christian mother holds my Jewish child in her arms. The rabbi, full of love, blesses the baby in Hebrew: *bruchah haba'ah.* We repeat the blessing in English. "Blessed is she who comes." In the chapter "The Myths of the Modern World" Eliade makes an argument that myth never disappeared but is sometimes disguised in secular rituals. He points to the building of a house or the move to a new apartment, events that suggests a yearning for "complete regeneration" and the "need for an entirely new beginning" (28). Although these secular events have moved far away from their mythic archetype, they illuminate a longing for what he characterizes as a "periodic repetition of the creation" (28). The "festivities following the birth of a child" are included among those events that preserve a "mythical structure and function. (28) "…What matters to us is that such celebrations still have a resonance, obscure but profound." (28). Armstrong argues that myth is not a way to opt out but a way to live more intensely within life itself. Pick has reclaimed the religious ritual to mark the new beginning by inviting the rabbi to her home along with her family. The baby naming ritual allows Pick to create an experience of Jewish time, to mark the new beginning with the Jewish language of Hebrew and to repair a broken ancestral maternal line by becoming a Jewish mother. The naming allows her to live more intensely within life itself and the ritual marks the moment of a new beginning with a new life in the architecture of Jewish time.

The Mythic Deployment

Armstrong suggests civilizations utilize myth as an explanation and response to mystery. In this paradigm, myth is not a fable:

> Another peculiar characteristic of the human mind is its ability to have ideas and experiences that we cannot explain rationally. We have imagination, a faculty that

> enables us to think of something that is not immediately present, and that, when we first conceive it, has no objective existence. The imagination is the factory that produces religion and mythology. Today mythical thinking has fallen into disrepute; we often dismiss it as irrational or self-indulgent. But the imagination is also the factory that has enabled scientists to bring new knowledge to light and to invent technology that has made us immeasurably more effective. The imagination of scientists has enabled us to travel through outer space and walk on the moon, feats that were once only possible in the realm of myth. Mythology and science both extend the scope of human beings. Like science and technology, mythology as we shall see is not about opting out of this world but about enabling us to *live more intensely within it* (3 *emphasis mine).*

What might it mean to *live more intensely* within life? How might this idea be contained within *Between Gods*? Pick has many questions and one of them is *what does it mean to have a Jewish soul*? One of the rabbis offers an explanation. The rabbi's story illustrates a mythic explanation of repairing history. Pick characterizes her conversion as a recovery, as opposed to a process hallmarked by newness. Pick has been to a *Shabbat* dinner at the home of a Czech family, and the host, whom she has never met, looks into her eyes and announces that he can tell she has a Jewish soul. Pick is taken aback, as she has never met this man, and is wondering how he knows, and what this observation might mean. She asks *how*. The host replies he *knows* his observation to be true. He smiles. He offers no explanation.

The Myth of Gilgul Nefashot

In answering this question, the rabbi shares a Jewish myth, and the term *gilgul nefashot* which she translates as "rolling souls" (85). She explains "it's a concept that applies to bringing Jewish souls back to Judaism. There are lost Jewish souls. They attach to someone who will find a Jew

to marry" (85). In this story, the soul needs to be brought home, an existential journey of lost and found. Conversion becomes homecoming. The myth provides a primal explanation for a motivation for conversion (the soul has been lost and needs a home), as well as a rationale to welcome new members. For these "rolling souls," conversion is represented as an act of retrieval, reclamation, and recovery, as opposed to the disruption that comes with constructing a new identity. The *gilgul nefashot* myth is framed as repair. Traditionally the rabbinic system of determining who was a Jew was predicated on the biology of the mother through matrilineal lineage. In contrast, this myth presents an option for inclusion that transcends biology. In Pick's situation, the myth becomes complicated because her fiancé has no interest in converting. He has no Jewish ancestry. (Whether or not this myth will literally hold true is outside of the scope of this project. Pick's marriage with her non-Jewish husband Degan Davis dissolved in 2014. She wrote a first-person account of finding a partner online in an issue of *Toronto Life* in 2017). The myth's promise of homecoming makes it powerful. Conversion can transform past, present and future. For Pick, the yearning to become Jewish is positioned as a way of repairing her ancestral history. Thus we have conversion as a memorial paradigm operating in multiple time zones. By reclaiming what was erased, becoming Jewish is positioned to function as repair. This myth of lost souls offers a way to think about that identity within a framework that constructs the process as retrieval rather than a disruption. The myth omits difficult details that converts would have to navigate such as a relationship with their previous faith community, their biological family members, as well as the difficulty of integrating and figuring out how to belong. The myth is silent on what may be biggest challenge, and that is identity reconstruction.

Mythic Time and Mircea Eliade

I would like now to focus on how the myth reorients temporal experience. In *Myths Dreams and Mysteries* Eliade argues that myth has been misunderstood as a fable or something untrue. He proposes instead that the value of myth functions as the "very foundation of social life and culture" and that myth provides a "pattern for human behaviour" (23). What I would like to highlight is the division between two kinds of temporal experience: profane and sacred time. "If the myth is not just an infantile or aberrant creation of "primitive" humanity, but is the expression of a mode of being in the world what has become of myths in the modern world? Or, more precisely, what has taken the essential place occupied by myth in traditional societies?" (Eliade, 25). Eliade argues that myth never disappeared but was disguised because it became secularized. "For at the level of individual experience it has never fully disappeared: it makes itself felt in the dreams, fantasies and the longings of modern man (27). He points to secular rituals such as New Year's parties, the birth of a child, the building of a house, rituals characterized by beginnings and regeneration. He characterizes these processes as yearnings to perform re-enactments *of beginnings*. Yerushalmi characterized Jewish memory as a re-enactment. Re-enactment implies a return as well as a renewable process. Re-enactment is predicated on reinvention. Armstrong argues that the mythic framework allows someone to live more intensely within life itself. Eliade argues that myth can represent a "certain mode of being in the world" (30). I am foregrounding these issues about the division of temporal experience into sacred and profane categories, myth as a mode of being, as well as Armstrong's idea of a myth allowing someone to *live more intensely within life* itself because these issues coalesce in Pick's representation of *Shabbat,* the Jewish day of rest.

In this context, the representation of *Shabbat* functions as an example of how the myth delivers temporal experience, a mode of being, and the opportunity to live more intensely within

life itself. Pick describes a ritual she and her fiancé have ‘invented’ called “24 hours unplugged ” (38). The weekly ritual involves unplugging computers, shutting off cell phones, and relaxing into the quiet. They do no work. The ritual begins on a Friday night and constitutes a break from work, a time of being instead of doing. It is during one of these Friday night interludes that Pick finds herself reading Anita Diamant’s *Living a Jewish Life* where she learns, for the first time, about the weekly Jewish day of rest called *Shabbat*. She has been assigned this chapter about *Shabbat,* as part of a class she is taking about Judaism. Pick states she knows nothing about Judaism, and has not been exposed to any significant Jewish practice, books, or culture. She has grown up going to the Anglican church in Kitchener, Ontario. “Every Friday evening Jews around the world light candles, recite blessings, and rejoice in a taste of the world to come. In the modern world, a crucial part of the ritual is turning off technology” (38). Her boyfriend jokes “the Jews have been spying on us.” “For centuries,” quips Pick. She characterizes their ‘invented’ ritual as a secular version of *Shabbat,* but comments that the tradition itself, feels to her “almost like a genetic memory” (39). “Like my cells were remembering something my consciousness had been told to forget” (39). The experience is characterized as a metaphor of genetic recognition. Pick finds this coincidence so astounding that she has an overwhelming urge to share news of her temporal ‘invention.’ She arranges to meet with a fellow Jewish writer named Eli. She discloses that “…everything I learn feels so comfortable so familiar” (42). The power of this experience is one of the driving forces that propels the conversion. Later in the memoir, during the adjudication among the Reform *beit din,* the rabbinical judicial council overseeing her conversion, there is a “collective gasp” amongst the rabbis when she shares her story of unplugging from technology for twenty-four hours. “That really sealed the deal for me.” “Although,” I add hastily, it’s been clear all along, like recognizing something that was always

mine but got lost along the way, along the generations (353). Pick has characterized the process as one of lost and found. Her emphasis on recognition echoes *gilgul nefashot*, reclaiming a way of being in time, and returning home. In this way, the observance of Shabbat becomes an act of repairing ruptures of history by displacing secular time with Jewish temporality. Pick cannot bring back her murdered relatives. She can however create a Jewish experience of temporality, and so the act of repair resides in her creation and experience of Jewish time. Shabbat itself offers a mode of being that Eliade describes as a way of experiencing sacred time, and its observance delivers the possibility of stillness. It is repeatable, coming without fail each week, and can be re-enacted *and* reinvented. Pick's secular version is replaced by the Jewish version: "We abandon 24 hours unplugged like a too-small T-shirt: tossed in the corner and forgotten" (172). Eliade examines rituals that have become secularized. In *Between Gods*, the secular ritual reclaims its religious roots in much the same way that the myth of *gilgul nefashot* is positioned as a retrieval. Before she learned that conversion would be necessary (because her mother was Christian) and the Reform movement in Canada (unlike the United States) requires matrilineal descent, the Canadian writer imagined she could simply become Jewish, the way one would pick up a forgotten suitcase at the airport (28).

During the conversion interview with the Toronto Reform rabbinical judicial council called a *beit din,* three rabbis ask Pick what she most likes about Judaism. The *beit din* functions as the rabbinical authority, the authority which will determine whether she will be accepted or not as a member of the Jewish community. Pick has studied for a year as part of a communal class. "Shabbat," Pick responds (353). Pick highlights her relationship with time. *Shabbat* is the Hebrew word for the Sabbath, an obligation to create a day of rest, according to the Ten Commandments. In this way, *Shabbat* is contained within this rubric of non-material legacy.

Shabbat is a way to sanctify time. One of its hallmarks is a removal from the commercial world. *Shabbat* functions for Pick not as recollection of history, but as a weekly re-enactment of sacred time with a community. It is characterized as a tradition grounded in time, and in the creation story in the Hebrew Bible. The tradition of *Shabbat* functions instead as what civil rights activist, rabbi and writer Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel characterized as a “palace” in time in *The Sabbath.* Heschel argued that Jewish civilization and practice was predicated upon constructing an architecture in time, as opposed to space. As such, it exists as a democratized temporal sanctification not dependent upon wealth or property. It is a way of *being in time* and defined by a beginning, middle and ending. Pick reads Heschel. Heschel explains *Shabbat* by explaining that it is time itself that is holy, not material possessions. When Pick begins learning, practising, and observing *Shabbat* with her partner she concludes “A child who grows up with Shabbat will know comfort and stillness, will know at least one way to God” (173). Pick has linked “knowing God” with Jewish temporality. In this regard, part of her legacy as a Jewish mother will be in creating this experience for a child, of passing down a way of experiencing time itself; a legacy of Jewish temporality. This experience is part of what Eliade characterizes as “mythic time” or sacred time in that it functions outside of mundane, profane or everyday experience. It is in this context that the myth of repairing history through conversion offers a memorial paradigm: a way of living in the present *and* delivering a promise for the *future* by undoing the wrong of the *past.*

Because of the Jewish primacy on memory, conversion functions as a memorial paradigm and because it is broad enough, like the image of Masada, to include the memory of ancestors. The process of conversion is broad enough to operate in all three time zones: past, present and future. I would like to flesh this out with a dream that has includes past present and future within it: Pick dreams of her great grandmother Marianne (whom she never met) suggesting over coffee

that there are “better ways to honor us” (375). In this dream, the message “Go life your life” (375), is the same message Pick heard from her therapist Charlotte. Eliade suggests dreams deliver another way of experiencing mythic time. Marianne was murdered in Auschwitz in 1943. The dream functions as another way of reconstructing history through the imagination. The dream offers Pick a strategy for life itself; and that the way to honour the dead is to live more fully.

Conversion As Memorial Paradigm

Pick cannot create this Jewish legacy for her daughter without conversion. By creating a memoir she has constructed a way to transmit the legacy in a public form as opposed to writing a private letter to her daughter. She has constructed a conversion memoir about repairing the rupture of history by fighting against erasure. The conversion functions as a way for Pick to create a Jewish identity. In addition, the process of converting functions as a modality of remembrance itself. Conversion requires classes about Judaism, Jewish history, and culture. The conversion allows her simultaneously to reimagine her past history, to construct a new identity that allows her to time travel by reclaiming and reimagining the past, as well to construct a new present and future. On the morning of her conversion, she opens an e-mail from her father Thomas Pick, a man who has been raised in the United Church, whose parents fled Prague and converted to Christianity in Canada. This is the father who was not supportive of her wish to have a Jewish wedding but becomes more interested in his own lost history because of his daughter’s desire. Thomas Pick starts investigating the genealogy of his own Jewish family, and begins to construct a detailed family tree. He goes to a synagogue in Prague, and after a discussion with the rabbi there, he is counted as a Jew and part of the *minyan* or quorum required for a traditional prayer service.

Thomas Pick does not convert, but his curiosity grows. He begins to read Jewish history, the history of Israel, attend Jewish exhibits and to seek out Jewish experiences. Near the end of the memoir when he is invited to a *Rosh Hashanah* dinner with his daughter Alison he confides to the host that although he has been raised as a Christian, in his heart he feels he is a Jew (295). For Pick, who has grown up going with her father to church as a child, this statement functions as a turning point.

> "Dear Alison: Good luck today in your new life as a Jew. I am proud of you and admire the courage that you have shown in pursuing this venture. Your ancestors up in heaven are applauding!" (351). The ancestors have been reconstructed as cultural cheerleaders--including Thomas Pick's parents who had perfected their Christian identities in what Pick describes as a 'bang up performance" (161). The construct of performance applies to the grandparents, as well the characters Pick invents. Whether it's the grandparents *or* the characters on the page, whether real or imagined, they are constructed with enthusiasm but in the end, constitute a "bang up performance nonetheless" (161).

I would like to pause here to argue this radical reconstruction is exactly how the myth of historical repair operates in acts of radically creative *reconstruction*. The grandparents who turned Christmas and Easter into elegant cultural events, who refused to invite Jewish relatives for fear of exposing their own Jewish history, have become reconstructed into Jews encouraging their granddaughter to become what they worked their entire lives to remove. The myth suggests much about the father's implicit regret at the aggressive erasure, and his emerging idea of repairing history *for himself*. This image of applauding Jewish ancestors functions as a comforting genealogical fantasy that positions Pick's conversion as an act of courage, as opposed to a rejection of Christian identity. It also positions her within the genealogical trajectory of her

Jewish family. The myth is silent on that complex issue of Christian identity: "It wasn't Christ I prayed to as a girl: it was a vague idea of "God" as a man with a beard in the sky. But now I ask myself what does the Jewish God look like? I strain for an image" (135-136).

In the case of Masada, Schwartz et al. argue that a collective suicide is reimagined as a metaphor to fight against spiritual suicide. The authors illuminate how the myth is clear *not* to offer a panacea because failure was a possibility. The image is powerful because it suggests the slippery volatility between optimism and despair. The situation is politically tenuous. The Zionist pioneers have antecedents in the struggle for a homeland. Their myth too, is about literally settling in a place to call home. While Herzl's Zionism was a modern pragmatic political movement that arose with alongside other political movements for national independence, the Masada myth reframes history. Their political movement is no longer only modern, but ancient. For the pioneers of the 1920's, the myth allows them to construct their lives by positioning themselves into as historical players in the long trajectory of Jewish time. Herzl's vision of Zionism functioned as a strategy to fight anti-Semitism and create a national independence. The Masada myth in this poem however straddled both worlds by reframing the political movement into one with ancient roots. I am not arguing that the image of Masada was the catalyst for political Zionism, but I am arguing that once the political movement unfolded, the myth helped it to construct an ancient antecedent, and raised the political stakes. In some ways the myth created urgency to avoid another collective disaster: George Steiner argues how images of the past are deployed with purpose and power:

> It is not the literal past that rules us, save, possibly, in a biological sense. It is *images of the past.* These are often as highly structured and selective as myths. Images and symbolic constructs of the past are imprinted, almost in the manner of genetic

> information, on our sensibility. Each new historical era mirrors itself in the picture and active mythology of its past or of a past borrowed from other cultures. It tests its sense of identity, of regress or new achievement, against that past. The echoes by which a society seeks to determine the reach, the logic and authority of its own voice, come from the rear. Evidently, the mechanisms at work are complex and rooted in diffuse but vital needs of continuity. A society requires antecedents. (3)

Just as a collective leverages historical antecedents, so, too, the convert searches for ancestors. They are reconstructed to concretize the process. This is where art functions to fill in lacunae through dreams, imagining, and reconstruction. In *Between Gods,* the myth of repairing history operates by reconstructing ancestors as a way to navigate the present.

Maternal Legacy and Naming As Act of Ethical Repair

In *Between Gods*, this maternal legacy reclaims ancestry. Since it is Pick who retrieves and reimagines her origins, it is her version which comes into being as a public document. The process of conversion includes reconstructing identity so that *being* Jewish is not defined by external forces of enmity. It is not about duplicating a replica of the past, but about navigating the rupture of the Holocaust in the contemporary moment. "You've worked hard for this Alie. Fighting history isn't easy," says the rabbi after her successful immersion in the *mikveh* (363). *Between Gods* is connected to other memoirs by Jewish women such as *Gluckel of Hameln* where maternal legacy is foregrounded. Personal history is privileged. The transmission of legacy is predicated on a belief that the children should be cognizant of ancestors and without such transmission, they would be functioning in the way that American writer Anne Roiphe describes in *Generation Without Memory Growing Up Jewish in Christian America*. One could argue here, as Yerushalmi has, that history has become "faith of the fallen Jew" (Zakhor 86).

Yerushalmi argues that in modernity, history replaced Scripture. Is history here operational as a new authority or God? The transmission of personal history is associated with identity, and the transmission falls to the parent. If there is no transmission, there is no knowledge or practice. Roiphe argues that without any transmission of tradition, education or Jewish languages, a cultural phenomenon emerges that she calls a "generation without memory." Pick ironically characterizes the "inheritance" from her grandparents as a "passion for remembrance" (Question and Answer 62). She is working hard to reclaim what they erased, but she is also creating something new. This memoir functions as Pick's inheritance to her present and future family as well as a way of transforming her "passion for remembrance" into a conversion memoir. The inheritance is modified, transformed, interrogated, constructed and reconstructed. As a public document, the book functions as way of *publishing* history to fight against invisibility. What started as an accidental private transmission later morphs into a public from of remembrance, a dynamic Jay Winter has identified in his exploration about the process of war memorialization. Gluckel explicitly dedicates her book to her children. Pick's book is dedicated to her daughter. Both Gluckel and Pick create acts of maternal legacy. Gluckel's decision to write to her children comes during her depression that follows the death of her beloved husband. Both writers create a narrative as a way to navigate depression, and in this way the writing itself becomes an inheritance for their children first and then subsequently a public audience. It is during the baby naming ceremony in her Toronto home that Pick explains the meaning behind the names for her daughter, Ayala Emily Ruzenka. The first name is from Hebrew and means "deer." Pick defines the word as something "lithe and delicate, with light in the eyes" (378). The image of light here emerges as more than an aesthetic nicety. Pick connects light to the Jewish tradition of lighting Shabbat candles. The second name Emily is a name from her non-Jewish husband's Degan

Davis' family. In contrast, the name Emily does not carry the burden of history. In the book, Pick does not share stories of the baby's paternal ancestor Emily.

The ritual naming of the Christian ancestor Emily is closer to Yerushalmi's idea of recollection. She is remembered as a beloved relative, but the name is not *re-enacted* beyond the recitation and recollection. Yerushalmi argues recollection preserves temporal distance as opposed to the power of reactualization (*Zakhor,* 44). Reactualization is characterized by a temporal merger, a "fusion of past and present." (*Zakhor* 44). He deploys Passover as an exercise in group memory to illuminate how reactualization unfolds. He points to the ritual act of a Seder leader holding up a matzah, and saying "*Ha lahma 'anya –* t*his is the bread of affliction which our forefathers ate* in the Land of Egypt. He quotes a central line from the *Haggadah* "In each and every generation let each person regard himself as though *he* had emerged from Egypt (*Zakhor* 45). He deploys Passover as a memorial paradigm to illustrate how the message of slavery and liberation is reconstructed. Past and present time zones are fused as participants are asked *to imagine* their lives *as if* they had left Egypt, and they are asked to imagine they were once slaves. Such time travel requires a suspension of disbelief and imagination. Recollection is more constrained by the limits of history or reliable evidence. In the representation of the baby's name, it is the third name that generates the myth of historical repair and the name that links Ayala to the great-great grandmother she will never meet. It is in the full explanation of the history and reason for choosing this name that we can see how the myth of repairing history works, how it is represented, and what it delivers. In particular, the naming offers a chance to witness the construction of maternal legacy unfold.

Pick's choice of name and the subsequent naming ceremony suggests the re-enactment Yerushalmi describes. In addition, the naming ceremony delivers the experience of mythic time

Eliade delineates. The names and naming ceremony function as a way for Pick to retrieve, reclaim and *re-enact* the history of an ancestor into the present. It is not the retrieval of literal history but the *image* of someone connected to Jewish ritual, and a woman who *refused to be erased* into the dominant culture. This woman functions as the opposite *image* to Pick's paternal grandmother. Let us return to George Steiner: "*Images and symbolic constructs* of the past are imprinted, almost in the manner of genetic information, on our sensibility. Each new historical era mirrors itself in the picture and active mythology of its past or of a past borrowed from other cultures. It tests its sense of identity, of regress or new achievement, against that past" (3). Her daughter becomes connected to someone whose life was defined by her attachment to Judaism and who functioned, like Pick, as a familial outlier. Pick creates a myth of maternal ancestry *and* antecedent. In this way, she can retrieve something for which there is a precedent in her own family; this myth means she is not creating an identity *ex nihilo.* The performative naming echoes the central myth of historical repair that appears in different guises but undergirds the entire work; the myth of the *gilgul nefashot.*

Naming and Legacy

Near the beginning of the memoir, Pick imagines her depression as a relay race with her ancestors handing her a baton of psychic depression. However at the close of the book, during the naming ceremony, the *image* of the darkness is reversed into an inheritance of light from the *Shabbat* candles. Light is reimagined as travelling through the generations. The transmission of light is a way for the baby to be connected with a maternal ancestor. The new life is now associated with the legacy attached to her values and attached to a Jewish ritual act performed weekly. Pick longs for light as a way to ease the burden of her depression. In desperation when

all else is failing she refers to urgently purchasing a special lamp online to deal with seasonal affective disorder. The naming functions as a temporal bridge.

I would like to pause here briefly to fully flesh out how this re-enactment works, what it delivers, and why I am framing it as part of the myth of repairing history. During the naming ceremony Ruzenka's legacy is framed with the particularity of Jewish practice, including fasting on Yom Kippur, lighting candles for Shabbat. Ruzenka functions as a familial rebel: while her family pretends to be Christian she holds onto her Jewish identity and refuses to let go. She functions as a solitary outlier. She functions as the Jewish maternal ancestor Pick requires in order to feel she is *retrieving* cultural tradition. She becomes the Jewish maternal figure Pick needs to establish her own Jewish genealogy. Pick's biological Christian mother is a character whose representation is marginalized. We do not know what *she* thinks about Pick's conversion and whether or not she feels it's a rejection of her Christian faith. Pick's paternal grandmother who refused to talk about her own murdered Jewish parents is not included. Pick erases the erasure! Pick could not become Jewish without conversion because the Reform rabbinate of Toronto does not accept patrilineality. Within the Reform Toronto community, a formal conversion is also required before a formal naming ceremony for an infant (Shekel).[3] She explains the reasoning behind her choice of name. Pick is also constructing a myth for her daughter of cultural recovery as an act of historical repair:

[3] The position of the Reform Rabbis of Greater Toronto was and is that patrilineality is not accepted in determining who is a Jew. There is no national Canadian Reform position. In the United States, the Central Conference of American Rabbis declared in a resolution from March 15, 1983 that the child of one Jewish parent is Jewish. Rulings of the CCAR are not legally binding, and there are American Reform rabbis who disagree with this ruling but they are in the minority, according to Rabbi Michal Shekel who is the rabbinic director of Jewish Information Class and the *beit din* of Reform Rabbis of Toronto (Shekel, email).

> Ayla's third name is Ruzenka, I say, after Dad's paternal grandmother. She loved my father fiercely. She suffered the worst thing anyone can suffer-the deaths of two of her children in concentration camps. She grieved and adapted with grace to what life dealt her. She believed, and taught Dad, that the most important thing was to have faith-of any kind-in God, the world and humanity.
>
> But Ruzenka also believed in the particularity of religion. While the rest of her family pretended to be Christian, she held her Judaism close her entire life. She fasted on Yom Kippur. She lit candles on Shabbat. It is the light from Ruzenka's candles, I tell our family and friends that we want Ayla to grow up in. A light that, despite great adversity, has shone down the generations. (378)

Her representation of Ruzenka creates a contradiction. Was Ruzenka a universalist or a particularist? Pick's representation argues she was both; someone who believed in the power of believing and someone attached to Jewish rituals. The reconstruction allows her to pivot between two options. This memoir begins with Pick's wish for her own death, and closes with the birth of her first child. A memoir that began in crippling psychic darkness concludes with new Jewish life. However, like the flexibility inherent within the Masada image, the myth of historical repair is not naïve nor is it politically unaware. After the naming of the baby, Pick writes : "Somewhere rain falls into the open sea. Genocide continues. There are no easy answers. Snow falls on a tombstone, furring it over with memory. My great grandmother is buried in an unmarked grave in the sky" (378). There is a limit to repair. Genocide has continued to unfold *after* the Holocaust. We have no records from Ruzenka, no letters or other evidence with which to connect with her. Her identity has been reconstructed much in the same way that Pick must undergo "identity reconstruction." During one of the meetings, the central rabbi sponsoring Pick's

conversion says the Jewish learning is the easy part. "It's the identity reconstruction that's harder" (97). What is the litmus test for success or failure when it comes to becoming a Jew?

The quest for evidence of ancestors emerges as one that is empty because material objects have vanished or been destroyed. Pick does not possess anything that belonged to Ruzenka Bondy. In Prague she finds the monument with her murdered great grandparents: Oskar Bauer (1880-1943) and Mariana Bauer (1894-1943). The memoir itself functions as a response to those very lacunae. In *imagining* history, the memoir constitutes an effort to interpret rupture as well as process catastrophe through the myth of imagining the lost ancestors.

Pick's Jewish Name

Before the immersion in the *mikveh*, Pick is required to choose a Hebrew name. Her great grandmother Ruzenka Bondy's name came from *bon dia* in Catalan which translates into good day, or in Hebrew *yom tov*. This naming assumes historical knowledge. Pick and her father have been researching the history of their Jewish ancestors and it is this news--that Bondy originally came from Catalan-- and the surname was from 'bon dia,' that leads Pick to the word Tova. Hebrew is reclaimed from Catalan, memory is reconstructed from the past to the future (from Bondy to Tova), and a woman brought up Christian converts to live as a Jew. The idea of reclaiming goodness (*tov* means good in Hebrew) exerts power. From Catalan to Canada, both Ruzenka Bondy and Alison Pick resist erasure. Both fight as outliers. Within her extended family the news about her Jewish conversion creates befuddlement. For Pick's family, Jewish erasure has been *so* effective they don't recognize reclaiming what is also *their* Jewish ancestry.

Pick translates from Catalan into Hebrew, rehabilitating Jewish memory by retrieving Hebrew. The linkage is created through the translation from Catalan to Hebrew, transforming the

word as a Jewish one, and thus a marker for identity. "I thought about taking the name *tov* and being called *Tova,* she explains to the rabbi who remarks that Tova is a "beautiful Israeli name" (350). She has chosen to link herself with the only ancestor she knows who was a practising Jew. In this act of naming, Pick has retrieved and constructed maternal Jewish genealogy. Pick's own biological Christian mother has been rendered invisible. There is a limit however in this naming. A new name often signals a change in public identity. However it must be noted that the *Between Gods* and Pick's subsequent historical novel *Strangers With The Same Dream* (2017) are not written by Tova Pick but by Alison Pick. The new Jewish name exists within the myth of historical repair. Identity reconstruction is always incomplete because the past exists within the present. It is impossible to fully erase Alison. "Tova Pick" is under construction.

Jewish Memory, Earwitnessing and La Sangre Llama

What happens when a woman raised as a 'happy' Christian is haunted by Jewish memory that functions like a psychic reflex? What are some of the implications that arise out of remembrance as an obligation? Can there be something akin to involuntary traumatic memory, the way the body may exhibit involuntary movements? There has been much critical discourse about the trauma inherited by second and third generation children of Holocaust survivors. What is unusual here is that Pick has grown as up as a Christian. Her nightmares about ancestors whom she has never met is perplexing. Consider her dream about being in a café with Marianne, her great grandmother in Prague, before the war. Pick never met Marianne. In this dream, it is the representation of Marianne's voice that travels. Here again we have Eliade's suggestion that dreams function as a way to connect with mythic time. In this representation, the voice is detached from the body, and travels through time and space like an intergenerational echo. This

auditory transmission constitutes a good example of what it means to be an earwitness. And might this also be a sounding of Wiesel's observation in *The Testament* that the "call of the dying will be heard?" (19). Here is the scene of the dream of the great grandmother with Alison Pick:

> The cups are bone china. Marianne is wearing a veil of sheer netting over her face. Marianne says "I wish we had more time together". The waiter comes with the bill. Marianne gathers her things. Marianne says "*Go live your life*." She turns her back toward me, looking over her shoulder but when her *voice comes it is directly in my ear as though she is standing next to me.* "Don't suffer for me," she says. "For us." I know that by us she means Oskar and her; Vera's children, little Jan in his bathing suit, Eva with her halo of curls. Marianne holds my eye and says, for emphasis, "There are better ways to honour us." (375 *emphasis mine*)

Canadian composer Murray Schafer defined the earwitness as someone who can testify to what he or she has heard. He explained his theory about sound and soundscape in *The Tuning of the World*. Schafer was referring to both natural and manmade sound. Those sounds include what he characterized as soundmarks (sounds unique to an area such as a lighthouse horn), foreground sounds (bells, whistle, or an ambulance siren), as well human sounds such as traffic and natural sounds from chirping birds, falling hail, to pounding surf. He created this concept as a way to help people *listen* to the contours of a soundscape and to construct an argument about sonic ecology and architecture. Just as there are components of composition with a painting, so too there are components of sound.

I am *expanding* upon his notion of an earwitness to include the human voice and language. The voice can function as an instrument as well, and in that way people can *testify* to what they heard.

Schafer points out that thanks to technology such as the telephone, the radio, and the phonograph sound can travel from its point of origin. The telephone allowed conversations to travel over oceans. The radio is capable of international reception and transmission. Sound is no longer tied to its source.

Pick's dream illuminates this mobility of sound: the reception of the sound is heard *as if* it was whispered into Pick's ear, although Marianne is leaving the café and saying goodbye at the door. The phrase "Go live your life" has been disconnected from its point of origin, and repeated like an echo but one removed from its origin. "Go life your life" is what the therapist Charlotte advised Pick. (375). The phrase now emerges from Marianne, temporally travelling both backwards (from Charlotte to a murdered ancestor) and forward (transmitting to Pick). These dreams are one way the conversion becomes concretized. "Go life your life" is then internalized as a response to trauma.

La Sangre Llama

The phrase *La sangre llama* also contains this echo chamber. The phrase constitutes earwitnessing through generations. Like the image of Masada, the phrase gives converts a way of reclaiming history. They are not alone, but positioned as part of a collective with Jewish antecedents within Christian families: Pick quotes Dubner: " 'My noisy soul had demanded I follow the flow of my blood'. Yes, I think, Exactly" (74). The term *la sangre llama* means the blood is calling. It is attributed to the Crypto-Jews, the descendants of the "new Christians" forced to convert to Christianity during the Spanish Inquisition who reclaim Jewish identity generations later. The *la sangre llama* is a strange phrase. How can blood *call*? It is functioning here as a way to repair history *and* explain the motivation for conversion. Christians discovering Jewish antecedents thus has a long historical trajectory. The phrase frames conversion as a *return*

rather than a rupture, and it functions as a variation of the *gilgul nefashot* myth. In this context "la sangre llama" functions as reparation myth, it becomes a way of beginning a process of restitution and constructing amends for what has been lost, discarded, or erased while constructing a new identity. It contains elasticity, like the myth of Masada. The *sangre llama* myth functions as a form of anti-erasure; a way of thinking about accommodating ideas about the past into an unfolding present. I would like to frame it briefly within a broader context to illuminate why it matters.

I would like to pause her briefly to connect this phrase of blood calling with its Biblical origin. I want to make this connection to illustrate how the *midrashic* tradition interpreted loss of human life. Even if we understand the language metaphorically, the wording is odd. *How can blood call?* The image is found in Genesis Chapter 4 verse 10. Cain has murdered Abel.

"Then He said, "What have you done? Hark, your brother's' *blood cries out* to Me from the ground! Therefore you shall be more cursed than the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's *blood(s)* from your hand." (Oxford Study Bible, *emphasis mine* 17)

The rabbis respond by creating a *midrash*. I include this *midrash* because it is relevant to the interpretation of loss arising from the catastrophe of the Holocaust. The rabbis note that in the Hebrew text in Genesis the word is not *blood* but *bloods.* It looks *as if* the text has an error by making blood plural. In *How To Read The Bible*, James Kugel has argued that for the ancient interpreters, the Biblical text is a sacred and therefore perfect. One implication of this position is that the text has no accidents. Herein lies the issue. Why *bloods* and not *blood*? Only one man has been murdered. The word "blood" functions as a collective noun in Hebrew as it does in English. The *midrash* solves this puzzle by suggesting that the murder of a human being is not *simply* the murder of a human being. The loss includes the future life that would have emerged *if*

the human had remained alive. In this way, the loss reverberates into future generations. Therefore, in the case of a murder, there are generations who do not come into being:

> In civil suits, a man may pay money and effect expiation. (If he causes financial loss through false testimony). But in capital cases, he is held responsible for the blood of him (who was wrongfully condemned) and for the blood of the posterity that would have been his until the end of time. Thus we find that Cain, who slew his brother, was told "The bloods of thy brother cry out unto Me " (Gen. 4:10). Not the "blood of thy brother" but the "bloods of thy brother": his blood and the blood of the posterity (that would have been his). Bialik, B. Sanh 37 *The Book of Legends* 682:386

In this midrash, a single murder has the power to annihilate the future. If one is to apply that interpretation to the catastrophe of the Holocaust, loss multiplies and continues to unfold. The loss reverberates. Future generations will not exist. In the contemporary example *la sangre llama* functions as a reparation myth that allows the convert to inhabit three time zones: the call repairs the erasure of the past, listening is a way to transform the present, and transforming the present through conversion will have an impact for future generations, an act of reparation through ancestral rescue. Both the midrash and the myth of *la sangre llama* position a single human life as an entity with agency, power and consequence. The midrash and the *la sangre llama* myths both privilege the power of life, and push back against erasure.

The Blood(s) Calling

Dubner characterizes his quest to convert as one driven by instinct, and like Pick, he articulates the process by deploying the sense of hearing. I am sharing this example to flesh out my deployment of earwitnessing. Dubner used to work for the *The New York Times* as a writer and an editor. When he wrote a short story about his desire to reclaim the Judaism his American-born

parents had discarded for Catholicism, he was deluged with mail. His parents rejected Judaism, changed their names, got baptized, and lived as passionate Catholics. The New York Times magazine story evolved into the conversion memoir. Dubner had been raised in a boisterous family in the United States, the youngest of eight children, and, as the youngest child, he knew the least about his parents' religious history. His father died when he was ten years old. As an adult he began to search, seek, ask questions and converted to the religion his parents had rejected:

> It wasn't theology I needed; it was a Way, and it was the way of Judaism that had *called out* to me. The "new Christians" of South America, Christians who discovered that their ancestors were converted Jews, had a phrase for it: *la sangre llama*, "*the blood is calling*". Now my blood was *calling* and the only way to *answer* it was with a whole heart. (*Choosing My Religion* 223 *emphasis mine*)

Dubner's language suggests a conversational engagement, *a call and an answer*, reminiscent of a *call and response* dynamic and the answer is represented as embodied memory through hearing. Dubner was the *only* one of the eight adults who made this choice; his seven siblings, both brothers and sisters, either maintained their Catholic faith or discarded it. He found himself attracted to Jewish ideas about God, prayer, community and the necessity of asking questions. He was drawn to a system where there was no concept of original sin. He had been raised in a religiously Catholic home, where God and prayer occupied centre stage. He worked as an altar boy. His history is different from Pick's but the phrase *la sangre llama* is the one that resonates with them both.

These Jews made their way back by *hearing* what Pick terms "history's siren song" (3). In this context, one could imagine the children of Abel. Pick connects history with bloodline, and

the transmission is represented like an urgent personal phone call: “The blood is calling,” writes Pick (13). “I was Jewish. Because my family died in Auschwitz. Because it’s in my blood” (29). Within this embodied memory, hearing is linked with transmission: She characterizes the *writing* of the novel *Far To Go* itself as a process of listening: “I work at my book *as though taking dictation*” (161 *emphasis mine*). When her baby is born, “the first words I tell her are the Jewish prayer of newness, *whispered into the tiny whorl of her ear* (366 *emphasis mine*). Conversion here will require a new language, the language of Hebrew.

From the tradition she has distilled the experience of time (*Shabbat*) the obligation of giving (in *tzedakah*) as well as the Kaddish, the prayer for the dead. She has distilled what Jewish practice means *to her*:

> *If I start crying I will never stop*. Of Gumper: *Not if I was the last Jew on earth*. Of his mother, Ruzenka, fasting quietly, secretly on Yom Kippur… I think of what Judaism has come to mean to *me.* Of Shabbat, of *tzedakah,* of the shivers down my spine when I hear the prayer for the dead ….. As a writer I believe in the power of words, but there are things words cannot speak to, worlds that language cannot name. The *mikvah,* for me, is one of them. In the long year of classes, of learning Hebrew and making *Shabbat* it has not occurred to me that the bath would be more than a rite, that I might truly be transformed. But when I emerge, I am different. (362)

It is only the *mikvah* experience that exists outside of the power of language. The *mikvah* provides a ritual of mythic time that finally marks her as a Jew and constitutes a way too of creating memory that is embodied, within the body.

Myth and Redemption

Pick is haunted by people she never knew, in what is represented as a generational transmission of trauma. The act of constructing a memoir is part of her strategy to imagine what has been lost in order to create a future, and in so doing, to rehabilitate what cultural memory may encompass. Pick's paternal grandmother greets Pick's questions with defiant silence. Her grandmother has taken the position of the Epicurean, but her transmission to her granddaughter Alison has failed. In the preface to *Zakhor*, Harold Bloom imagines how an Epicurean would view his own past:

> Of past sorrows Epicurious takes no heed. He recalls his past only in so far as it is pleasurable. It is the decision characteristic of the Epicurean that he is *incapable of suffering from his past* . Nothing could be more un-Jewish, and one sees again why the great rabbis used the term "Epicurean" as a term of the greatest abuse. An Epicurean attitude towards memory is antithetical to Judaism. (Bloom, *Zakhor* foreword xiii-xiv *emphasis mine*).

If the Epicurean does not suffer from his or her past, then what happens to trauma? The anti-historical position is not the exclusive domain of the Epicurean. Yerushalmi shares highlights from the Hebrew writer Haim Hazaz titled *Ha-Derashah*- "The Sermon"-in which a man on a kibbutz named Yudka declares his robust opposition to Jewish history: I would simply forbid teaching our children Jewish history. Why the devil teach them about our ancestors' shame? I would just say to them: Boys from the day we were exiled from our land we've been a people without a history. Class dismissed. Go out and play football (as quotedtd in *Zakhor* 97). Yudka and the grandmother have much in common: They are both working to construct a new beginning predicated on erasure: for Yudka, that beginning is the Zionist project, and for the grandmother, life as a Christian. Both are committed to aggressive erasure. Erasure will relieve

pain: "If you weren't Jewish, Jewish history did not apply to you. If you weren't Jewish, there was nothing to mourn" (160). Pick explains her family's strategy with Freud's "On Mourning and Melancholia" (159-160). Freud made a distinction between two responses: mourning involves grieving, whereas in melancholia a person is unable to process loss. Yerushalmi points out that for Yudka the goal is "no continuity but a break, the opposite of what was before, a new beginning" (*Zakhor* 101). Pick is determined to retrieve what has been discarded. If human life *is* positioned as the most sacred force, it seems fitting that the memoir ends with the ceremony for Pick's baby. The final scene gestures to the ancestors whose absence becomes a presence if only in memory.

> Somewhere rain falls into the open sea. Genocide continues. There are no easy answers. Snow falls on a tombstone, furring it over with memory. My great-grandmother is buried in an unmarked grave in the sky.
>
> My Christian mother holds by Jewish child in her arms. The rabbi, full of love, blesses the baby in Hebrew: *brucha haba'ah.*

We repeat the blessing in English

Blessed is she who comes. (378)

The fight to *fix* history begins with the promise of new Jewish life. In conclusion I would like to return to Pick's Biblical frame before the book begins from Jeremiah 6:16: "Stand by the roads and consider; inquire about ancient paths: which way is good? Travel it and find rest for your soul" (np). Jeremiah is the prophet preoccupied with destruction. (Jewish Study Bible 901). Pick may have selected this text to set up the myth of historical repair, but she has omitted the punchline:

Thus said the Lord:

Stand by the roads and consider,

Inquire about ancient paths:

Which is the road to happiness?

Travel it and find tranquility for yourselves.

But they said, ‘We will not.’

(Jeremiah v. 16)

The rebellious Israelites will *not* travel ancient paths to find tranquility. The myth of historical repair is broad enough to include rupture alongside navigation. Pick can return to a place she considers home; becoming Jewish is her way of rewriting her history *as well as* her future. Conversion provides this type of time travel, reimagining the past, reclaiming it in the present to create an impact into the future.

The myth of historical repair includes a subset of other mythologies: ancestral rescue, reparation, as well as the myth of being lost and becoming found. The book functions as an ethical will in transmitting hope and despair simultaneously. In *A Short History of Myth,* Armstrong remarks that “mythical consciousness” or “mythical modes of thought” (123) delivered “structure and meaning to life.” (122). She argues that this mythical consciousness fell into disrepute in the nineteenth century with the rise of *logos* in the forms of science and technology. The ascent of logos created a gap. “Logos had never been able to provide human beings with the sense of significance they seemed to require.” (122). Pick mobilizes, adapts and constructs myths as part of the legacy she is transmitting. *Between Gods* functions too as her artistic response to the impossibility of full remembrance and delivers unfinished remembering

that exposes the void of unknowing after the Holocaust. The myths help navigate catastrophe and provide renewal but they are forever fragments. They have been stretched to their capacity.

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Chapter Three: The Counter Transmission

"You will have to use your imagination and I will try to help you."

Henia Reinhartz from the foreword to *Bits and Pieces*

Memorialization As Conversation

In *The Stages of Memory Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between* James Young asks questions about memorialization. How is absence memorialized? Young traces a "memorial vernacular arc" (1) in artistic memorials responding to catastrophe from Berlin's Denkmal to New York City's 9/11. Henia Reinhartz's Holocaust memoir *Bits and Pieces* is thematically connected to the counter memorial movement Young illuminates. A memoir is not a physical monument, but both forms grapple with commemoration, regeneration and transmission. Both forms constitute an artistic response and interpretation of a catastrophe. Young positions the counter memorial movement within a paradigm of *conversation*. Young argues that the counter memorial movement functions as the beginning of a dialogue; the art demands interaction, response, and open inquiry. The counter memorial movement emerged from postwar artists leery of authoritarian monuments intertwined with fascism. Reinhartz's *Bits and Pieces* is connected to the counter-memorial movement in its emphasis on democratization, as well as the author's narrative strategy as a moral witness. Her "camera" is turned towards what ordinary people can do in the face of atrocity, as opposed to painting portraits of suffering, tyranny, and death. She creates portraits of power from people who appear powerless. Reinhartz's strategy illuminates a spectrum of resistance, and illustrates the values that underpin her work. I am using the word resistance in the broadest application including the narrative resistance against sharing details about her family members' suffering and deaths, and

privileging instead of vignettes of how they lived. This chapter will first frame and then explore the connections between *Bits and Pieces,* the counter memorial movement, and cultural mobility and then move to reader reception, and the counter memorial movement.

Young's questions probe memorialization. How can Germany memorialize the Holocaust? National crimes are usually buried, not commemorated. How do you *memorialize loss* with debate? Young suggests the monument's function includes commemoration, memorialization and regeneration. He deploys Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin's heteroglossia (16) in suggesting the monument could function *as a talking point,* and making the debate part of the memorialization. I am connecting this talking point to Marjorie Garber's argument about literature as a way of constituting its own practice (5) in *The Uses and Abuses of Literature*. Both responses to catastrophe function as a departure gate for inquiry as well as future creativity. What connects *Bits and Pieces* to the counter memorial movement is democratization. The works are bottom up, liberated from didacticism, and designed to engage participants.

In this context of open ended inquiry, Young notes that Maya Lin's design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (1982) provided a foundation for "counter memorial work." Her vision functioned as a counterpoint to Washington's neoclassical monuments. Lin characterized the project as a "moving composition to be understood as we move into and out of it" (as quoted by Young 6). Lin's work is framed as something that will include mobility in both space and time, and includes viewers' experience as part of its *raison d'etre* : "her memorial will be defined by our movement through its space, memory by means of perambulation and walking through" (Young 4). The power of Lin's conception resides in its relationship with, and reception amongst viewers. The primacy of experiential reception is privileged over the elevation of the artist. Lin's vision articulated loss without redemption. She described the memorial as a wound

in the earth. (Young 4) . Loss without redemption is relevant for a Holocaust memoir. Counter memorial work invites conversation; it is designed to be provocative, and to engage the visitor. It is designed to talk *with* the visitor as opposed to talk *down.* "You will have to use your imagination and I will try to help you," Reinhartz writes in the foreword. Reinhartz positions her reader as a partner. This invitation is part of the counter memorial movement's participatory ethos. Readers or viewers are no longer passive spectators. Reception generates interpretation. Consequently, recipients may become mobilizers, a term deployed by Stephen Greenblatt. Consider postwar Israeli artists Esther Shalev and and Jochen Gerz who invited people to sign a twelve metre pillar, *Monument Against Fascism, War and Violence-and for Peace and Human* Rights as part of the counter memorial movement's *crie de coeur*. What was radical was that their aluminum pillar was *designed to disappear*. Before it vanished, the artists explained their purpose in seven languages:

> We invite the citizens of Harburg , and visitors to the town to add their names here to ours. In doing so we commit ourselves to remain vigilant. As more and more names cover this 12-metre lead column it will gradually be lowered into the ground. One day it will have disappeared completely, and the site of the Harburg monument against fascism will be empty. In the end it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice. (Young *The Stages of* 159)

Artists had grown wary of monuments that had become substitutes for intervention (Young 160). The pillar was unveiled in 1986, and lowered underneath the sidewalk in 1993. Young describes this concept as a revolution: "its aim was not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by its passersby but to demand interaction" (Young 16). In so doing, the monument highlights the idea that physical

structures will break, dissolve or disappear. The fragment, whether a window in a sidewalk or a textual fragment, may be ignored, transformed, modified, reimagined or erased.

The Counter Memorial Movement and Bits and Pieces

Bits and Pieces, like Maya Lin's memorial—unfolds as something horizontal and not vertical. Instead of writing *exclusively* as a grandmother, Reinhartz eradicated conventional familial hierarchy. She wanted her grandchildren to know her history as a child, drama lover, a teenager, a mother, sister, daughter, friend, refugee, teacher, factory worker, resistor, reader, Yiddish lover, Bundist, socialist, and educator. She functions as what Avishai Margalit calls a "moral witness." Reinhartz's narrative strategy, however, characterizes her as a particular type of moral witness.

This chapter will argue her witnessing is linked with the counter memorial movement in its emphasis on democratization and engagement. In addition, I am making a connection between the counter memorial movement and Stephen Greenblatt's mobility manifesto from *Cultural Mobility*. The counter memorial movement explores the contours of democratization, and engagement between art and its audience. Cultural mobility is connected to the counter memorial movement because it illuminates us how products move through space and time, how they become reimagined, deployed and upended. Democratization is one of the rallying cries of the counter memorial movement. When we look at this intersection of the migration of a text and how it moves through space and time, we see how it is reimagined and deployed in new contexts. That intersection is the test for possibilities of reception. We are in position to witness the cultural mobility of its afterlife. Reinhartz gave *Bits and Pieces* to her grandchildren as a gift of personal history in 1994. After it was published, Henia's grandson Mordecai Walfish selects an anecdote that he retells for a public speaking contest. Henia's granddaughter the artist Shoshana

Walfish imagines Sima Rosenfarb, the great grandmother she never met in a painting. Staff at the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre in Toronto, an institute of the United Jewish Appeal, deploy *Bits and Pieces* with new Canadians learning English for adult language learners. The Azrieli Foundation distributes *Bits and Pieces* in Canada, Israel, Poland, Hungary, France, the Czech republic, England, Romania, South Africa, Senegal and the United States. *Bits and Pieces* was translated into French. Translaters function as "mobilizers" because they enable migration.

Bits and Pieces functions as an ethical will, an act of non-material legacy. An ethical will-such as the letter from Solomon Rabinowitz -is usually but not always a document of a single voice. Here I have an opportunity to track reception from the readers for whom it was originally written. One of the hallmarks of the counter memorial movement is interaction. I want to pause to examine that interaction by comparing the positioning of the authorial voice of Reinhartz with Primo Levi's *The Drowned and The Saved*. Unlike Levi, Reinhartz is not writing with a warning that the Holocaust could reoccur. Like Levi, Reinhartz wanted to reach this third generation. Levi sets up the problem by explaining how time has created a problem :

> The experience that we survivors of Nazi Lager carry within us are extraneous to the new Western generation and become ever more extraneous as the years pass. For the young people of the 1950s and 1960s these were events connected with their fathers: they were spoken about in the family; memories of them still preserved the freshness of things seen. For the young people of the 1980s, *they are matters associated with their grandfathers*: distant blurred, "historical." These young people are besieged by today's problems, different, urgent: the nuclear threat, unemployment, the depletion of resources, the demographic explosion, frenetically innovative technologies to which they must adjust.

> The world's configuration is profoundly changed; Europe is no longer the center of the planet. (185 *emphasis mine*)

Levi argues that in the course of only a few decades, subsequent generations view his testimony as something "historical," and the implication is fossilization. The loss of *oral transmission* creates rupture. The grandfather's testimony floats farther away from the survivor's grandchildren. Yet he is compelled to share:

> We must be listened to: above and beyond our personal experiences, we have collectively witnessed a fundamental unexpected event, fundamental precisely because unexpected, not foreseen by anyone. It took place in the teeth of all forecasts; it happened in Europe; incredibly, it happened that an entire civilized people, just issued from the fervid cultural flowering of Weimar, followed a buffoon whose figure today inspires laughter, and yet Adolf Hitler was obeyed and his praises were sung right up to the catastrophe. It happened, *therefore it can happen again*: this is the core of what we have to say. (186 *emphasis mine*)

The Moral Witness

In *The Ethics of Memory*, Avishai Margalit defines the moral witness as someone who has personally witnessed evil, has been at personal risk, and his or her testimony, contains— at its centre— moral purpose. Margalit characterizes this moral purpose as " a sober hope" that *testimony will be heard* (155 *emphasis mine*). We hear an echo of Primo Levi's plea-that the testimony will be foremost be *heard*. This hope is underpinned by the terror it will be ignored. This hope is "sober" because it is not predicated on revolutionary change, but a modest plea for

reception. This hope is quiet *and* radical. What is heroic is that people living in a Nazi concentration camp, or a Soviet gulag may give up hope of experiencing a moral community; they may believe the triumph of evil will endure because they have been subjected to a tyrannical regime that looks forever invincible. For people who have been terrorized, the ability to imagine what Margalit calls "the possibility of a moral community" requires a leap of faith. Reinhartz shares a tapestry of hope: the Bundist network responds with illegal lectures, theatre, and classes in defiance of the Nazi invasion. Henia teaches for the illegal Bundist school and this experience allows her to imagine an alternative future. Not all of her hope is solemn. After the war she recalls with glee how she fooled a Parisian apartment superintendent who had been stealing her food packages. Henia hides a Jewish refugee under her bed. The refugee was a friend who did not have a visa, and was in Paris illegally. Henia could not have pulled off this trick without radical hope she could succeed as well as understanding the effectiveness of theatrical gesture. Henia opened the door wide, smiled and greeted the superintendent and police with a beaming "*Bonjour Madame*" (70). After the inspection, Henia and her friend enjoyed a giggle and slid away to enjoy a day in Paris together.

Margalit argues that some authority of the moral witness emerges from the ability to describe a paradoxical horror that may be, at its core, ineffable. He points to Polish Israeli writer Ida Fink who navigated this impossible terrain by showing the moment of terror before the horror, followed by the moment of terror afterwards. The reader fills the gap. Reinhartz constructs a different narrative strategy. In a 78-page memoir there is a little more than a page about Auschwitz (40-41). She refers to Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen as "black holes" and is "afraid of the horrors hidden there" (40). As a writer she is *not* asking the reader to imagine horror. She is *not* asking her grandchildren to accompany her into darkness. Reinhartz chooses

not to catalogue Nazi atrocity. She does not delineate these memorial “black holes,” nor does she dwell on the death of her father, and the impact of multiple losses What she foregrounds is resistance both individual and collective, physical and mental, public and secret. The reader must fill the gap, but it is a different type of gap than the one created by Fink. What is witnessed and transmitted is a moral choice. If one imagined Fink and Reinhartz as photographers, Fink deploys a zoom lens on individuals. For example, in Fink’s short story “Aryan Papers” a Jewish teenager is blackmailed into sex to obtain false documents. Her life and the life of her mother is at stake. Before the sex, Fink shows the Polish blackmailer folding his pants with precision and the trembling virgin turning out the lights (67). Fink does not describe the sexual scene (which is closer to rape) itself but instead reveals laughter erupting afterwards from the man. The reader fills in the sexual violation. Reinhartz turns her camera in other directions to privilege resistance. Reinhartz opens her book with this narrative strategy right from the beginning. She recalls how she witnessed German officers push her father, and make him walk in front of them in Lodz. She raced out of her apartment and begged the soldiers to stop harassing him but they laughed and pushed her away. She is joined by her mother and other Jewish women who march beside her father and other Jewish men. The men were forced to dig trenches late into the night (21-22). After this incident, Henia, her mother and her sister remain on guard for German officers rounding up Jewish men. She does not share what she witnesses in her father. Was he also attacked? Instead she highlights female resistance creating temporary protection. Later in the memoir she shares a remarkable story about collective resistance. Henia, her mother Sima and sister Chava Rosenfarb worked building prefabricated housing in Sasel, Germany from October 1944 until March 1945. Prisoners were not allowed to bring anything back to the camp . SS officers searched prisoners daily, and one day found potato peelings hidden in the clothing of

two girls. The SS told the five hundred women prisoners that they would not receive food unless they whipped the girls. The SS distributed weapons. The SS beat and threatened the prisoners. The SS dumped soup into snow. The prisoners remained standing all night, frozen until the morning. Instead of describing the beating (42), Reinhartz recounts surprise at the spontaneous action as well as surprise that prisoners were not punished more harshly for collective defiance.

Resistance can also be strategic and invisible. For example, Reinhartz recounts a story about the Sperre, the house arrest, curfew and subsequent liquidation of the ghetto in Lodz. During ten days in 1942 she reads *Gone With The Wind* in Polish, and covers her ears to quiet anguished screaming. She does not share what she witnessed. Instead, she privileges reading. Reading functions as resistance because it contains this possibility of imagining another world. Her reading passion emerged from escaping into literature as a way of displacing trauma and holding onto imaginative capacity.

In addition, her project is predicated on a belief in the influence of the transmission of personal history. In *Zakhor* historian Yerushalmi argues that with the rupture of modernity, history replaced sacred text. “If Herodotus was the father of history, the fathers of meaning in history were the Jews” (8). Yerushalmi frames this primacy on history with the multiple commandments “to remember” throughout the Hebrew Bible: “Only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to remember felt as a religious imperative to an entire people” (9). One might call this phenomenon a religion of history, a belief in the necessity of historical transmission.

Mobility

How does memory migrate? Creet argues that "memory is produced over time and under erasure," and that memory itself is shaped by the present (Memory and Migration 6). In "Introduction: The Migration of Memory and Memories of Migration," Creet asks "How are we to understand memory that has migrated or has been exiled from its local habitations?" (3). Greenblatt connects this primacy on movement with radical mobility as a phenomenon that is not a feature of the 21st century, but something that has always occurred everywhere but has been overlooked. Greenblatt argues scholars need a "mobility manifesto" to understand immigration, emigration, exile, colonization, greed, unexpected random events, as well as wandering, restlessness and longing. We can see mobility not only with Reinhartz but in the lives of her six grandchildren. Greenblatt's manifesto reveals the migratory mechanism of cultural products.

Firstly, mobility includes *literal* mobility. Henele Rosenfarb was born in 1926 and moved to Canada in 1951. In her first twenty five years she survived hiding in Lodz, overcame typhus, escaped murder in Auschwitz, endured starvation and hard labour in Sasel, recovered from a blood infection on her eighteenth birthday, survived being smuggled into Belgium, and invested in education to become a Yiddish teacher in Paris. When she emigrated to Canada she worked in Montreal in a French department store, in a factory making children's clothing, at Tip Top Tailors in Toronto, before landing teaching positions.

Creet asks what if instead of assuming there is a single point of origin, we look at how memory moves. I will position mobility within the paradigm of an unfolding conversation to build on Young's paradigm. How does mobility affect transmission and reception? A single transmission is impossible.

What emerges is a trajectory of discourse between the grandchildren and their grandmothers. Unlike other works from grandmothers —such as Pauline Wengeroff's *Memoirs from A Jewish Grandm*other (2010) or Marian Wright Edelman's *The Sea is So Wide and My Boat Is So Small (2008) Bits and Pieces* (2007) does not contain a didactic directive. Wengeroff's book contains a lament for the loss of Jewish religious traditions in 19th century Russia. Wengeroff blames Jewish husbands lured by professional opportunities from assimilation. Edelman, an American civil rights advocate, shares prescriptive wishes for her grandchildren. In contrast, Reinhartz's wish is for her grandchildren to know her as a human being and to unlock their capacities: "You will have to use your imagination… and I will try to help you." In writing the book, she will also teach them. In so doing, she sets up a paradigm of conversation in the same way that the counter memorial movement positioned physical monuments as "talking with." She does not position herself as a top down wisdom figure like Edelman, nor does she offer a poignant lamentation as Wengeroff does. She has resisted those narrative temptations.

The grandchildren interpret the book for themselves. In his introduction to *Zakhor,* Harold Bloom makes an argument that Jewishness is intertwined with an "obsession with interpretation" (Bloom xxiii). Bloom connects the interpretive tradition to Sigmund Freud and Kafka. I am linking the interpretive impulse further back to James Kugel's analysis of ancient interpreters who also resisted conventional understandings of texts in radical ways. Henia's grandchildren are confronted with interpreting her history and what it may mean in their own lives, far removed from the ravages of the Second World War. The grandchildren are aware that they have received fragments and that the work is full of lacunae. Their responses form a "conversation" with their grandmother's text. Moreover their responses constitute *their way* of filling in lacunae. This chapter will be structured by setting up the methodology for interviews,

the origin and description of the memoir, and I will then examine issues related to transmission, reception, interpretation and the power of mobility.

Methodology

The methodology consisted of semi-structured interviews with Henia Reinhartz's six grandchildren as well as two children, Adele Reinhartz, a professor of religion and classics at the University of Ottawa and Abe Reinhartz, a Toronto family physician. The grandchildren include Abe Reinhartz's daughter and son, Leah and Ben Reinhartz, as well as Adele Reinhartz's four children: Miriam-Simma, Mordecai, Simcha and Shoshanah Walfish. I also interviewed Henia Reinhartz's niece Goldie Morgentaler, a professor of literature at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, Canada. Henia Reinhartz's sister, Chava Rosenfarb, a Canadian Yiddish writer and the author of the trilogy *The Tree of Life* was Goldie Morgentaler's mother. Henia Reinhartz's husband of 59 years Nochem Reinhartz, a Toronto typesetter, translator and Holocaust survivor died in June of 2011. Interviews with Adele and Abe Reinhartz, Lean and Ben Reinhartz Goldie Morgentaler and Mordecai Walfish were conducted in person in Toronto at different locations from December 2017 until April 2018. The interviews with Miriam Simma Walfish in Cambridge Massachusetts, Simcha Walfish in Montreal and Shoshana Walfish in Brussels, Belgium were conducted on Skype. I organized a follow up interview with Mordecai Walfish in Toronto April 6 2018. In addition, I conducted an e-mail interviews with Arielle Berger the managing editor of the Azrieli Foundation's Holocaust Memoir program, as well as Carson Phillips the managing director of the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre in Toronto.

Interview Type

I chose the format of a semi-structured interview because the format offered a way to ask foundational questions with flexibility. I needed flexibility so I could follow up. I wanted the interviewees to feel free to provide examples, and commentary so that the interview would feel more like a conversation, but it would maintain structure. Because I required *some* structure I eliminated the non-structured interview. Because I required flexibility, I eliminated the fully structured interview. Questions included but were not limited to : What do you think is the memoir's essential message ? How do you interpret that message? How do you connect or not connect to Henia Reinhartz's legacy? What questions did the book raise for you? What questions remain unanswered ?

Memoir's Origin

Reinhartz identifies as a secular Jew, it is her grandchildren whom she characterizes as *her* own "miracle."

> Each one of you, my uniquely beautiful grandchildren, is *my miracle* and each of you has filled my life with riches that I cherish. I am putting down these those bits and pieces for you because Ima and Daddy already know most of the stories of my life, and because I would like you to also know where I come from, who my parents were, what my world was like when I was growing up. I know how difficult it must be for you to imagine your *Baba* as a child: fighting with her sister, being scolded by her mother or father when she was naughty or crying her heart out because her best friend did not want to play with her anymore.
>
> I have no pictures from my childhood to put in front of you, to make it easier to place me in the stories I want to tell. *You will have to use your imagination, and I will try to help you." (Reinhartz, preface, n p emphasis mine)*

Reinhartz explains, “these are the bits and pieces of my life.” There is no promise of wholeness. Five of the six grandchildren are born in the 1980s. Simcha Walfish is the youngest grandchild, born in 1991. Miriam-Simma Walfish is the oldest grandchild born in 1981. The grandchildren received a coil -bound paper memoir around 1994. *Bits and Pieces* was based on this memoir. The title remained unchanged. Leah Reinhartz, one of the grandchildren, works as a social worker with a private practice in psychotherapy in Toronto. She said her understanding changed. As a child, she felt incredulous that her grandmother, the woman who was always offering her unconditional love and Bundt cakes, had gone through this traumatic experience. Later, as a social worker, she said her clinical training left her with unanswered questions about the experience before, during and after the war. Leah Reinhartz was asked what she would ask her grandmother now if she were well. Henia Reinhartz suffers from dementia. Leah Reinhartz replied, “What else happened?”

Bits and Pieces functions as an ethical will by sharing an act of personal history as a non-material legacy. For Reinhartz it was not enough to share her history with her children; like Primo Levi she wanted to transmit her history *in her own words.* More particularly she wanted to create *this conversation* with her six grandchildren. She did not want to rely on transmissions from her own children. *Bits and Pieces* transmits non-material legacy because of its emphasis on the values Henia cherished : resistance against tyranny, the primacy of human relationships, the necessity of community, the political power of the Bund, as well as the power of friendship and family. That she wrote a memoir *exclusively* for grandchildren illuminates her desire to create a non-hierarchical connection. She wanted them to know her beyond her position in the family : the bickering sibling, the child who yearned to become an actress, the teenager who joined the

Bundist resistance, the smuggled refugee, the Canadian factory worker, retail clerk, teacher, reader, Yiddish lover, translator, socialist and Holocaust educator. Because the book was designed for young readers, its history is selective. In an interview, Henia's daughter Adele Reinhartz said that her mother was aware of the youth of her audience, and that the memoir was sanitized. She did not want to traumatize her grandchildren, the people whom she considered part of her victory against Hitler.

During an interview, Mordecai Walfish explained that the family had a tradition of Sunday meals with Henia and her husband Nochem, their children Abe and Adele. During these meals in the 1990s, the grandparents would often give gifts to the grandchildren. It was during one of these dinners in 1994 that they brought out *Bits and Pieces*. The grandparents said this is your grandmother's story, it was important for her to put it down on paper. Mordecai Walfish said he "cherished" the book. He was born in 1984 and was around ten years old. He said he had a "Holocaust obsession" that left him with paradoxical legacy: gratitude he was alive; but also the anxiety that people could disappear. It was not until later in Henia's life that Mordecai Walfish helped her edit the book. For Mordecai, the purpose was to make the memoir *sound* like his grandmother's speaking voice. During 2007 Mordecai Walfish was staying with his grandparents in Toronto when the proofs arrived from the Azrieili Foundation.

Henia and Nochem Reinhartz worked as translators when they retired. While their vocabulary was complex, they sometimes required help with English syntax, according to Mordecai. They translated works from Yiddish and Polish into English. Translators function as what Greenblatt characterizes as "mobilizers" who move cultural products. Mordecai had been helping with these translation projects, and so the request to help edit her memoir was natural. In their translation note for *With A Yellow Star and A Red Cross* Henia and Nochem thank their

children who read *components* but they highlight Mordecai who read the book "in its entirety" (Mostowicz, xxx). The grandson and his grandparents all functioned as mobilizers. This book exposes the absurdity of practising medicine in a Nazi regime devoted to Jewish annihilation. *With a Yellow Star and Red Cross* is not sanitized. The Polish doctor describes examining people to determine whether or not they were "fit" for deportation and not knowing — because of Nazi deception — whether his assessment would hasten death or delay it. For Henia Reinhartz and her husband, this translation functions as another way of exposing history through an act of displacement, the displacement of translation. Translation opens the book up to an English audience to what might otherwise be an unknown historical Polish chronicle from a doctor who functions as an insider eyewitness.

Part One: The Transmission

Reinhartz structured her 78-page memoir into fourteen chronologically organized vignettes: The World of My Childhood, The War, the Ghetto, The Sperre, The Work, Friendship, The Liquidation of the Ghetto, In the Concentration Camps, Return to life, In Search of Father, Fedafing, Brussels, Paris, On the Boat, and Canada. Those moments include a wedding in which her father's speech is recollected, the terror of hiding from Nazis, to the glee of riding a department store escalator as well as the process of becoming a mother. The book begins with her birth in 1926 and closes when during the 1950s. Much has been omitted. Her life after 1950 is excluded. Trauma unfolds offstage. *Bits and Pieces* "reminds me very much of an oral history being retold by someone who wants to transmit some of her lived experiences to a younger generation" according to Carson Phillips:

> It also lacks an extensive reflective approach and this I believe is one of its strengths. The descriptions and memories do not seem to be coloured that much by more current events. Many survivor authors *want to add in things they learned after the Holocaust which in*

> *turn affects their narration.* They reflect back with new knowledge they have gained and apply this knowledge to interpret the events. However, Henia Reinhartz seems more intent on simply remembering and describing the events as they occurred without them being coloured by newly acquired knowledge. Although it is not a diary, it contains some of the descriptive elements of a diary and feels like it is being discussed "in the moment" but obviously the events are being remembered, as they were to the best of her ability… ("Query from.." 15 April 2018 *emphasis mine*).

Reinhartz deploys the English language to reclaim history in an act of linguistic displacement. She writes the book not in Yiddish (the language of her beloved Bund) or Polish (the language of her birthplace) or French (a language she loved) , but in English, the language of her Canadian-born grandchildren. In her memoir, reading as a child functions as resistance. Choosing to *write a memoir* functions as resistance against invisibility. She becomes a mobilizer against erasure.

In *The Art of Memory* Frances Yates introduced readers to the classical practice of associating something to be remembered with a place. Creet explains that this practice worked by pairing an idea onto a real or imagined place. "The idea as image is mapped onto a locus, a place that acts as a wax tablet on which to imprint the idea; good *loci* can be wiped clean and used again." (Creet, *Memory and 4*). In chronological order, the places in Henia's memoir include but are not limited to Lodz, the Lodz ghetto, a Lodz toy factory Auschwitz, Sasel, Bergen-Belsen, Frankfurt, Brussels, Paris, Naples, Montreal, and Toronto. Many locations are places where she escapes being murdered.

Henia Reinhartz also provided testimony to the University of Southern California's Shoah Foundation Visual Archive project with a three hour interview August 1995 when she was 69 years old. During that interview she shared more details about distressing experiences . The

Nazis put shards of glass into soup. The Jewish head of the Lodz ghetto, Chaim Rumkowski, "touched" her (a detail the interviewer does not follow up on). Bergen-Belsen was worse than Auschwitz because of the stench from corpses, coupled with starvation. In an interview, Abe Reinhartz, Henia's son, said he felt the book was closer to his mother's voice because his mother loved to act. The difference between the book and the video testimony is that the video testimony provides more explicit detail about horror. The book illuminates her passion for performance and reading as an activity also functioned as displaced performance. Her parents' illegal library provided an entry into another world (26).When Henia describes the power that reading possessed, she frames it as performance because of her absorption *into* the text: as *living the lives of heroes and heroines* (26). The reading allowed her to slip —albeit temporarily— into another life. Reading constitutes a powerful form of inner resistance against what is unfolding outside of her Lodz home. This passion for drama is something Henia mentions at the beginning when she performs as a child in a show for Mother's Day (9). She dreamed of a career in dramatic performance. She had a career as an educator but her stage director—like observation for a telling gesture—from the fingering from a child in the bread line to her father's outstretched hands during the family wedding speech— is one of the hallmarks of the memoir. These remembered gestures are also part of what Paul Connerton describes as embodied memory, an issue which I will explore in the final chapter of the dissertation.

History of Henia Reinhartz

Henele Rosenfarb was born in 1926 into a Yiddish speaking family of Bundists. The Bund was known in Yiddish as the *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund* or Jewish Workers' Alliance. Henia leverages her Bundist connections for survival, hope and community before, during, and after the war. The Bund was founded in 1897 in Vilna as a "social-democratic revolutionary movement that fought for the rights of the Yiddish speaking Jewish workers, advocated national cultural autonomy, and championed the Yiddish language and Yiddish secular culture. In interwar Poland, the Bund served as one of many Jewish political parties." (Glossary 80). Henia explains that her parents were poor. They never had the opportunity to go to school. They moved from the small town of Konskie to Lodz, a large industrial city to escape poverty. Lodz, a manufacturing centre for textiles, was known as the Manchester of Poland. The Bund meant opportunity:

> Thanks to the Bund, my parents' lives became filled with a contentment not known to them in their lives in their small hometown. After they married they structured their home life upon the Bundist values that they so strongly believed in: love, respect for others, the right for Jewish people to develop the Yiddish language and culture, and an opportunity for all citizens to go to school. (6)

The Bund's influence becomes clearer with a fuller picture of Sima Rosenfarb's history. Sima's mother died after she was born, and her stepmother and her father were abusive (Henia Reinhartz USC testimony). I want to thank Goldie Morgentaler for sharing Chava Rosenfarb's unfinished autobiography about her mother, Sima Rosenfarb:

> My mother went through hell growing up in the streets of Konskie. She was exploited by the women neighbours who exploited her as an unpaid helper in their households. Not much older than the children she cared for, she dragged the young ones with her wherever she went and took care of them, so as to be fed a leftover potato by their mothers. The women neighbours would beat her, complain about her to her father, who beat her as well. Once she stole a boiling potato from a pot and suffered painful burns, in addition to the licking she got from her father. The wounds took a long time to heal. But she was a clever little girl. She learned about life just by inhaling the air around her. Even before she learned to speak, she knew how to profit from every situation, at least as much as possible. She was a fighter, a survivor. And so she ran away from home when she was in her early teens, straight to Lodz, hitching rides, while begging for bread on the way. Her elder sisters were already in Lodz, but she certainly got no help from them. She did not bother to ask. She wanted to make it on her own. She was an independent and fearless sort. (Chava Rosenfarb, autobiography np)

When Henia is infected with typhus, the Bund smuggles in medicine. When the Nazis burn Hebrew and Yiddish books, Bundists rescue books. "My love for books and reading stems from that time. Reading meant escaping into another world, *living the lives of heroes and heroines*, sharing their joys and sorrows, the joys and sorrows of a normal life in a normal world unlike ours, full of fear and hunger " (26). During the war, Bundist teachers worked without compensation. In her testimony to the USC Shoah Foundation Archive, Henia said the school created an "atmosphere full of love," and she recalled she had never since seen a school like that since. Her resistance includes fighting predators. In the Lodz ghetto Rumkowski was a feared

Jewish leader who believed that he could save Jews by turning the ghetto into a ruthless production machine, making it vital to the German economic interests. He had a reputation of being volatile as well as predatory. There was a rumour dangerous work might be rewarded with soup. The head of the furniture and toy making factory is a Bundist. Henia deploys this connection to request a meeting. She goes by herself. She ignores his question when he inquires whether or not she has a fiancé. She explains that because the toys must be painted, the air is dirty, and the workers get sick. “We received the second ration of soup and, for a short while, also a glass of milk. We rejoiced as this was a victory” (33).

Reception

When we look to at the trajectory of transmission we have an opportunity to look at reception. Creet argues that memory is influenced by the present. For this case study, the question arises as to how you interpret the transmission to the six grandchildren (and implicitly to the two children as well). I asked Creet this question and she replied via email to me:

> So, in each case, you might ask why your interviewees highlighted what they did *not as a function of transmission,* but as a function of how they see themselves in the present or how they need to deploy Reinhartz's memories in the present. It's a question of reception in the present, where memory is always conditioned by and invoked in a very contemporary moment. So, the various emphases of your interviewees speaks to their needs for particular messages not to some absolute historical or mnemonic truth that can be transmitted unmodified. (Creet "In Your introduction" 27 March 2018 *emphasis mine*)

Transmission and Reception

Creet's observation about *the impossibility of transmitting an absolute or mnemonic truth* unmodified is something I would like to explore. I would like to deploy Creet's formulation and suggest that the transmission *has* functioned as a catalyst for the grandchildren to try to process the catastrophe of the Holocaust *for themselves*. Responses of the grandchildren suggest the impossibility of transmitting an absolute truth, but the transmission functions as *raw material*. What has emerged as a pattern among the Reinhartz grandchildren and other family members is interpretation that inhabits multiple time zones: past, present and future. In this way the memoir

provides the raw material of fragments, and the grandchildren respond and some of their interpretive reception fills in the lacunae. If the memoir was positioned in a soundscape of the postwar counter memorial movement it could be imagined as a call, and the reception functions as the response.

Reception Among Grandchildren

I asked each of the six grandchildren, “What do they understand as the central transmission or message from the memoir?” In this section, I will provide their responses from individual interviews. The last section provides a closer examination of two of the grandchildren’s responses, from Mordecai and Shoshana Walfish.

Ben Reinhartz

Ben Reinhartz is a Toronto musician. For Ben Reinhartz the central message is about the primacy of family relationships. He said that his grandmother’s experience was atypical because while many survivors lost their entire families during Nazi selections, Henia emerged with her mother Sima *and* her sister Chava. He noted that his grandmother’s book was different from the work of Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi. In the interviews many grandchildren referred to “third generation anxiety.” Ben Reinhartz said he wondered if the transmission of trauma alters neurobiology. When he sees a crowded streetcar or subway, the sight reminds him of death transports. He said the sight of people squeezing into a streetcar or subway in a large city triggers this anxiety. He wondered aloud if depression and anxiety are transmitted from one generation to the next.

When asked about a highlight, he recalled an anecdote about Henia’s father who worked as a waiter. Reinhartz tells stories of how her father would serve herself as well as her friends with flair when they stopped in at this café on their way home from school. “Those tidbits touched me a lot,” said Ben Reinhartz. He found it a powerful story because it answered the question, “How do you remember your father?”

Leah Reinhartz

For Ben's sister Leah Reinhartz, the memoir's legacy is twofold. She said it's about hope coupled with hate. Leah Reinhartz said Henia Reinhartz works hard to establish "cautious optimism." She held onto the hope with the story of Herr Herbert, the German supervisor who smuggled food, she created hope when she moved to Brussels, and to Paris where she fulfilled her promise to become a Yiddish teacher. Leah Reinhartz works as a psychotherapist. She did additional training to better serve clients dealing with trauma because she wanted that expertise for marketing her practice. She did not connect professional interest in trauma and subsequent training with her grandmother's history. However clinical training leaves her with questions because she reads the story *now* as a clinician. Her comment echoes Maya Lin's description about her memorial as a "moving composition." The text also functions as a moving composition because readers' reception evolve. The experience for her now raises new questions : "What are the after effects? How did these experiences affect her after the war? How did it impact her sense of safety? What else happened?

Miriam Simma Walfish

Miriam Simma Walfish is an ordained rabbi and a PhD candidate at Harvard University. Her research will explore the issue of cultural transmission between parents, rabbis and children during the Talmudic era. She highlighted her grandmother's emphasis on the power of the positive, on the power of life itself. She pointed to an anecdote of the illegal library her grandmother's parents operated as a site of cultural resistance, and as a site of nourishing life. Survival is not just a test of physicality, but also a test of the spirit, she said. Reading is

something that makes people feel human. She chose that example because she said that her grandmother emphasized how important cultural life was to survival, including theatre and musical productions. Miriam Simma pointed out that the "kernel" will likely be different for each of the six grandchildren. She said she is still trying to "grapple with" the kernel of the Holocaust because it "can't be everything."

She noted that her grandmother's book, unlike Primo Levi's memoir, was not preoccupied with Hitler or with political operations. She suggested as well that although the transmission may be different for each grandchild, the values that underpin the book may be passed on. She also suggested that it is possible the transmission Henia *intended* was not necessarily the transmission that the grandchildren *received.*

Her grandmother had taught her one of the reasons for being a teacher was the opportunity to "unlock" students' capacity. Henia used to joke that all Jewish children had a box of Yiddish inside their minds, waiting to be unlocked. Miriam Simma said she thinks of her own teaching as giving students a toolbox to unlock discovery. Miriam Simma teaches Talmud to high school students. She represents this textual study as part of a conversation in which the students can participate, learn, and debate. The teaching is an act in the contemporary moment but the text is in Aramaic and so her teaching inhabits two time zones and two languages, English of the contemporary moment, as well as the Aramaic of the Talmud.

Shoshana Walfish

Shoshana Walfish is an artist and art teacher who moved to Brussels in March of 2018. Some of her art can be viewed on shoshanawalfish.com. She said she was struck upon rereading the memoir about the sequence of events; “at every turn there was something that had to go right” in order for Henia, her sister and their mother to survive She talked about how Henia, Chava and Sima Rosenfarb had escaped murder at Auschwitz by joining the work line for Sasel. Bundist female prisoners had warned the women to get out by signing up for work. “How did that happen?” asked Shoshana Walfish. “It feels very lucky.” She said she felt the power of the miracle of survival as well as “the idea of holding onto hope when everything else is falling apart.” When asked how she connected to the memoir, Shoshana said she feels she must make the most of her life. “Your grandmother did not survive Auschwitz for you not to do anything with your life.” She said she thinks about the juxtaposition between her grandmother’s post war liberation journey in 1945, and her desire to try to live “the life of an artist” in 2018. That juxtaposition has become accentuated because she moved from Canada to Brussels, the city where the Bund smuggled Henia and her family after the liberation .

I want to look now at the representation of memory in Shoshana Walfish’s artistic response. The artist has highlighted the power of Sima, her great grandmother in an oil painting called “The “Ritual of Protection.” Shoshana said people told her she looked like her great grandmother. She said she did not resemble anyone else in her family , and these remarks forged a connection in her mind. Shoshana learned about her great grandmother from her family and *Bits and Pieces*. In the memoir, Sima makes the popular soup with “fat soup bones” at the Bundist run school, a soup designed to nourish impoverished students but distributed to all

children (9). In Sasel she retrieves smuggled goods including rations intended for German soldiers without being caught (43). Sometimes her protective radar emerges in unexpected ways. After the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, Henia recalls how Sima warned her daughters not to eat the rich tinned food the British soldiers distributed. Since they were starving such restraint is astounding. Sima boils potatoes in the freshly piped water (45). Many Jewish prisoners survived the liberation, but died after eating the food (45). In her testimony to the USC Shoah Foundation Reinhartz says that about 23,000 prisoners died. After the war, Sima becomes not only her mother but a "treasured friend."

> When she died in 1959, I felt orphaned, not only because I had lost my mother, but also because I had lost someone whose love for me was unconditional. After the war, I was always aware of the good fortune and amazing luck to have had her. It was also then that I really understood how much her presence near me during the war helped me to survive. (2-3)

Goldie Morgentaler said in an interview that Sima Rosenfarb had taken women under her wing , including women who had lost their family members during Nazi selections. She functioned as a maternal figure to a community of Bundist women. Years after the war, one of those women would visit Sima's grave in Canada, seeking comfort. Morgentaler suggested her grandmother had been raised by the Bund. The Bund taught her to read, and its women's division provided support. In the USC testimony, Henia characterizes the Bund as her "second home." The Bund created sports clubs, youth programs, schools as well as a women's division.

Shoshana Walfish's painting depicts painted figures who have beaks and wear helmet-like head coverings resembling birds. The collective facial expressions are inscrutable. The artist explained the painting emerged from "this idea I had of her during the war as a mother figure,

this idea of having a flock under your wing trying to care for everyone and protect everyone in the face of things beyond your control." Five years later Shoshana Walfish created *Ritual of Protection Revisited* (2016) . She created the second painting because of a request from a client. The second version features the maternal figure and only two smaller figures. The maternal figure is centrally placed as the focal point and is holding a spear, planted firmly in the ground. I am arguing these paintings illuminate the memory of migration and the migration of memory, to use Creet's formulation. They illustrate the artist's imagined ancestral history, bridging a generational and temporal divide. The painting pays honour to the maternal protector who survived with both daughters against impossible odds. There are two paintings of the same scene. With *Ritual of Protection Revisited*, the second painting, the figures have moved closer to the foreground with facial expressions that merge trepidation in the face of the child with the defiance of the mother. The paintings are reproduced below in chronological order from the website of Shoshana Walfish with permission. They are categorized in her collection in the category of "imaginative realism."

Walfish, Shoshana. *Ritual of Protection* . 2011, Collection of the artist in Brussels, Belgium ,

http://www.shoshanawalfish.com.

Figure 1. *Ritual of Protection* (First Version) by Shoshana Walfish (2011).

Figure 2 . *Ritual of Protection Revisited*. (2016) By Shoshana Walfish

Imaginative realism is a term American artist James Gurney defines as the “convincing portrayal of something that cannot be observed directly” (11) . *Imaginative Realism* is subtitled: “How to paint what doesn’t exist.” In one of his blog posts, the artist suggests the skills required are divided between observation, memory and knowledge. Walfish’s interpretation celebrates the female warrior. I asked the artist for an explanation regarding the title:

The title refers to how many of our human behaviours are in fact rituals, and that ritual and habit are things that drive humans to behave in certain ways, especially without thinking. How the act of a mother protecting her children, even in times of great difficulty, the strength to do so can be drawn from ritual and habit. Also in Judaism, many people adhere to the rituals without really knowing where they come from, or without believing necessarily in their purpose, but do so out of habit and the ritual becomes as important as the act itself” (Shoshana Walfish, “Help” 23-24 April 2018).

In her dissertation *After Postmemory: Coping With Holocaust Remembrance In Postmodern Hebrew Literature* (2015), Yael Seliger argues that art functions as an interpretation of history and is not designed to replace it. Seliger is exploring what remembrance can encompass and argues that history itself is large enough to encompass more than chronology. Seliger points to Jay Winter (2006) who argues that remembrance “must recognize the role of novelists, playwrights, poets, filmmakers, architects, museum designers and curators, television producers, and others in this varied set of cultural practices we term historical remembrance (278). I would add the vocation of artist to Winter’s list. Shoshana Walfish has responded by shining a light on the maternal figure who redefines the capacity of the myth of the mother bird as a resistor.

Simcha Walfish

Simcha Walfish is studying law at McGill University. He felt the central transmission resided in his grandmother's desire to share personal history. He said that he has a habit rereading the book because parts fade from memory. Like his cousin Leah Reinhartz, his reading experience changes with the same text, foregrounding Maya Lin's analogy of a "moving composition." For Simcha Walfish, the scene that stands out is the vignette about a Polish boy around five or six years old who fingers Henele as a Jewish child and points her out to a German soldier in a bread lineup. People usually associate the Holocaust with the Nazis, ammunition, and concentration camps, but not with the power of a child's gesture.

Mordecai Walfish

Mordecai Walfish became the most involved in his grandmother's legacy. In a series of interviews Mordecai Walfish said the book functions as part of his responsibility to "hold, tell and remember." Creet argues that reception is a function of the *present*. However, for Mordecai Walfish, a member of this third generation, temporal categories collapse. Reception may be *shaped* by the present but what if that present is itself haunted and temporally fragmented ? How do we understand temporal mobility?

I would like examine the hallmarks of temporal fusion. Greenblatt characterizes contact zones where cultural goods are exchanged as being a place where "mobilizers" such as agents, go between, translators or intermediaries operate (251). Mobilizers create "contact zones where cultural goods are exchanged." For my purpose they create a way to look at the migration of memory as well as its reception, interpretation and impact. (251)

Mordecai Walfish wrote a speech called "Herr Herbert: A Righteous Gentile". The text of *Bits and Pieces* literally moved from Toronto to Hamilton, Ontario. Mordecai selects one

anecdote and transforms it into an oral performance . He shared the story for the Morris Black Speaking Contest in Hamilton, Ontario, a community event for Jewish elementary school students on a topic of the students' choice. Mordecai was in Grade 5. In his speech, he creates a causal connection between the subversive actions of a German supervisor with the survival of his grandmother, her sister Chava, and their mother Sima. He connects the trajectory to his existence and the speech culminates by thanking Herr Herbert (who has no last name) for *his own life*. He has already calibrated the consequence of survival for future generations. In so doing, the speech incorporates multiple time zones and locations.

I found Mordecai's speech with the assistance of Dr. Rick Black who operates the community contest in Hamilton, Ontario and has kept copies of speeches for the last forty eight years. I received permission to share the text from Dr. Black as well as Mordecai Walfish. The contest began in 1970 following the death of Rick Black's father from cancer at the age of fifty four. Morris Black was learning about Judaism and loved Israel, his son explained. In his legal will, he left money for a contest to teach young students about Judaism and Jewish values. Attached to his legal will, he wrote "In place of mourning, teach others the value of study and education. A wonderful heritage has been given to us, forsake it not" (as quoted by Rick Black e-mail 16 April 2018). Although an ethical will is usually constituted as a separate document there are examples where assets of a legal will and the moral legacy of an ethical will are merged. Solomon Rabinowitz's will included information about how to manage his assets as well as his royalties. The contest began as an essay contest, but it was changed into a public speaking contest, a move from text to oral performance.

Legacy Intersection : Morris Black and Henia Reinhartz

Morris Black's warning not to forget Jewish heritage is connected to Henia Reinhartz's passion for sharing history. Near the beginning of the memoir, she recalls a speech her father gave at the wedding of Henia's cousin Chava (18). She remembers her father sporting a new suit, standing on a beer barrel with his hands outstretched, (here we see again her eye for the strategic gesture) and the values he highlights are the same ones we see Henia Reinhartz foregrounding: family relationships, love, the necessity of community, the power of friendships, and generosity. Her father describes his sister Adele's home as a place where "love dwells," where the thirsty are given something to drink, and those who are upset leave comforted. He compares Adele's children to pearls on a necklace, and hopes the groom will become the sixth jewel on the chain. Human relationships constitute genuine wealth, not material objects (8). The power of this speech remains in Henia's memory. Henia names her first child Adele. Although Henia lost her father as a young woman, she devotes less than a paragraph to his death (52) . Henia's father was sent to Dachau, and was killed by Americans. When the Germans discovered Americans were moving towards Dachau, they loaded inmates onto a train. The Americans thought the trains were military trains (52).

Reinhartz directs her attention instead to her father staying up late to read his beloved books, giving his daughters piggy back rides after a bath, delivering breakfast in bed on a Saturday morning, and showering his family with hugs and kisses. I am connecting this narrative strategy of ethical legacy of privileging life to an issue Dara Horn has identified. In "Becoming Ann Frank," Horn argues that "People love dead Jews. Living Jews, not so much. " Horn argues that one of the reasons the Ann Frank's diary became beloved was that the book de-emphasized Jewish identity. Moreover, Frank was not given an opportunity to update observations from Bergen-Belsen. We have no record *after* the family was betrayed. Subsequently her diary was

not about genocide : “And here is the most devastating fact of Frank’s posthumous success, which leaves her real experience forever hidden: We know what she would have said, because other people have said it, and we don’t want to hear it. ” Horn points to the Jewish chronicler Zalmen Gradowski who provided a historical account of his job in Auschwitz as a *Sonderkommando.* He is not well known. His work describes in grisly detail the death of 5,000 Jews in a single transport from Czechoslovakia. He wrote as an eyewitness to murder. He wrote in Yiddish, and buried the work. He was murdered in 1944.

In a lecture Horn delivered about the role of Holocaust memory in literature, she warned readers how deeply Christianity had informed expectations about literature. Readers sometimes look to literature as a site of resolution and a happy ending, the Christian version of grace. Jewish literature argues such redemption is a fraud and lie, she argued. Jewish literature grapples with the limits of creativity in overcoming evil she argues. This issue -- limits of creativity overcoming evil-- functions as a thematic thread in *Bits and Pieces* because of the focus on resistance. Reinhartz functions as a witness to how people lived, not a portrait of how they suffered or died. Her sister Chava Rosenfarb, a Canadian Yiddish writer also highlights the living with her morally complex trilogy *The Tree Of Life,* a work that begins in pre-war Lodz and unfolds in the voices of ten characters. Like Ann Frank, Henia Reinhartz’s history can never be *fully* known. Unlike Ann Frank, Reinhartz had a choice as to what to publicly transmit after the war.

Oral Transmission Trajectory

The Morris Black public speaking contest functions as a platform where mobilizers share material. Memory here functions not just as recollection but the ritual of public performance connects with Yerushalmi's concept of Jewish memory as re-enactment in *Zakhor*. In chapter one, re-enactment unfolded with the descendants of Solomon Rabinowitz choosing which stories to read aloud. Here Jewish students re-enact subjects they choose. This issue of democratized choice means that like Solomon Rabinowitz's descendants, the subjects may change but the platform accommodates fluidity. The event is characterized by democratization and oral transmission. The essay contest started in Peterborough originally as an essay contest in 1970 and then expanded to small Ontario communities through the Canadian Jewish Congress and eventually evolved into a speech contest in Hamilton and Vancouver where Rick's brother Larry Black resides. The contest is held annually and about 200 people come to hear the speeches, according to Rick Black (email "Query" 15 April 2018). Black said he hopes the speeches will inspire the audience. In an interview Mordecai said the story of Herr Herbert made him wonder as a child if he himself would possess the same courage. Here is his speech:

> My grandmother, Henia Reinhartz is a survivor of the Holocaust. I'm going to tell you about a kind German man that helped her, her mother sister and her sister Chava survive the Holocaust. His name was Herr Herbert (in English Mr. Herbert). From the beginning of the war until 1944 my grandmother and her family lived in Lodz Ghetto. Once Lodz was liquidated they were all sent to Auschwitz, where they got separated from their father. After 10 days they were sent to Sasel. Sasel was a small work camp near Hamburg, in Germany. Their work was building pre-fabricated houses outside the camp for the Germans whose houses had been bombed. One of the unit heads at Sasel was Herr Herbert. He befriended my grandmother's family almost as soon as they got there. My

grandmother thinks that he liked them because he saw how much my great grandmother Sima cared for her children and for everyone else in their barrack. Every day he took potatoes from the Germans' rations and hid them somewhere outside the camp. He would whisper to Sima every day where they were and she would take them and smuggle them into the camp. He also brought them German newspapers so they could read about Germany's defeats in battle.

Herr Herbert's wife was also very kind to them. She would give them things such as decent underwear, flannel dressing gown for Sima, cutlery, warm gloves and even sandwiches that would make them feel like women again. Herr Herbert and his wife must have really disagreed with the antisemitism of Hitler and the Nazis. They knew the great risk of what they were doing but they did it anyway.

On November 3 1944 (my grandmother's 18th birthday) she was very ill with a blood infection and was allowed to stay back in the camp. Herr Herbert was worried when he didn't see her at work and went to Sima to ask where my grandmother was. Sima answered that my grandmother was sick and told him that day was her birthday. At the end of the day Herr Herbert brought three small apples so that Chava, Sima and my grandmother could celebrate her birthday. They hadn't tasted apples in a very very long time. I know that to us one little apple is not a big deal at all but they thought it was a very precious gift because apples were very rare in the camps.

Herr Herbert said that he had a brother in Canada and that after the war he and his wife would join him there. I don't know if they were got to Canada because my grandmother could not find him. He never told them his last name so that even if they were bribed or tortured they would not be able to betray him to the Germans.

I think that one of the reasons my grandmother, great aunt and great grandmother survived the Holocaust is because of Herr Herbert and his wife. Because of Herr Herbert I am alive. So wherever you are Mr. Herbert I'd like to say thanks a lot." (Mordecai Walfish, *emphasis mine 1995)*

Henia's textual transmission functions the departure. The grandson's speech functions as a reply. He creates a public thank you for the German supervisor whom, he believes, is indirectly responsible for his existence. Henia shares that she wanted to find this man after the war, and that these daily kindnesses had given Henia, her sister and her mother hope. She never knew his last name, and was unable to find him. Because of the frequency of the food, including rations intended for German soldiers, it is not inconceivable that these acts of subversive nourishment played some role in survival. The Rosenfarb women worked in Sasel building prefabricated housing from October 1944 until March 1945. They were liberated in April 1945. The migration of memory includes other acts of transformation-from private to public, from written to oral, and now there is a new imaginary public recipient (Herr Herbert) as well as the live audience and potential future readers since Dr. Black has maintained a private archive . Herr Herbert functions as a kind ghost, the myth of the unexpected protector. He may be physically absent but becomes present through memory and language. He is brought to life through the narrative, and then given a second life with this speech. For a Canadian Jewish audience, the story reframes the representation of the German in a forced labour camp from enemy to a surprising resistor. Mordecai's choice highlights the danger of binary categories, classifying people as " victim" or "oppressor" . For the Canadian Jewish audience, the anecdote echoes his grandmother's witnessing because he illuminates resistance.

Greenblatt asks what happens to cultural products that are enshrined in new contexts and what *impact those products have on the recipients*. As a fourth year university student at University of King' s College in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Mordecai majors in German and contemporary studies. He functions as the student correspondent for *The Canadian Jewish News.* He wrote about his own complex journey to learn German. He was learning German to fulfill the university requirement for a second language, and he approached this study with trepidation as well as interest. Unlike his peers, his experience is haunted by history. The *past* has radically altered the present and what unfolds is a temporal rupture. Throughout his article temporal zones have collapsed. Where other students see the present, Mordecai remembers what is no longer visible :

> I have been continually struck by how different it is to learn a new language in university than when one is a baby. As babies, we take a beautiful journey from innocence to knowledge. Every step we take is a move forward, allowing us to understand and express more about the world. But for me, German is packed with so many negative associations that every step forward also seems *like a step backward into a dark place.* (*emphasis mine)*
>
> I got a chance to face these feelings directly by spending part of this summer in Berlin. I was on a program with students from all over the world who had come to Berlin to learn German and experience life in the city. *But I found there was a chasm between my experience and theirs.* In a sense, the way they related to Berlin reminded me of the baby learning a language: it was pure intake. Each day, they discovered another great thing about Berlin, which gave them an overall picture of the city as a very fun place. For me, however, life in Berlin was anything but straightforward. *For every fun place that I discovered, I found at*

least one trace of the horrific past: a former Nazi compound, a deportation site, a destroyed Jewish graveyard. The fun and the tragic are piled on top of each other. I think it's fascinating how this is reflected in the memorials throughout the city. You don't need to make a special outing to visit a memorial in Berlin. They are built into the everyday fabric of the city. The main Holocaust memorial, completed just one year ago, is located on a central boulevard in Berlin, making it hard to avoid. In addition to that impressive structure, there are dozens of smaller memorials. At a number of subway stations, monuments remind passengers that the train tracks taking them to work each day were once used to deport Jews and other victims to concentration camps.

Though these memorials are everywhere, *I realized that it takes some effort to notice them*. *I'm sure that only some people spot them on their daily commutes*. (*emphasis mine*) The same goes for my fellow students. One day, I was talking to a friend about our previous day's activities. I visited Mitte, which was once a Jewish neighbourhood but is now one of most popular areas of Berlin's renowned nightlife. I saw a graveyard on Grosse Hamburger Street that had been completely ransacked by the Nazis. My friend informed me that he had partied all night at a great club on that very same street. *A feeling of intense discomfort came over me as I wanted to tell him that he was partying on the graves of my ancestors* (*emphasis mine).*

I find that studying German and visiting Germany has given me an important opportunity to deal with these issues on a personal level. I am determined to keep reminding myself that learning German allows me to *better understand both great*

> *philosophy and sickening Nazi propaganda*. I will probably never completely give up my aversion to the language, nor do I want to. And I don't want people to stop questioning my choice of language to study**.** (Mordecai Walfish "A Summer in Germany" 2006 *emphasis mine*).

In *Cultural Mobility* Greenblatt asks: "What happens to cultural products that travel through time or space to emerge and be enshrined in new contexts ? (4). Mordecai responds by creating a public speech to thank the man who was supposed to be the enemy. Shoshana responds by paying artistic homage to her great grandmother. Miriam Simma considers teaching a process of unlocking capacity. Ben says his music is not connected to his grandmother's history. Leah invests in trauma training but does not connect her professional interest to her grandmother's history. Simcha shares that it is difficult to create causality between his grandmother's history and his contemporary choices. Reception and interpretation are as varied as the recipients.

Reception of Henia's Children and Niece

Adele Reinhartz

Henia Reinhartz's daughter Adele Reinhartz, is a professor of religion and classical studies at the University of Ottawa. For Adele the memoir illustrates the power a grandmother feels in the urge to transmit history to her grandchildren, something Adele had experienced herself. She noted that her late father Nochem did not have this urge to transmit his own Holocaust history. Adele said her mother was an educator and she did not want to rely on her own children to transmit her history, she wanted as a teacher to share it directly. Adele shared that the urge to transmit history to grandchildren is something she has done herself, sharing stories with her grandchildren about what it was like to grow up in the Toronto's Italian neighborhood of St. Clair and Oakwood in the 1950s. "It was wonderful," she said and explained she grew up in an era where kids were free to run around the neighborhood and there were many Italian grandmothers who would welcome visitors with treats. Adele stressed the relationship between a grandmother and a grandchild is different than a relationship between a mother and a child. Her daughter Miriam Simma has three children. She said children are not as interested in who you are as a human being as your grandchildren are. For a long time children see parents as being there to service their own needs. As a child you perceive your parents' lives as revolving around you, she said. The generational distance creates a different social dynamic.

What is it about the urge to transmit stories that is connected to ethical wills? It is a way of sharing non-material legacy through stories that highlight values and personal history. The sharing of stories also constitutes a form of oral transmission characterized by face to face

intimacy, the intimacy that Primo Levi talked about regarding the transmission of history from father to son. In this case it's from grandparent to grandchild and the generational distance and different social dynamic allow for a different type of sharing.

Goldie Morgentaler

Goldie Morgentaler is a professor of English at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta and the daughter of the late writer Chava Rosenfarb. Goldie Morgentaler read the book with a research agenda. She has been the translator of Chava Rosenfarb's work. Rosenfarb is a Yiddish writer of fiction and the author of the trilogy *A Tree of Life.* Goldie Morgentaler is working on translating other works of her late mother as well as a literary biography. She read to determine what in Chava Rosenfarb's work was fiction, and what was based on fact. Morgentaler pointed out that the anecdote of the bread line appears in *The Tree of Life* . In Rosenfarb's version, it is the heroine Rachel, modelled on Chava Rosenfarb, who is fingered by a Polish woman who works for her family doing laundry. Morgentaler suggested that the frequency of the anecdote suggests it likely happened to *both* Henia and Chava. Morgentaler suggested the power of this gesture is that the occupying Germans were *expected* to be the enemies, but Jews who had lived in Poland for centuries felt betrayal from Polish neighbors. It is one of the reasons why the recent 2018 law in Poland that forbid talking about Polish collaboration with Nazis created such an uproar, she suggested.

Abe Reinhartz

Henia's son Abe Reinhartz provides another type of memory mobility. When Henia Reinhartz retired, she worked as a translator with her husband . Their work is featured in the Canadian collection called *Found Treasures: Stories by Yiddish Women.* Henia and Nochem Reinhartz also translated *With A Yellow Star and A Red Cross* in 2003 . The book's subtitle is *A Doctor in The*

Lodz Ghetto. The book was published in Polish in 1988. A German translation was published in 1992. Henia and Nochem dedicated their translation to the memory of the Jews of the Lodz. The book was published in Great Britain and in the United States in 2005. Greenblatt's mobility manifesto includes *literal* mobility. Translation enables migration. Moskowitz's memoir has travelled from Poland to Germany, Canada, Great Britain and the United States. In an era of digitized publishing, it is difficult to overestimate the rapidity of mobility. On April 2, 2018 the paperback edition of *With A Yellow Star and A Red Cross: A Doctor in the Lodz Ghetto* was available for $34.95 Canadian and eligible for Prime shipping on amazon.ca. Mostowicz remained in Poland *after* the war but his memories traveled. His 15-year-old son was buried there.

Abe Reinhartz works as a physician in Toronto. He wrote a screenplay inspired by Mostowitz's memoir called *When God Was Sleeping*. Abe Reinhartz invented fictional characters, and created a romantic subplot in 2009. The screenplay was optioned twice but has not yet been produced. Abe Reinhartz was hoping the film would be produced in Polish and French. Translation functions as what Greenblatt calls a "contact zone", and here the contact zone is not just translating languages (from Polish into English) but moving from memoir to dramatic feature film. The doctor's eyewitness account provides raw material .

We can see multiple types of mobility operating: spatial, temporal and linguistic. If art functions as an interpretation, the transmission itself becomes so radically reimagined it would be difficult to link the screenplay to the book without prior knowledge . Greenblatt suggests that mobility studies should *shed light on hidden as well as conspicuous movements* of peoples, objects, images texts and ideas (250). He explains that "cultural goods are transferred out of sight, concealed inside cunningly designed shells of the familiar or disguised by subtle adjustments of

colour and form (250-251) . Abe Reinhartz deployed medical anecdotes and the setting of the Lodz ghetto from *With A Yellow Star and A Red Cross* but he chose the medical vignettes based on the needs of *his* story arc. His choices constitute one example of what Greenblatt identifies as the capacity to *empty out and fill in* when it comes to mobility's power to erase and adapt. In his introduction, Greenblatt deploys a religious example to show how this *emptying out and filling in* operates: the *figura* is about how the Christian Church provided a radical reinterpretation of Jewish Biblical figures such as Abel, Isaiah or Moses with the goal of erasing Jewish interpretation. The Christian argument was that these shadow figures could only be understood within a Christian lens: "The cunning form of this form of interpretation was that it left things standing in place, and at the same time *emptied them out* in order to claim that a full actualization of the precious cultural resource-in this case, the religion of Israel-could only be realized in the religion that had come to displace and triumph over it" (13 *emphasis mine*). What Abe Reinhartz created in *When God was Sleeping* was a dark love story set in Paris as well as Lodz before and during the Second World War. What remains the same is Lodz, Poland, as the classic "loci" of memory (the Lodz ghetto) , that can be wiped clean and reimagined . For the reader of *either* work what is exposed is the absurdity of medicine in a Nazi regime. For Abe Reinhartz the creative memorialization in the screenplay functions as a way to process catastrophe.

For Abe Reinhartz, *Bits and Pieces* provided his mother's "backstory." In an interview he said his own relationship with his mother was closer to one of friendship, and that his mother, like her mother, Sima, had been a radical. His parents' European socialist experience formed a "foundation for (his) life and attitudes." He explained that his parents were active in the union movement, and devoted to social justice. They invited a black family to rent a floor in a building in Toronto in the 1960's against the neighbours' wishes. Reinhartz had worked previously doing

occupational medicine. He worked for unions. He worked in a clinic with Canadian labour activist Jim Brophy, and recalled that they received death threats. In Sarnia workers were dying from asbestos exposure from the 1950s into the 1980s. “All kinds of horrible things happened,” He viewed the Sarnia exposures as an “extension of the Nazis”. He defined himself as a secular Jew for whom the Holocaust constitutes a central part of his identity. For Abe Reinhartz the legacy is his connection to history and to the Holocaust in particular. He will devour books and films about the Holocaust. He has no interest in Judaism as a form of religious expression. His position echoes Yerushalmi’s idea that for moderns, history functioned as the “faith of the fallen Jew,” (*Zakhor* 86) and the arbiter of modernity.

Ethical Will and Grandmother

I would like to briefly situate *Bits and Pieces* with other works by or about Jewish grandmothers: American anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff's *Number Our Days,* (1978) Susan Starr Sered's *Women As Ritual Experts*, (1992) and Pauline Wengeroff's *Memoirs of a Grandmother Scenes from the Cultural History of the Jews of Russia in the Nineteenth Century (2014)* . I have chosen these works as a framing device within which other Jewish grandmothers create transmissions of Jewish culture, religion, ritual or history. Firstly the position of grandmother is not always one of beloved connection. In *Number Our Days* elderly Jewish grandmothers are isolated, lonely and feel they have been cast off and forgotten. Wengeroff begins the chapter called "The Third Generation" with the following appraisal: "And then came the third generation which feared neither God nor the devil. The offered supreme allegiance to their own will and raised this to divinity" (141). Wengeroff is referring to the generation of her grandchildren who have grown up without any Jewish tradition, customs, education about Jewish history. She blames the Russian fathers who eliminated the transmission of Jewish customs at home because they have been lured by a secularized modernity. She traces the consequence of the assimilation in a trajectory to the baptism that Jews- sought in the 1880s and 1890s as providing "safe harbor" from anti-Jewish violence (143). Some of her own children were baptized as a response to the anti-Jewish violence of the 1880s and 1890s.

Susan Sered studied elderly Kurdish and Yemenite Jewish women living in Jerusalem and looked at how they created religious beliefs and rituals. Many were illiterate. They knew they were commanded to light candles on Friday night for the Jewish Sabbath but many did not know the blessing. They transformed Sabbath candle lighting into a ritual about the welfare of

individuals (Sered 31). They *imagined* it to be something that would serve their own purposes . Sometimes they lit a candle for each member of the family. They develop rituals including the planting of trees in Israel, the celebration of the new moon, and the placement of candles on tombstones. These women became what Sered calls “ritual activists” when they gained time and mobility (140).The transmission of tradition does not require wealth or textual literacy. Sered’s argument is that by examining religious expressions in the profane world we see religion interwoven into daily experience. In the patriarchal system of traditional Judaism, these religious women, most of them grandmothers, responded with their own system . Goldie Morgentaler shared a story of a Bundist woman befriended by Sima Rosenfarb who would go visit her Montreal grave for comfort. She may not have been placing a candle on the tombstone, but the yearning to connect with a loved one remains constant. Morgentaler explained that this custom of visiting a gravestone was Jewish tradition called "*kever oves*,” i.e. visiting the graves of the ancestors. It was commonly done by Jews in Eastern Europe, not just out of respect for the dead, but also out of a hope for comfort and a wish to ask the dead to intercede on the visitor’s behalf for some crisis in the visitor’s life.

Myerhoff’s *Number Our Days* includes an explanation of Judaism as transmitted from a grandmother to granddaughter. Myerhoff’s book charts an elderly community in Venice, California and explores their attitudes towards Jewish living, culture, community and religion. Myerhoff explores the idea of a female sacred Jewish space that is parallel to but different from men’s Jewish religious experience. The chapter called “Jewish comes up in you from the roots” begins by presenting the voices of elders, men and women, discussing subjects including male and female attitudes to Jewish ritual, law, and practice. The chapter title is a phrase from the mouth of a woman named Rachel.

Rachel describes “another kind of religion” (234): “We girls had what you could call domestic religion, that means it comes into you through the rituals ” (234). She describes cleaning dishes. She recalls an event as a child where she had to wipe dishes and did not like to wipe them because the towel was rough. Consequently, she did not wipe the dishes well. Her grandmother talked to her privately. She did not publicly humiliate her. She told her how beautiful she was. And then the grandmother said “Rucheleh you know you are carrying a holy name. And according to your name, you have to be perfect” (235). Rachel accepts the speech and the comparison to the Biblical Rachel not as a reprimand, but as a gift : “I was transformed into a different person. The towel became soft as fine linen and I loved to wipe the dishes” (235). She imagines herself to be the holy Rachel. She characterizes this transmission as a form of “domestic religion” (235). The story of a Biblical matriarch is leveraged with a speech from the grandmother delivered with affection: “When it goes in this way I describe, Jewish comes up in you from the roots and it stays with you all your life” (235). Rachel sees advantages in this “domestic religion” because the roots “stay” with you, unlike the boys’ education based on study which can be easily forgotten. Here the transmission is about the relationship of the grandmother to the granddaughter, and about re-enacting the power of the Biblical Rachel into the American woman. It functions as a temporal re-enactment of Jewish memory, and the connection to Jewish sacred text has been created through naming.

In Wengeroff’s *Memoirs of a Grandmother,* the author argues that modernizing Russian Jewish women wedded to Jewish tradition and wanting to adopt European culture were forced to abandon tradition. What unfolded was a cultural loss in Jewish society, for women's inability to transmit tradition. Wengeroff is a religious Jew who wants her children to have a Jewish education. This wish for Jewish education extends to the trade school she sets up for girls. She

frames her second chapter "The Second Period of Enlightenment" by quoting two Psalms: "Do not cast me off in old age; When my strength fails. Do not forsake me." 71:9, and "Do not cast me out from Your presence, Or take Your holy spirit from me." 51:13. (28). These psalms frame the memoir as a woman of tradition and faith navigating the rupture of modernity with a husband who has a complex relationship with Jewish identity. Wengeroff is attached to Jewish traditions (*kashrut*, synagogue, *tzedakah*,) *and* parts of modernity. And the book illuminates what happens when modernity ruptures tradition within marriage. The husband and his sons mock her attachments. Wengeroff identifies cultural loss with women. "One more generation and the old Jewish ways would become as a strange as a fairy tale" (51).

Both Myerhoff and Wengeroff's texts are in conversation with Jewish textual sources whether as sources of illumination or departure. This connection with Jewish sacred texts is absent from *Bits and Pieces*. In the Lodz ghetto, Henia Reinhartz recalls reading *Gone with the Wind* in Polish. Her identity is founded upon a particular Jewish iteration of socialist Bundism, a form of secularized modernity that Wengeroff was wary of. Wengeroff was a philanthropist and an emerging Zionist. The Bund movement was about a home in the Yiddish language opposed to Zionism. In this regard, I accept Irving Howe's argument that the Jewish socialist movement functioned as a form of secular messianism. It was designed to protect Jewish workers and provide a way to fight against anti-Semitism. It was designed to repair the world through a Jewish political agenda. Henia Reinhartz, who speaks Yiddish, Polish, English and French, who works as a teacher and translator after the war, appears to have nothing in common with the religious lives of elderly Jewish women in Jerusalem, the aging Jewish community in Venice, California or the 19th century battle between religious tradition and modernity. However the grandmother's desire to share something remains an anchor across the religious and secular

spectrum. In her memoir, personal memory and history has replaced Jewish sacred text. Her children turned to education and medicine, her grandchildren responded with the practice of social work, the creation of music, teaching, the development of leadership in the Jewish non - profit sector, the art of painting, as well as the study of law. Reinhartz's memoir can be considered an ethical will, but like the spirit of Solomon Rabinowitz, what she asks for is the deployment of human imagination. Like the counter memorial movement, the memoir itself may 'disappear' in subsequent transmissions, conversations and creations. A viewer looking at Shoshana Walfish's paintings would not know the source. The transmission's source may become invisible or inaudible, but the trajectory of reception continues to unfold as an organic plant of its own, generating its own roots and shoots. Like Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial, *Bits and Pieces* can be best illuminated as a "moving composition to be understood as we move into and out of it " (Young 4).

Chapter Four: The Melodic Transmission

In this final chapter, I want to address embodied memory, and examine the transmission of wordless melody. I am concluding with wordless melody because I wanted to address what happens when language fails, and, in addition, address the issue that Jewish non-material legacy may unfold outside of textual transmission. The previous three chapters have been silent about the Jewish soundscape. I have chosen a melody called a *niggun*[4] because it is often experienced as a *wordless* and thus confronts directly the limits of language. Some *niggunim* do have words. The focus of this chapter, however, is wordless melody. The *niggun* occupies a liminal sonic space. Vocables such as *bi bim bam* or *lai lai lai* are not proper words but they constitute more than humming. In so doing, they create a liminal vessel for the human voice. In this way they constitute their own particular soundscape. The ethical component here resides in recovering the power of melody as a mode and expression of repair, as a way to soften trauma, and to examine how *niggunim* create and transform human relationships. Moreover the *niggunim* work ethically as a mobile invisible salve to reject suffering.

The power of these wordless melodies recalls the idea I introduced in chapter one about the ethics of comedy. That chapter illuminated how comedy operated as part of a Jewish response to defiantly reject the Christian concept of redemption through suffering. This chapter will examine melody as a mode of memory, a mode where ethical repair unfolds through the

[4] There are various spellings of *niggun* including *nign, nigun* but for consistency I am deploying a single spelling which I have found as the most common variation. The plural is *niggunim.*

power of sound, a way of listening in the human body. Then I will share a story by Yiddish writer Isaac Loeb Peretz to "sound" mobility and ethical function of the *niggun* in the Jewish soundscape. After the Peretz story, this chapter will explore three Canadian case studies of *niggunim* composed in the contemporary moment. One of the features of Greenblatt's mobility manifesto is that properties of cultural products become hidden or disguised when redeployed. I am arguing that the ethical component as well as the idea of non-material legacy are rendered invisible. The mode of memory through melody is itself invisible as a memorial form. This chapter will illuminate or try to 'audiate' these components of invisibility: the movement of embodied memory through melody, and secondly the ethical components that unfold as a function of the impact of the melody.

Bodily Social Memory

I want to frame these musical ideas with a brief explanation of "bodily social memory," a term created by Paul Connerton. In *How Societies Remember* (1989), Connerton makes a distinction between inscribing and incorporating practices as modes of memory. An inscribing practice "for storing and retrieving information including print, encyclopedias, indexes, photographs, sound tapes, computers all require that we do something that traps and holds information" (*Collected Memory* 339). The past three chapters have privileged these textual inscribing practices. Connerton delineates "incorporating practice" as physical gestures that could include a smile, a handshake, or swimming where human beings remember a gesture or sequence of motions through what he calls a "habitual memory" that is "sedimented in the body" (339). Connerton argues that the transition from oral culture to literate culture is a movement from incorporating practices to inscribing practices. An incorporating practice can function as a system of

mnemonics, but it is easy to see why it has been under represented: "It is equally true that incorporating practices, by contrast, are largely traceless and that, as such, they are incapable of providing a means by which any evidence of a will be to remembered can be "left behind." In consequence, we commonly consider inscription to be the privileged form of transmission of a society's memories" (342). Connerton characterizes the inscribing practice as the "privileged story" and the incorporating practice as the "neglected story" (341). It is thus not surprising that inscribing practices are more likely to be part of the canon (342). What is foregrounded is connected to Aleida Assmann's research about what constitutes canon, and what becomes archival. The inscribing practice moves forward. The incorporating practice may become archival, forgotten or neglected. Thus it is easier to *hear* how wordless melody may be inaudible, forgotten or neglected.

Connerton, however, warns against underestimating the power of the incorporating practice. "Incorporating practices depend for their particular mnemonic effect on two distinctive features: their mode of existence and their mode of acquisition. They do not exist objectively independently of their being performed. And they are acquired in a way as to not *require explicit reflection* on their performance" (*Collected Memory* 342). Connerton connects bodily practices and commemorative performance. I am arguing that as a live musical performance that remains *unrecorded*, a *niggun* can function as a commemorative performance and an incorporating practice. What makes the *niggun* complex is that it may also exist as an inscribing practice in a recording. In this way, the *niggun* can occupy both modes of remembrance as an inscribing practice in a sound file, (although an unconventional inscribing example because of its wordlessness), or as an incorporating practice in a live performance. For the *unrecorded* performance or rehearsal or music lesson, what remains is what is remembered. The fact that

wordless melody contains *no explicit will* to be remembered is noteworthy. Thus recipients determine its future trajectory through their own memory. Many melodies will be forgotten. Connerton's argument about incorporated memory is about tradition and memory transmitted in non-textual and non-cognitive ways (*How Societies* 102-103). He shares an example of incorporated memory in the chapter about bodily practices and provides, as a case study, the evolution of table manners which were refined, adapted and acquired particularly between the sixteenth and eighteenth century. The way in which a knife, fork and spoon were held and deployed was codified over centuries but table manners then became technical skills that possessed "moral values" (83). "They are 'forgotten' as a maxims only when they have been well remembered as habit" (83). One of the ethical components unfolding here is to re-examine the incorporated practice. What is at stake, then, is a transmission that bypasses text. Connerton shares the case study of David Sudnow, a musician who characterized his failures when he was learning how to play jazz for five years as the "management of improvised conduct" (as quoted . in *How Societies* 91). "By observing the minutiae of his body's movements he shows how a whole variety of expanding skills, co-ordinated ways of *looking, moving, reaching, thinking* to have to be developed if one is able to execute the correct succession of chords " (91 *emphasis mine*). Wordless melody has its own gestural repertoire that would include *looking moving reaching and thinking* in sound.

But the ethical component is not explicit. In *The Ethics of Memory* Avishai Margalit introduced the moral witness as someone who has suffered personally, and witnessed evil. The hope of the moral witness is a modest one, and that is that his or her testimony will be heard. This *yearning to be heard* echoes Primo Levi's observation that he had an obsessive desire to share what he witnessed, alongside a terror he would be ignored. I want to propose the idea of a moral

earwitness. *Niggunim* can be understood as ear witnessing. The lure of melody eliminates *yearning to be heard*. Hearing is involuntary. This argument rejects silence as a response to catastrophe, and recognizes three things simultaneously: the limits of language, the power of melody, and thirdly, the melodic response does not try to explain what may be beyond articulation. It does not require, in the words of Connerton, "explicit reflection" on the performance and its "persistence as a mnemonic system is protected against what he calls "cumulative questioning" (*Collected* 342). Its power resides in listening. In the case of the Canadian case studies, new melodies function as a response to loss, and are positioned as an ethical repair. This soundscape is part of Connerton's paradigm of embodied memory. *Niggunim* reclaim a mode of transmission that does not leave a physical trace.

The New Zealand musicologist Christopher Small (1927-2011) is helpful in reimagining musical experience. Small defines musical experiences as "musicking." Small explains that "the act of musicking establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies" (*Musicking* 13). Music is not an object, but positioned as a verb. I position the *niggun* as a verb; to riff on Small's terminology, I would call it *nigguning.* The *niggun* functions as a transmission between generations. Small argues *musicking* is relational:

> They (the relationships) are to be found not only between those organized sounds which are conventionally thought of as being the stuff of musical meaning but also between the people who are taking part, in whatever capacity, in the performance; and they model or stand as a metaphor for, ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be; relationships between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world and even perhaps the supernatural world.

(*Musicking* 13)

The Peretz story will highlight this relational aspect of melody as will the three Canadian case studies. This chapter includes a case study of three melodic transmission of new *niggunim*: a concert performance at the University of Toronto, a transmission from a Canadian musician in memory of his father, and in conclusion, a transmission from a father to his newborn son in the neo-natal intensive care unit of a Toronto hospital. Whereas the textual tradition in this dissertation moves from parents to children or grandchildren, the musical transmission exists inside and outside of the parental paradigm. While this project privileges the parental paradigm of the Jewish ethical textual will, sometimes it is necessary to complicate the paradigm. The second case study complicates the parental paradigm because the *niggunim* were composed *from a son* to his deceased father, a melodic commemoration of loss. Time looks into the rear view mirror. The conventional temporal trajectory is *from* parent to child. The final case study combines wordless melody composed by Canadian musician with a story reimagined by Canadian storyteller Dan Yashinsky. Since the traditional textual transmission in Jewish ethical wills ignores the Jewish soundscape, this chapter fills a lacuna. In the soundscape, melodies are transmitted, and reimagined from one generation to the next moving through time and space. The melodic trajectory is non-linear. The process of transmission, reception and interpretation also offers another way of understanding what sonic legacy may contain, possess, upend and explore.

There are other reasons to listen to the soundscape. In its textual form, an ethical will privileges an individual voice, whereas the Jewish *niggun* often emerges from a collective process that continues to be reinvented. Recipients of a textual transmission may ignore or cherish a textual ethical will. The Peretz story illustrates another principle about melody. While the textual ethical will can remain unopened, a melody can move into uninterested ears. We see this dynamic

unfold when a Talmud student is invaded by an irresistible melody in the Peretz story. In "Memory in Oral and Literate Traditions" Jack Goody argues "it would be a mistake to view the handing down of culture as the exact counterpart of genetic transmission, a kind of cultural mimesis; genetic reproduction is largely self-replicating, but human learning involves generative processes, what has been called "learning to know" (*Collected Memory* 323). Later in this chapter we will hear an example of this "learning to know" in a call and response exercise in the concert at the University of Toronto. I am proposing another way of understanding non-material legacy as a form of experience through sound. Sound *does* have a material aspect in vibrations of voice, instruments, as well as scores. I am highlighting singing and listening as non-material. Finally, Greenblatt's mobility manifesto explores hiddenness as a component of cultural mobility. In order to illuminate melody as culturally mobile and ethically powerful, I want to begin with Peretz's story to help "sound" what may be otherwise inaudible.

A Gilgul Fun A Niggun

The Peretz story provides foundational principles about the *niggun* soundscape. "A gilgul fun a *niggun*" is about a wordless melody radically transformed as it travels on wagons and through forests, out of windows and flying into a circus organ grinder, into a circus performer, invading the soul of a Talmudic student, and sliding into the mouth of a rabbi. The *niggun* travels from places in the Ukraine and into Poland. The hallmark of the *niggun* is its reincarnation not only through literal travel, time zones, and spaces but also through its capacity for emotional range. The *niggun* emerges as an elastic vessel which can create comfort, transformation, joy, as well as lamentation. Moreover, the *niggun* is positioned as a tool of repair. The story could be read as a story about the migration of memory itself which is always constructed, reconstructed and reassembled. The melody constitutes a portable component of cultural memory. When it comes

to the *niggun* it is not only the singer who may change the tone, but the audience, too, wields power on its future.

Peretz opens with a narrator who describes how the same *niggun* can be sung in a joyful or a melancholy tone. The narrator shatters any expectation of melodic stability. The notes function as a guideline. The singers determine the outcome. The narrator then sets up the story by characterizing the *niggun* as the "reincarnation of a melody" (Peretz 240). People who hear the *niggun* borrow it as one might borrow a piece of clothing, and they alter the clothing to fit. It is not something that that can be owned or contained in either time (because it travels from one generation to another) or space (because of its mobility). We see this robust reincarnation: from an irresistible melody from a poor bride looking for contributions to help pay for her wedding, to a frenzied theatrical performance in Warsaw, and, reborn near the story's close as a plaintive wail emerging from a blind orphan. "And the soul of a melody comes from some emotion of a human being, such as love, anger, pity, vengeance, longing, remorse, sorrow. In short, everything a person feels can be embodied in a melody —and a melody lives" (238). The melody is *re-enacted*. We never learn who wrote the original. Subsequent singers reimagine its evolution, character and function. Music is encountered while it is being sung, in *medias res.* The *musicking* creates a relationship between the singer and the audience.

I note Creet's research about turning away from the recoverable origin, and looking instead at the migration of memory as well as the memory of migration. In this regard, the Peretz story's beginning echoes a legend about a rabbi who overhears a love song from a peasant, and then steals the melody for his own religious purposes, arguing the melody has returned home. In the story by Peretz, we never hear its musical afterlife because it unfolds as a recyclable resource without a defined beginning or ending. In this story, the *niggun* operates as a temporal juncture in a river that will continue to flow.

Peretz's story is built on an idea that nature is the source of any soundscape. There is no sonic creation *ex nihilo.* "A melody, as you doubtless know is a sum of sounds, as others say, a totality of tones. The sounds or tones are derived from nature. *A person does not invent them.* In nature there is no lack of sounds. Every object has its own sound, its characteristic tone, sometimes even an entire melody" (238 *emphasis mine*). Composition is positioned as a response. We hear Small's "musicking" because the story privileges the relationships that emerge between the singer and the audience, the power of the *experience* of sound . Small defined the term in *Musicking* (1998) as something that is radically democratized.[5] I highlight that democratization here because it is relevant to the *niggun* as a form that anyone can sing. It is *not* an opera aria.

[5] I have proposed this definition: To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing. We might at times even extend its meaning to what the person is doing who takes the tickets at the door or the hefty men

Another way of framing Small's privileging of the musical experience would be to say he highlights music as an incorporating practice. The notational system recedes into the archive.

Peretz's story opens with Reb Chaiml, a band conductor from Machnovka who travels to a nearby town of Berditchev to learn a new melody. The music teacher has vanished. His success will be predicated on what he can hear and improvise. Reb Chaiml has been commissioned to create a new song for an upcoming wedding for the daughter of a widow. The widow is wealthy. Reb Chaiml is poor and has many children. He hears a melody townsfolk sing to collect money for an impoverished bride. Music is deployed to change behaviour, an idea with Biblical origin, and a model to which I will return. He sees people dropping coins into the bride's basket. Here we see the ethical impact of the *niggun* upon a community. This melody is mesmerizing because its range includes joy and sorrow. However, on his way home as Reb Chaiml begins to sing, what comes out of his mouth turns into a lament. Fellow passengers sharing the wagon ride

who shift the piano and the drums or the roadies who set up the instruments and carry out the sound checks or the cleaners who clean up after everyone else has gone. They, too, are all contributing to the nature of the event that is a musical performance. … I have to make two things clear. The first is that to pay attention in any way to a musical performance, including a recorded performance, even to *Muzak* in an elevator, is to music. The second is related but needs to be stated separately: the verb to music is not concerned with valuation. It is descriptive, not prescriptive. It covers all participation in a musical performance, whether it takes place actively or passively, whether we like the way it happens or whether we do not, whether we consider it interesting or boring, constructive or destructive, sympathetic or antipathetic. The word will remain useful only for so long as we keep our own value judgments clear of it. (*Musicking* 9)

home hear him and when he stops they hear the sound of a child saying the *Kaddish,* the Jewish memorial prayer for the dead. He cannot erase the musical memory. He did not *seek* lamentation. When Reb Chaiml sings the *niggun* for the wedding guests, they revolt against its mournful tone. He has become distressed by the child's grief; haunted through sound. The connection constitutes another form of oral discourse; the sound of a mournful prayer has infected what used to be joyful melody.

The melody then travels and invades a theatre in Warsaw. The singers' tone is one of frenzy. Since the *niggun* functions as a live performance, each transmission contains unpredictability. The *niggun* then moves into a circus organ grinder. This reinvention is the first time the *niggun* has slipped inside of an instrument. The travelling circus features acrobats who have kidnapped a girl forced to perform stunts. The kidnappers beat the girl who is left abandoned and ill with typhus. People who find her lying unclothed take her to the hospital where she recovers, but she has lost her sight. One reading is that she has been raped. After this trauma, she functions an earwitness and now has only sound with which to navigate her future. Her previous life was dedicated to feats of physical agility under duress. Now she cannot function as an eyewitness and identify her attackers. In her destitution, she begins to sing as a way to beg.

It is during this crisis that the narrator tells us that the *niggun* had begun to rise in stature. Why? "It induced people to be charitable" (256). Herein is the crux of the enterprise for my purposes. Music alters behaviour, creating generosity. As a performer, she had no voice. Ironically, the loss of sight has given her more agency. Her response to catastrophe is "musicking." Her *nigguning* (to riff on Small's *musicking* term) launches a melodic revolution. When a studious Jew who loves studying Talmud hears her voice, he is unable to study, concentrate or sleep. He tries to block the music from his ears but "the melody managed to steal furtively between his fingers" (

258). Someone can become an accidental ear witness, to recall Reb Chaiml's experience. The student calls the girl a harlot, and shoos her away. The melody has entered through his window. He goes to the rabbi for help. He does not explain what the song is about, he sings the *niggun*. He recreates "musicking." The Talmud loving student does not consult the Talmud, a text that includes discussions about music. Textual primacy recedes. The song can only be understood by being heard : "The room was too small to contain the melody. Through the windows, it made its way into the street. A sea of flaming holiness gushed forth into the street, and the people outside cried in amazement: "The melody of the of the poor orphan! The melody of the orphaned girl!" (262). Reception is immediate. The rabbi, too, responds *in music* by humming. If this is the war between melody and text, melody has vanquished its opponent. The rabbi tells the Talmudic student he must atone for calling the orphan a harlot. Words have created harm. The student is ordered to find the orphan a match. He complies. The orphan marries a widower. The *niggun* has rehabilitated the orphan, transformed the Talmudic student, and functioned as the catalyst for repairing human relationships. Its power unfolds as a relational dynamic.

The *niggun* emerges as a platform for the human voice. It has the ability to soothe, comfort, repair, enhance joy and create kindness. However the *niggun* can also turn into an unpopular lament. It is the singer who shapes the melody by choosing whether to sing slowly or quickly, softly or loudly, plainly or with ornamentation. Peretz does not show where the *niggun* moves after the orphan's marriage. The aftermath Peretz provides is the girl's identity: she is the granddaughter of the miserly Berl Katzner, (242) the man whose death prompted his widow to commission a wedding music, the assignment with which the story began. The music began as a response to loss. The melody has been traced to its origin, but there is no family reunion. The girl's mother has died, the girl's father has moved to America. Human migration is ongoing. The

niggun provides *the only link* bridging the generations, connecting the girl *through sound* with her widowed grandmother. *Musicking* has connected generations who never had the opportunity to meet each other.

I read the commissioning of a new song as the grandmother's voice by proxy. She commissions a *niggun* as an act of legacy for her daughter, the orphan's mother. We learn that the widow, too, wished to remarry. She responds with an investment of affirming life through music. She paid for a musical performance which ended poorly during the wedding. However the *niggun* itself undergoes a return *and* repair in the mouth of the orphan girl. There was never a linear transmission from grandmother to granddaughter; the widow did not bequeath a musical score to her granddaughter, nor did she sing the melody to her, and there is no indication that they ever met. Yet the song wandered home. In the orphan's mouth the song becomes a tool of ethical repair.

Niggunim: A Defintion, History and Context

Niggun comes from the Hebrew word for melody (Edelman 36). A *niggun* may be a melody with only vocables (such as *la la la ya da da*) as well as a melody which includes words. In the *Concise Encyclopedia Of Jewish Music* types are classified by function. In the religious context the *gemara niggunim* is a chant students sing when studying Talmud, as well as the *Sabbath* or *Yom Tov niggunim* for holiday celebrations (185). The repertoire includes *tish niggunim* known as table songs, and dancing *niggunim* called *niggunay simha*. Song marks study, celebration, and community. *Niggunim* are connected to movement with dancing *niggunim.* I note this connection of dance with *niggunim* because Canadian musician Brian Katz wrote a *niggun* that emerged through dancing in the Negev.

In *What to listen for in Jewish Music*, Charles Heller points out that a song with vocables such as *ay ay ay* or *bim bam* are not unique to Jewish culture. The Plains Indians of North America as well as the native people of the Pacific North West possess these repertoires. In these cultures, however, people explained that their ancestors *once* knew the meaning, but words have been lost. In contrast, *niggunim* are *intended* as wordless (Heller 233). The *deliberately* wordless form constituted part of the movement for the supremacy of melody. "Chassidism set piety above learning and regarded the expression of exuberant joy as a chief religious duty," explains Abraham Zvi Idelsohn in his *Jewish Music in its Historical Development.* Idelsohn estimates that at the end of the nineteenth century there were about three to four million adherents of Chassidism (*Jewish Music* 414). It is impossible to estimate how many melodies were obliterated during the Holocaust. How many melodies had no one to remember them?

Heller (1946–) argues that the Hasidic niggun is distinctive because of pacing. Heller argues that this "motor element" is compelling whether sung by *Hasidim* or hockey fans. He reveals that one of the tunes for Toronto Maple Leafs' hockey games in Canada is a version of *Hava Nagila* (originally a Hasidic niggun)[6] and that the stadium version creates "frenzied rhythmic clapping" (232). Pacing matters because of power." Endless repetition of a fast melody has a further effect: it acts like a hypnotic, leading to a state of ecstasy, clinically described as a disassociated state (233). The singer can move from lullaby-like slowness to frenetic rapidity. The singing of *niggunim* is positioned here as a communal activity, a form of oral transmission that generates its

[6] Brian Katz points out that the musical version of *Hava Nagila* featured at Maple Leafs hockey games in Canada removed part of the Jewish sound by removing the augmented second and replacing it with a major rather than minor sound.

power *from* a community. The melody has moved from an eastern European Hasidic tradition and slipped into Canadian hockey arena in the contemporary moment. In this paradigm orality and community are intertwined.

One of the arguments that the Hasidic community made for the superiority of music was that a text limits the time of the tune. When the text is finished, the song is finished. They argued that the strategic advantage of the *niggun* was that it could be repeated. Variability emerges with oral performance. Its orality is highlighted, not only because there are no lyrics but because of the fluid vocal dynamics. The *Concise* Encyclopedia *of Jewish Music* delineates the rise of the *niggun* by explaining its psychological appeal as a response to catastrophe in eighteenth century Poland. The Hasidic movement positioned song as a powerful force for "inspiration, devotion, exaltation, ecstasy and joy" (*Concise Encyclopedia*185). The Polish-born mystical Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (known as the BeSHt 1698-1760) launched a democratized campaign in which he argued that joy functioned as a religious obligation (*Concise* 96). Historically music had been forbidden after the destruction of the temple (C.E 70) as a sign of mourning. However, in the eighteenth century, music emerged as a way to offer solace. Grief was fresh. Music provided an experience that text alone could not deliver. Music filled a gap. Moreover, the *niggun* did not disappear when pogroms stopped. The appeal of the *niggun* and its subsequent mobility and recreation over more than two hundred years suggests it delivers compelling *musicking*.

This obligation to create joy is related thematically to the ethics of comedy I explored in the first chapter. I argued that the ethics of Jewish comedy defiantly refused to glorify suffering. Alter argued that the Jewish comic vision rejected the Christian promise of redemption through suffering (*Jewish Wry* 25-36). In so doing, the Jewish comic vision rejected catastrophic thinking. Comedy functioned as a weapon. This obligation to create joy through melody also

softens suffering. Melody constitutes another mode of responding to catastrophe or loss. The *niggun* functions as a salve. The experience of *nigguning* does not require textual literacy, its repertoire is accessible, and its mobility makes it portable for migration. As an incorporating practice, it does not require materials. These are the invisible ethical principles made visible. I will now introduce the three Canadian case studies.

Interview Methodology

I interviewed two Canadian musicians who have written *niggunim* including Allan Soberman September 20, 2018, Brian Katz November 22, 2018, January 17, 2019 and one American musician, Rabbi Jack Schectman Gabriel December 5, 2018. Soberman also joined the interview with Jack Schectman Gabriel December 5 2018 about mid-way through the interview in a surprise visit. The interviews were structured with specific questions but designed to allow enough flexibility for follow up questions. I eliminated an unstructured interview because I required structure, but I also eliminated fully structured interview because I required flexibility. All the interviews were conducted in person and recorded in the city of Toronto, Ontario Canada in 2018 and 2019.

The Mobility Manifesto

Greenblatt's mobility manifesto is designed to "shed light on hidden as well as conspicuous movements of people, objects, images, texts and ideas" (252). I am arguing to expand Greenblatt's list to include *niggunim*. Why does mobility matter? Music is intertwined with movement. I am going to highlight three aspects of the mobility manifesto and show how these components are part of the *niggunim* soundscape: the literal mobility, hidden movement, as well as contact zones where *niggunim* are heard, adapted and improvised upon.

Case One The University Concert

During a *klezmer* concert at Walter Hall at the University of Toronto November 29, 2018, Canadian musician and teacher Brian Katz introduced his class repertoire by explaining that he began his course by teaching sources of *klezmer* music. Here is how Brian Katz introduced the Jewish component of the concert on November 29 2019 at Walter Hall at the University of Toronto:

http://walterhallrecordings.music.utoronto.ca/recordings/2018%20Nov%2029%20WME/Nov%2029%20WME%2015%20Klezmer%20Ens%20Talk.mp3

What began orally was instrumentalized. Katz demonstrated 'catching' a *niggun*. He sang one of the *klezmer* scales called *meshabarach* , a favourite mode amongst cantors. *Meshabarch* is the Hebrew word that begins a prayer for healing, and literally means "the One who blessed." The *niggun* contains the melody of the prayer but it has shed its liturgical language and been reimagined with vocables. Katz demonstrates the improvisational and playful possibilities in this recording from 29 November 2019 from Walter Hall.

http://walterhallrecordings.music.utoronto.ca/recordings/2018%20Nov%2029%20WME/Nov%2029%20WME%2016%20Klezmer%20Ens%20Tarras%20Katz.mp3

(Katz, Brian, World Music Ensembles. Directors Brian Katz, Jenny Blackbird and Gary Nagata Walter Hall November 29 2018.)

The *niggunim* gain momentum, and adaptive possibilities from being sung within a community. Katz positions the call and response exercise as a musical conversation between a teacher and his students and, towards the close, the conversation then opens to include the audience. We hear "musicking". Because of its participatory nature, the listener can become a producer:

To pause for a moment, to provide a brief overview of how this lesson relates to the field, I want to address the fact that musicologist and scholar Edwin Seroussi has argued that Jewish studies has been too logocentric.[7] This chapter is not a musicological analysis, but represents my response to a gap Seroussi and others including scholar Judah Cohen have identified. Cohen has observed that music has been deployed to fill an emotional need [8]. This chapter will build on

[7] In "Music the "Jew' of Jewish Studies: Updated Readers Digest" Seroussi argues music tells a different story from text. He proposes a "musicology of the Jewish." His vision includes but is not limited to leveraging digital repositories, avoiding binaries such as labelling music "Sephardic or Ashkenazi", examining how Jews understood sound, as well as an exploring music as a "transformative force in religious experience."

[8] "Fortunately, scholarship has largely moved beyond the idea that "Jewish sound" has a common origin and vocabulary. Rather, we can view it as simultaneously ephemeral and historical, reinforcing the ideas of a moment and then decaying quickly. Understanding that relationship and our attempts to capture those moments in writing or on recording reveals the stakes in creating Jewish sonic cultures, and thus ideas of sonic (or musical) "traditions." In eras when Zionists sought to establish new musical conventions for a Hebrew-speaking world, when liberal Jewish leaders attempted to spur Jewish identification through a more noticeable "ethnic" musical form, when cantors aimed to assert their place in Jewish history by creating parallels to opera singers, and when composers explored ideas about Jewish music to parallel other national sonic narratives, sound's fleeting/permanent dichotomy became an important component. Each group constructed an answer to the problematic question "What is Jewish music?" that could

Cohen's observation, but, in addition, I will explore how wordless music may also fill a cultural gap and provide ethical repair. In her introduction "The Migration of Memory and Memories of Migration, Creet argues

> Memory in all its forms, physical, psychological, cultural, and familial plays a crucial role within the contexts of migration, immigration, resettlement and diasporas because memory provides continuity to the dislocations of social identity, particularly in a country like Canada, a nation in large part formed by migration and memories of migration. (3)

Memory and Migration features a multidisciplinary exploration of memory studies in Canada. Musical memory is not represented. This chapter is designed to enrich the discourse by introducing Canadian *niggunim*. The *Memory and Migration* collection includes a section classified as "sense memory." This Canadian contribution of *niggunim* gives us an opportunity to hear what has until now been inaudible. This chapter will explore the wordless *niggun i*n the contemporary Canadian moment.

meet emotional needs first, and intellectual needs through repetition and writing. (Cohen, "To Hear the World Through Jewish Ears, AJS)

I would like to listen first to the classroom transmission. For some students, the music functions as a gateway to exploring Jewish culture through a Jewish musical soundscape which is new according to interviews with Katz. Katz observed that this *musicking* for his Jewish students sometimes functions as their first introduction to Jewish culture. For what writer Anne Roiphe termed a "generation without memory," a classroom may fill a gap. These music students have been classically trained. Not all of them are Jewish. Katz invites them into the *niggunim* soundscape by teaching a musical form that is highly mobile, playful, and open to improvisation. The transmission moves from teacher to student, and consists of a legacy of Jewish sound shared through practice, rehearsal, and performance. I would like to contextualize this musical lesson with a historical illustration about the interplay between text and orality .

I am bringing in this historical frame because it illuminates the primacy of orality as a mode of learning, and more broadly a form of learning through embodied memory. It is connected to learning in the body in a face to face encounter. Martin Jaffee argues in *Torah in the Mouth Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE -400 CE* that the rabbis of the third century repositioned orality or what the rabbis termed "Oral Torah" as a way to buttress their system of face to face learning. Jaffee argues that during the Second Temple and late antiquity, writers used oral traditions, but they did not appeal to orality as authoritative. He argues that later the rabbis elevated what they called "Torah in the Mouth" into a mode of legitimate transmission. In so doing, orality gained traction and subsequent authority. In "Rabbinic Authorship as a Collective Enterprise" Jaffee argues that the written text functions only as a departure point and its "restoration" to "oral performance" is part of "interpretive *experiments*

that emerge among people engaged in mutual discourse" (20 *emphasis mine*) . This primacy on orality as a learning mode has powerful consequences. The fluidity of orality allows the interpretive system to remain fresh. Whereas a sacred text may be fixed, the conversations that emerge around and about that text remain mobile.

So what happens when words disappear? This connection between text and orality applies to the contemporary music lesson because the musical notation functions only as a departure point. I am building on Small's idea of pushing what he called the "black dots" of notation into the background, and foregrounding instead the face to face music lesson. I am arguing that the musical notation *if it exists at all* functions as the "text." During interviews Katz explained that when musicians rehearse or play *niggunim* they do so by singing because even the titles may not refer to the melody the musician wants to share. The same title can be attached to different melodies. During the University of Toronto concert, Katz introduced the music with a call and response *niggun* exercise. The *niggun* returns to its oral origin, and then it is shared, adapted and improvised upon in a musical conversation that begins with the teacher, moves to the students, and finally extends to the audience. Students are participants in their own "interpretive experiments" and, in return, they create their own "mutual discourse " in *niggunim*. The *niggun* is *not* an operatic aria, it can be sung by ordinary people. The *niggun* functions as a highly democratized form, just as the traditional ethical will is a democratized textual transmission for anyone literate enough to write a letter. What is transmitted explicitly is an experience of melody through the body.

As a young musician in Toronto, Katz recognized the melodies of the *klezmer* revival in the 1970s from the soundscape of his childhood home in Toronto. However even without melodic recognition, even without the listener being a musician, the invitation into the soundscape

provides an experience of audible history through melody. For the recipient, the experience is about listening to a *niggun* soundscape, and being invited inside an experience of sound. For people who will never write, receive or see a Jewish textual ethical will the *niggun* soundscape fills a cultural gap. It functions as a sonic bridge to history and geography at the same time and fulfills an ethical gap for a generation of Katz's music students, or audience members who, like American writer Anne Roiphe, may be a generation without any Jewish soundscape memory. However reception is not a passive act. Earwitnessing becomes accessible but also participatory. Katz invites engagement. This invitation is connected in its participatory democratized ethos to the postwar counter memorial movement I explored in chapter three. It is enriched by and predicated upon audience engagement.

For the singer, the *niggun* functions as a sort of musical canvas upon which each singer will craft his or her own interpretation. This issue of interpretation is essential for the *niggun* as well as for textual forms of transmission. Shoshana Walfish responds to her grandmother's memoir by imagining the fierceness of her great grandmother. Solomon Rabinowitz's ancestors select which stories to read aloud. *Niggunim* constitute another invitation for interpretation. What is different is that the transmission is not stable, and the trajectory is not linear. Both the *niggunim* and the Rabinowitz legacy require orality and community. Legacy includes a link with personal as well as collective history and inheritance but its essence-like the textual ethical will-remains a gift that excludes material assets.

Music and Mystery

In *Abraham Joshua Heschel Essential Writings*, Susannah Heschel recalls a story her father used to tell. Someone looks through a window and sees people jumping. To the observer, these people look as if they are insane. The observer cannot hear. Then the observer enters this room, hears music, and realizes people are dancing. "From the outside prayer and religious observance are difficult to understand. Only when the inner music is perceived can the religious expression begin to have meaning" (138). What has created the understanding is something that has transpired in the hearing. Sound has cracked open a universe where vision failed. In "Prayer Makes Us Worthy of Being Saved," Abraham Joshua Heschel suggests "Prayer is song" (A. Heschel 162). This equation of prayer as song was not Heschel's invention. "Where there is song, there is prayer" (Talmud *Bavli Berakhot* 6a as quoted in Weissenberg 139).

In this essay, Heschel explores the purpose of Jewish prayer. I am pausing to include Heschel because of his recognition of the power of music alongside the limits of language. He juxtaposes the power of words with music. He admits his life's work is contained in words. He wrote sermons, essays, and books. He did not write music, but was someone captivated and moved by its power: "The only language that seems to be compatible with the wonder and mystery of being is the language of music" (162). "Music is more than just expressiveness. It is rather a reaching out towards a realm that lies *beyond the reach of verbal propositions*." (A. Heschel 162 *emphasis mine).* Heschel was honest about its lure:

> I am neither a musician nor an expert in music. But the *shattering* experience of music has been a challenge to my thinking on ultimate issues. I spend my life working with

> thoughts. And one problem that gives me no rest is : Do these thoughts ever rise to the heights reached by authentic music? (162 *emphasis mine*)

I am deploying Heschel's question as a departure point. How does the *niggun* function as a cultural transmission that *sounds* this realm "beyond verbal proposition"? How might music fill a gap? I am suggesting that one way out of this paradox is to examine Peretz story about a *niggun.* We can uncover how the niggun functions, where it moves, and why it's compelling. I am not arguing against mystery that is part of *musicking*. I am, however, arguing that one way to probe the mystery, to understand its mode of operations is look at the components of the *niggun* soundscape. Since music is temporal, recipients do *not* have a concrete object. In the Peretz story, melody travels through memory. There is no notation, recording, or trace. Connerton argues that is through the performance and formalization of the commemorative practice that the incorporating practice derives its persistence as a mnemonic system. Here however the mnemonic system includes the capacity for improvisation, unlike, for example, the acquisition of refined table manners in the deployment of cutlery. Katz argues that music is not "about" anything; rather that music should be thought of as a verb "What (music) means is embodied in the experience," Katz argues (Katz interview Nov 2018). "Music is a verb… The power is in the experience" (Katz interview Nov 2018). Katz points out that someone could study music, research and amass a tremendous knowledge about music without *being musical*. During interviews with musicians Allan Soberman, Jack Schectman Gabriel, and Brian Katz they often responded to a question by *musicking,* not by explanation.

This chapter will constitute an attempt, like the observer in Heschel's story of entering the room where the music is playing, of trying to listen to that soundscape and hear the stories the music may be unleashing, unfolding , and upending.

Niggunim And Cultural Mobility

How might wordless melody sketch a soundscape? The *niggun* can be more clearly heard with a literary text as well as components of Greenblatt's "mobility manifesto." Greenblatt's manifesto helps *to listen* to cultural mobility in terms of literal mobility, hidden movement, as well as to identify "contact zones" such as compositions, performances, and recordings where cultural goods are exchanged. If we imagine Heschel's realm "beyond verbal proposition" as a *niggun* soundscape, then Greenblatt's mobility manifesto can help us position the soundscape. I am deploying three aspects of the mobility manifesto: literal mobility (mechanisms of movement through time and space), hidden material (material that may be disguised, unrecognized or deployed in a new context as well as other forms of hiddenness), as well "contact zones" (where *niggunim* might be shared, distributed and improvised upon). These are some but not all of the categories Greenblatt delineates. We listen to how the *niggunim* migrate from one place or time, how the articulation of the sound itself may contain mobility, how movement is intertwined with the composition (literal and hidden mobility), as well as how the *niggunim* may wield hidden power (including the values embedded within the music).

I want to share a historical example of the *niggun's* metamorphosis and how it was deployed to fill a cultural gap, and in so doing was reinvented. [9] Yaacov Mazor's research provides a compelling sounding of cultural mobility. Zionist secular pioneers wanted music for the creation of the state of Israel. The pioneers worked to reject the image of the Diaspora Jew, and, in creating a state, they needed a "new" musical repertoire. They stripped the *niggun* of its Hasidic

[9] I want to thank Yael Seliger for translating and bringing to my attention Yaacov Mazor's "From Hassidic Niggun to Israeli Song "in Katedra 115 (2005) 95-105 (in Hebrew)

religious context, and replaced it with secular nationalist ideology to create a Jewish soundtrack for "authentic" Israeli folk singing and dancing. Even when, as part of the modernist formation of Zionist ideology, pioneers rejected Yiddish, the *niggun* slipped into the secular socialist campaign for political independence. As a musical form, it emerged as remarkably agile like a gymnast of melody. The history of migration includes the power of *musical* memory. Zionism as a political movement mobilized its membership to learn Hebrew, advocated for the cultivation of a new strong Jew of the land, and rejected the stigmatized Diaspora Jew. The Zionist project prioritized self-reliance over helplessness, self-defense as opposed to victimhood, and autonomy with Jewish sovereignty. The Jew of the land was no longer the Jew *exclusively* of the book. However, pioneers of the first *aliyot* of the 19th and early 20th century brought collective musical memory from their traditional homes in Eastern Europe. They remembered *niggunim*. The pioneers repositioned this music as part of the spirit of the 'native" Israeli in their state building and the construction of culture. They replaced devotion to God with attachment to the land of Israel. Historically, the traditional Hassidic *niggun* had been connected to religious devotion. The *niggun* created musical experiences that text alone could not deliver for both communities. For both the religious and secular communities, the melody offered the ethics of accessibility, and connection to a community. Singing a *niggun* did not require money, literacy or specialized training and singing was a way to connect with a social community. In its secular adaption, the *niggun* was leveraged as a spiritual way of expressing closeness to the land of Israel, fulfilling the Zionist dream. Music could function as a secular prayer that articulated hope. As a form of culture, the music is so mobile that a melody could be easily detached from its original context as Jan Assmann has noted when it comes to components of cultural memory.

It was during this era of the early twentieth century, Avraham Zvi Idelsohn a scholar, musician and composer moved to Jerusalem in 1906. He worked as a cantor and music teacher at the Hebrew Teacher's College. He created an ambitious project to record the diversity of the Jewish community. He was interested in the Jewish musical and linguistic soundscapes. *Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies*, the first volume of his ten-volume project was published in 1914. In 1922 he published *Sefer Hashirm* (Book of Songs) which includes the publication of his arrangement of *Hava Nagila*. He had heard the melody in Jerusalem around 1915 and was searching for a folk song for his Jerusalem choir. He added words. What he heard first was the *niggun,* the wordless melody. He selected the melody we know now as *Hava Nagila* for the choir around 1918. In Israel, the song became what was known as a "*sh'lager*" the Hebrew word for a hit (Mazor via Seliger). As part of the movement for Jewish sovereignty, the *niggun* turned into what is known as "hagshama," Hebrew national territorial realization (Mazor via Seliger). None of this would have been possible without Idelsohn first hearing Hasidic Jews singing this melody in Jerusalem. However the melody's dissemination gained traction with his decision to teach and record the melody. Greenblatt points out that texts and images claimed as "authentic" or "indigenous" are often of recent invention. The melody here was not a recent invention, but the secular socialist deployment shows the fluidity with which a melody can be reconfigured. Its popularity attests to its appeal for both communities. We have no name for the original composer. Is it not possible the religious community had also appropriated a melody for *their* own use from a secular soundscape, or that the melody emerged from cultural hybridization? The rapidity of its mobility is ear opening—Roberta Grossman's documentary *Hava Nagaila The Movie* outlines the global trajectory of the melody and reveals how it has been transformed and turned into a celebratory standard, loved, hated and parodied by entertainers and recognized,

misunderstood, and deployed for purposes around the world. In this context, it is the audience who will determine the memory of the melody and subsequently the trajectory of its migration. The wordless *niggun* is still audible, but is now disguised with words.

I am sketching the contours of Heschel's realm "beyond verbal proposition" by constructing a *niggun* soundscape. In *Memory and Migration* Creet asks what if we look at the way memory migrates? What if instead of looking at historical origin (itself a slippery proposition with multiple claims about authorship)[10] we examine the migratory path of *niggunim*? For the Hasidic community, the melody was a way of articulating God's presence. For the socialist pioneers, the music was part of a soundscape of sovereignty. For Jews such as the ones featured in *Hava Nagila The Movie,* the melody functioned as a collective cue to race onto the dance floor. Music is *literally* linked with movement, intertwined with raucous communal dancing. Because the melody became well recognized, entertainers deployed the melody for parody. Each group customized the music for their own purposes. As the *niggun* morphed into a collective dance routine, it too can be seen as a form of embodied social memory.

Niggun and Myth of Repair

[10] Roberta Grossman's documentary "Hava Nagila The Movie" (2012) traces the creative evolution of a *niggun* of Sadagora Hassidim from Sadagora, from present day Ukraine to Israel and beyond. The Sadagorer Hasidim moved to Palestine in 1905. Idelsohn arrived in 1906. Abraham Zvi Idelsohn recorded the song, and added words inspired by the Biblical psalms. In subsequent decades, musicians transformed the song into a celebratory standard around the world. The documentary includes the story of a lawsuit amongst two dueling families who claim ownership as well as royalties from recordings of the melody.

In chapter two, I argued that the myth of historical repair and ancestral rescue allows people to process *both* catastrophe and renewal. How might music be connected to the myth of historical repair, and how might the experience of music constitute *its own response* to both catastrophe and renewal? James Loeffler points out that for the 18th century Hasidic movement the 'borrowing' of secular melodies from non-Jewish cultures was positioned as *tikkun* or repair:

> Where do the melodies of Hasidic *niggunnim* come from? While many tunes are ascribed to specific musicians or famous *rebbes*, other were adopted from a diverse array of sources, including traditional Jewish prayer, modes to Cossack dances, Polish military marches, East European folk songs, Near Eastern dance tunes and even Central European waltzes. The use of secular or non-Jewish melodies for *niggunim* was not considered a problem for Hasidic Jews. On the contrary, Hasidic thought contains a notion of *tikkun* (literally, "fixing"), whereby non-Jewish or secular melodies can be spiritually redeemed and restored to their religious state by being sung as *niggunim*, either with new religious lyrics or without words altogether.
>
> A famous example of this *tikkun* is the Hungarian *nigun*, "Gules, gules." According to tradition, the Kalever *Tzaddik,* Isaac Eizik (Toib) of Kalev (1744-1821), was once walking in the Ukrainian forest when he heard a pastoral shepherd singing a love song in Ukrainian. The Hasidic Jew was captivated by the song, whose lyrics spoke of the shepherd's longing for his love, separated from him by the vast forest. The Hasidic *rebbe* took the song and translated the lyrics into Yiddish, replacing the lyrics' description of secular love with a description of his soul's longing for the *shechinah*, the mystical divine presence (of God). He then asked the shepherd to sing the song, but the young man found

> he had forgotten it. Whereupon the Hasid exclaimed, ""I have purified the *nigun* and returned it to its holy sources!" //www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-nigun/

This theft is positioned as a process of lost and found. Music has been returned for a sacred purpose. The words are removed and become a detachable portable component of the cultural product. Traditional boundaries between peasant and rabbi, between religious and secular, between love song and religious expression have been obliterated. What was secular has become sacred. This story also *ear opens* the mobility manifesto because the music has literally moved from the mouth of the Ukrainian peasant to the Hasidic rabbi, its origin remains hidden, and it will now presumably be disseminated as a religious song or prayer. One may conclude that it was the melody itself that captivated the rabbi who can easily replace the secular love song lyrics with his own lyrics. Who may hear it afterwards and borrow it again? If the *niggun* had *no words* what would have transformed it from a sacred rather than a secular instrument? Was the Ukrainian peasant the composer or did he also 'borrow' the melody ? We never hear its musical afterlife or learn its original genesis.

In this context, does not the identity and context of the singer determine the function of the *niggun?* Melody emerges as a mobile force for multiple purposes. It is possible that the peasant will once again recall what he has forgotten and resume singing the melody as a love song. Both communities can deploy the melody. Melody can move audiences. Sound travels outside of the forest. Finally, in the musical act of ear witnessing in this story—in the intersection between the peasant's love song and the rabbi's ears—there is the necessity of musical memory and possibility of creative interpretation. The story introduces the idea that culture itself can grow out of something syncretic. It is not made explicitly clear here *how* the rabbi may have improvised, but he can only re-enact the melody through memory. The melody's

existence is predicated on musical memory. The rabbi's rendition will be something new given his own musical repertoire, skill, and memory. The story constitutes what Friederike Pannewick identifies as "syncretical processes of intermingling" (216). In "Performativity and Mobility Middle Eastern Traditions on the Move" Pannewick explores the migratory path of theatre within the Middle East and beyond, and shows how the "traditions" themselves are always in motion and influenced by multiple variables:

> The resulting new and modified form is neither a cultural misunderstanding nor a failed reading. The highly creative procedures of what James Clifford has called "inventive syncretism" do not weaken the expressive power of these traditional at all—on the contrary. (216)

For the *niggun,* what this syncretism means is that it can borrow from the world and adapt as many melodies as are possible, from military march to folk song. It is not dependent on stability of place but is rewarded by travelling. The sources of its repertoire are rich, and as a form it becomes capable of renewal no matter where it may wander. Reversal is always possible-moving from a religious melody to a secular rallying cry as in *Hava Nagila,* or the reverse movement from love song to Hasidic prayer. The secular borrowing leverages the power of music as a ritual, a ritual that is part of the religious enterprise that the secular community is at the same time disavowing. The wordless *niggun* is ideal for this mobility but one can see here that even with words, the lyrics are easily replaced with new words, and it is the melody that has attracted attention. It offers any community possibilities of *musicking*. The words are part of the portable component of cultural memory as Jan Assmann has argued and they can easily be detached as one would detach clothing from a clothesline. The clothesline functions as the melody.

Loeffler argues that the *niggun* as a spiritual mode of expression resonated powerfully with poorer Jewish families in the 18th century in eastern Europe who could not afford to send their sons to the *yeshiva* for religious education, and had felt excluded from communities of Jewish learning. During this era, the religious education in the *yeshiva* was exclusively for boys. Loeffler argues there was a cultural divide because some Jews assumed that the more learned Jews were more pious. But what happened to those who could not afford a religious education? What happened to students who loved to sing? What happened to those who were illiterate but musical? The melody moved in because it was accessible, mobile and emotionally powerful. By contrast, the sacred text of the Hebrew Bible was unalterable. The *musicking* provided a way to belong. The ethical component here is that because the singing was not dependent on economic class, musical skill or family pedigree, it functioned as a radically democratized forum for the human voice, and for connecting to a community through sound alone.

Migrations of a Melody and Theoretical Considerations

"Migrations of a Melody" by the Yiddish writer Isaac Loeb Peretz (1851-1915) provides a way to hear sonic memory as a form of re-enactment, as well as a way *to hear* Greenblatt's ideas about cultural mobility. In *Zakhor*, Yerushalmi presented a concept of Jewish memory as re-enactment. Memory functions as a fluid force, capable of adjusting itself to changing circumstances. Yerushalmi distinguished memory from historical recollection, which tends to be static and to create distance from the historical event. Yerushalmi provides an example during a Passover *Seder* in which participants are asked to imagine that when they eat *matzah*, the unleavened bread, they are eating a bread of affliction as slaves who will be moving into freedom. Recitation functions as re-enactment, creating imaginary time travel in order to make the *past present* (Yerushalmi 44-45). Re-enactment through recitation collapses temporal boundaries. Musical ear witnessing works as re-enactment through sound. Oral performance of *niggunim* collapses temporal boundaries. The orality of the *niggun* invites improvisation.
An earwitness is someone who can testify to what he or she has heard. Murray Schafer the Canadian composer, and author of *Our Sonic Environment and The Soundscape the Turning of the World* coined the term "earwitness" as well as "soundscape" as a way to understand the "sonic environment." Schafer argues that noise pollution has made it more difficult to hear the soundscape of the natural environment. Schafer created a lexicon for its architecture. The English language is influenced by the visual field (we say we show, we see when we understand, we illuminate etc). This pivot of focus onto the ear functions as a corrective to recalibrate the primacy of listening. Both the contemporary composer Schafer (1933–) and the 19th century Polish Yiddish writer Isaac Loeb Peretz (1852-1915) posit that nature constitutes the original source of all sound.

Unlike testimony from an eyewitness, the *niggun* earwitness needs to perform the melody from what he or she has remembered. In this way, ear witnessing occupies a liminal temporal state because the musical memory is contained in what the ear witness has heard, but—at the same—the ear witness singing the remembered melody is creating something new. We have melodic temporal fusion of past and present. In Yerushalmi's example the person eating the *matzah* is inhabiting two time zones but the recitation is a usually but not always the fixed text of the *Haggadah.*

In this way, the ear witness performs musical witnessing. The eyewitness recalls what he or she has seen. An eyewitness is not required to re-enact testimony if providing details about criminal activity or an accident. When the earwitness *re-enacts* what he or she has heard, the song changes. The singer is not able to reproduce an *identical* copy of what he or she heard. The singer uses melodic, rhythmic and stylistic interpretation. There may also be accidental error or deliberate improvisation, including omission and additions. Katz explains that the *niggun* invites a singer to sing melismatically which allows a singer to deploy multiple pitches within a single syllable (Katz, Nov interview). Melisma is common to the opera repertoire. For the *niggun*, then, even a single syllable may contain movement. The elasticity of the vessel applies not only to its ability to borrow external melody, to move from joyful to sorrowful, but movement is contained in articulation. Listen to how American musician Joey Weisenberg delineates "How to Sing a Melody 20 Times in a Row: Creating Spontaneous Variations, Improvisations and Interpretations":

> I used to know only five melodies and people thought I was a *niggun* expert-but what was really happening was that I was good at continuously *reinventing* those same melodies over and over again. I would work them this way and that, sing them loudly and quietly,

fast and slow with *dreys* (turns) and straight, you name it. Thus, one melody could easily last 20 minutes or longer, (All the more so when other people were singing, too). It's enough to know only five melodies or even one melody as long as you know how to milk the melody for all its' worth.

The main purpose here is to turn off our 'channel switching urge' to turn off that boredom instinct that says " the next thing will be better than this." Reality Check: The *next melody we feel duty bound to sing is just as good or bad as the current one.* So what's the rush? Rather we'd do better to stay on the same melody for a while focusing, instead, on *how we're singing it a*nd *what we're bringing to it that is going to keep it fresh and alive.* (*Singing Communities* 23 *emphasis mine*)

Each performance has the capacity to become a new creation. The music is transformed when it becomes a communal performance. In this way, the oral performance tells a different story than the textual notation. The text functions as the departure gate. With *nigguning* as musicking, we earwitness creative musical construction, reconstruction and reassembly. Weisenberg's strategy *to keep it fresh and alive* functions as an ethical repair for the act of musicking and *nigguning* in particular. The repair constitutes a way to recalibrate the experience of listening by turning off the channel switching and creating a more profound experience within a soundscape, one note at a time. We can 'earwitness' how this dynamic unfolds by listening to Brian Katz's call and response with his students at the University of Toronto, the music we heard earlier in this chapter, as well as in a composition called *Niggun Elora* that I will introduce later in this chapter.

Case Number Two

Ethical wills are often positioned as acts of chronological legacy. However, time can move in the opposite direction. Toronto musician Allan Soberman's Polish-born father Morris Soberman (1908-1999) worked at Toronto's *Beth Tzedec* synagogue as a Torah reader, cantor, and a *bar mitzvah* teacher. Allan Soberman created music as a way of honouring his memory. Soberman said the music was his way of "shaking hands" with his father. " I thought my name was the cantor's son" (Soberman interview 20 September). Soberman, a secular musician, merged his own repertoire with the cantorial soundtrack of his childhood Toronto home, and created something new. In an interview he explained, "I was trying to create something from my musical inheritance, from my father. I would be using that legacy" (2 July 2019). He described the merger of secular and sacred music as "Queen and the Beach Boys have a *bar mitzvah*." Soberman said he wanted to write *niggunim* because it is liberating to perform music without being inhibited by lyrics. "You can throw yourself into the notes." He compared the experience to "bathing" as an immersion in melody. He frames the music itself as something that is embodied. During an interview, he described the process as "emotional osmosis." The music is positioned as a response to loss, and a mode of repair.

During an interview with Soberman and Schectman-Gabriel, neither musician could recall how the music was constructed. They worked on both *niggunim* together in the basement of Gabriel's daughter's Toronto home when Gabriel was visiting from the United States. In this way there remains something hidden about the compositional process. Neither musician could explain the source for the melodies. They described their collaboration process as one of give and take, playing and revising and listening to each other's suggestions. What they describe sounds like a musical conversation, a form of creative oral discourse. Their musical discourse is the compositional version of what Martin Jaffee refers to the rabbis doing when it comes to

privileging the power of orality for their own purposes with face to face learning. Soberman recorded the *niggunim* on both albums. Recording is one of the contact zones for cultural mobility and digitization allows for distribution and turns the *niggun* into an inscribing practice since it now exists as a digitized file: Here is the *Niggunda* and then the *Nigginisht* underneath:

https://soundcloud.com/allan-soberman/nigunda

(*The Quest Continues,* The Drive Shed, Toronto, 2012)

Here is the link for *Nigunisht*:

https://soundcloud.com/allan-soberman/nigunisht

(*Searching for My Voice,* Lydian Sound, Toronto, 2002)

Case Number Three: "Talking You In"

Here is the link to the collaboration https://briankatz.com/audio/

In order to see how the mobility manifesto helps to illuminate the deployment of *niggunim* as an act of legacy, I want to finally highlight *Talking You In* by Brian Katz and Canadian storyteller Dan Yashinsky. The piece which they recorded in 2010 tells the story of the birth of Yashinsky's second child born in 1991 as "sick as a sick baby could be." He was in intensive care neo-natal unit at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto for the first three weeks of his life. The title "Talking You In" is taken from the idea of the operating code of an air traffic controller who has to give an untrained passenger directions for landing a plane in an emergency. *Talking You In* invites the listener into a liminal state where a newborn baby hovers between life and death. Yashinsky tells the baby stories, songs and jokes. Yashinsky weeps. He faints in the middle of the ward. Yashinsky and his wife Carol Zavitz do not know if the baby will live or die. They want to him to hear more than "beep beep beep" of hospital machinery. Yashinsky and his wife also give the baby a name so he will be seen as a tiny human being, and not just a patient. Jacob Yashinsky-Zavitz is named after a beloved grandfather Jack Yashinsky, Dan Yashinsky's father. The legacy of naming has linked the new life with a paternal ancestor. The new Jacob is connected to the elder whom he will never meet but who will exist in memory. Yashinsky functions as the storyteller. Katz performs an original *niggun* called *Niggun Elora*. The *niggun* functions as the musical motif and anchor. I am going to deploy some components of Greenblatt's mobility manifesto and explore how these components open our ears to the

soundscape of the *niggunim*. Yashinsky and Katz create a legacy for this baby, for his parents, and afterwards the collaboration is deployed as performance piece for audiences in multiple locations.

Literal Mobility

In 2010, Brian Katz travelled to Elora Ontario to enjoy some quiet. While he was walking he ran into Rabbi Elyse Goldstein, a Reform rabbi based in Toronto. She invited him to play for a rabbinic conference. He was staying at the same hotel where the rabbis were staying. He declined the offer because he had planned the trip to relax. However, he wonders if staying at the same hotel with the rabbis may have influenced the dream he had. He dreamt a *niggun* melody and when he awoke the next morning, he wrote down the composition. He always carries musical notation paper with him when he travels, and he named the piece *Niggun Elora*. The melody *emerged* as a complete melody, Katz said the *niggun* "found a home" in the collaboration, *Talking You In,* (Katz, Interview January 17 2019). "It was *beshert*." *Beshert* is the Yiddish word for fated, or meant to be.

Katz is a composer of many genres of music including jazz but this 'composing' is "antithetical to normative composing" (Katz interview November 2018). Katz spends hours on other compositions. However when it comes to *niggunim* composition he describes the process as something that "comes through my consciousness" and something that "comes *through* me." (Katz interview January 2019 *emphasis mine*). "Rarely do I say I am going to write that type of melody." Katz grew up with Jewish music ranging from cantorial recordings to Yiddish swing and *klezmer* music. His father was an amateur musician. When Katz was paying for his music lessons at the Royal Conservatory School of Music in Toronto, he played in many bands for weddings and *bar mitzvahs*. During the 1970's *klezmer* revival he recognized those band

melodies from the soundscape of his Jewish childhood. He said he loves the idea of melodies moving from one generation to the next. He composed another *niggun* when he was dancing alone one night in the Negev desert in Israel, and the compositional experience was that the melody came *through the movement*. Movement and melody are here *literally* intertwined. The melody emerging through the dancing recalls Connerton's bodily social memory as a form of commemoration, albeit a private one. Katz was dancing alone. The source of compositional process remains mysterious and in this context the compositional process includes hiddenness, a reservoir not previously audible until, like an "earwitness" he hears a melody from a dream or a dance. It is as if he is connecting to a melodic reservoir that remains unheard until he tunes into his own internal *niggun* radio. In an interview, Katz said that as a composer, it is enthralling to hear a mysterious melody emerging without fully knowing its origin. The compositional process surprises the composer. As a Jewish musician, he explains the *niggunim* composition *not* as how did you become interested in *niggunim*, rather it was a matter of just how and where the "*niggunim* got into me" (Katz interview November). He positions these melodies as components that live *within his body*. They are literally embodied before they emerge into a soundscape. The collaboration features Katz performing *Niggun Elora* throughout the thirty-eight minute drama. In the beginning, the melody of the *niggun* is positioned in the background. Yashinsky's storytelling is foregrounded. The soundscape is mobile and could be framed in the beginning as the *niggun* in the archive, almost inaudible, and then sliding into the canon. However during a climactic moment when text vanishes, the vocal *niggun* is foregrounded. The moment is whether or not this precarious new life will be able to speak. Here the canon of text recedes and the music moves to the front to use Aleida Assmann's terminology as we see components shifting. Yashinsky and his wife are living in the hospital. One day the baby whom they have nicknamed

"starchild" opens his mouth and emits a squawk. The baby does not have the capacity to cry. The squawk creates hope. It is during this vocalization that Katz sings the *niggun* with his voice, not his guitar. The listener hears *only* Katz's voice singing the *niggun.* Katz's voice singing the *niggun* is the sonic representation of the baby's first sound, the sound of life emitted through melody.

Since 2010, Yashinsky and Katz toured the collaboration to the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, the Barbican in London, festivals in Holland, Wales and Canada as well as hospital performances in Canada, Wales as well as the United States. They have also presented this work as a keynote presentation at conferences, often followed by forums about critical care. It is described as an act of healing: "Like Scheherazade, the father hopes to use his voice and storytelling as a beacon to heal the soul and body of his fragile listener-and of himself. It is semi-autobiographical, and also based on interviews with other NICU parents and with medical staff " (Brian Katz, web site). What are the ethical principles then that have become invisible?

In chapter three I highlighted James Young's delineation of the power of counter monuments as a mode of resistance. This collaboration functions as an act of melodic resistance, replacing the auditory memory of "beep beep beep" of hospital machinery with melody and narrative. The collaboration provides another way to remember a trauma through *niggun* and story. The collaboration creates a new soundscape. The literal mobility includes not only transmission from *niggun* dream to text to orality in performance, but also geographic travel and online digital distribution, a way of moving a cultural product from the periphery, and into the centre. In so doing, the collaboration transforms one private experience of a traumatic birth into a public commemoration. The music constitutes a response when words alone are not enough and softens the suffering. In "Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in

the Twentieth Century" Jay Winter has argued that a feature of historical remembrance unfolds as something that starts alone but never ends alone. Winters is referring specifically to victims of war and violence. He charts a migratory path where memory takes on what he calls a "collective character" (Collective 427). "It is a public act, remembrance expressed by groups of people prepared to face their shared past together" (428). This move from private to collective is something that has unfolded here too with the phenomenon of medical trauma.

One of the ethical issues within Yashinsky's narrative is the need to humanize medical trauma. In *Talking You In*, the music softens a difficult story (Katz interview January). Katz suggests that we accept music as something we cannot *fully* understand factually. Music has context, music carries within it associations and history, music has its own embedded influences both explicitly and implicitly, but the *experience of music* constitutes more than a sequence of notes and chords. Music welcomes mystery. Heschel positioned music as a response to what he called the "mystery of being" (*Man's Quest* 162). In *History of Myth*, Karen Armstrong argues myth functions as a way of explaining phenomena beyond comprehension. It is my argument that wordless melody functions as a response to mystery when myth alone is not sufficient.

Yashinsky's story begins with his retelling of a Jewish legend, a story of the origin how human beings received an indentation on the upper lip, what American writer Abraham Socher calls "How the Baby Got Its Philtrum. [11] The baby hovering between life and death is one of those

[11] Socher quotes a Talmudic version in "How the Baby Got Its Philtrum " in which an angel slaps the upper lip of the baby, and that baby then forgets the Torah. The story is connected to a Platonic notion of learning as a form of recollection. The philtrum is the name of the upper lip indentation. In Yashinsky's version, the baby sees his or her entire life story unfold, and then

experiences that will remain something for which there is no satisfactory answer. Yashinsky and Katz continued to work on the collaboration together since 2010. They have created different versions. Whether it will be radically changed or not in the future is not yet known. Jacob Yashinsky-Zavitz, the boy who survived the intensive care, was killed in a car accident in Ottawa in July of 2018.

How do the creators position this collaboration work as an ethical project? Here is how Katz describes the ethical function. His concluding paragraph about the power of memory and melody beginning in the uterus offers another way to imagine embodiment:

> Music and sound are amongst our first felt experiences in utero, and our collective sound-musical life experiences, and, importantly, the associations we've formed with them, are intact until we die (even in the case of dementia-Alzheimer's). In this regard, an inspired melody can conjure up in a listener an entire story, and my hope is that my contribution to *Talking You In* will bring at least the essence of this story to listeners' minds for generations to come, in all its goodness. (Katz, e-mail "Following up" 10 May 2019)

Yashinsky explains that the collaboration is part of an international movement called storycare. The ethical principles include repairing the reliance on high technology, data, and mobilizing people to deploy music and story as a form of ethical care, one that in this case study will unfold by the creation of a new soundscape :

forgets this world tour. The subsequent myth provides an explanation as to why some experiences feel eerily familiar. They constitute fragments we recognize. In Yashinsky's version, God is replaced by "World Maker," and the Torah is replaced by the fullness of a human life.

> I believe *Talking You* In is part of an international movement to humanize medicine. Our work with the neonatal intensive care community provided the seeds for the work I have since been doing with seniors at Baycrest, and for the general concept of "storycare", i.e. integrating stories into healthcare environments. There are many ethical dimensions to this movement, and to *Talking You In* in particular. The key line in the piece, for me at least, is when the mother of the sick baby says, "If he lives, I don't want his first words to be 'beep beep beep.'" The idea of finding a language of wisdom and imagination, even in the midst of an often-terrifying and always-overwhelming setting of a NICU, is not only an enrichment of the clinical environment. It is also a reminder that wisdom is at least as important as data, and that the non-stop "beeps" of the monitors must be supplemented by stories, songs, poetry, and person-to-person connection. It also reminds family members that they aren't only passive observers of high-tech medicine. They can participate in the healing process. And lastly, I hope the piece speaks to the power of stories to create new frames of meaning, especially when our conventional and clinical vocabularies fail to do justice to the extreme hopes, dreads, and wishes that attend our critical care journeys. Like all art, of course, *Talking You In* presents more questions than solutions. As the rabbi once told his inquisitive students, "Don't give up your questions for mere answers. Answers divide us. The questions we share bring us together." (Yashinsky e-mail "Following up" May 10)

In a follow up e-mail, Yashinsky wrote:

> the piece is a collaboration by two Jewish artists, and uses a traditional *niggun* as the recurring and defining musical motif, as well as opening with a traditional Jewish legend. For me, the piece is a reflection on the power of stories, voice, listening, and spirit to

> humanize the high-tech world of the neonatal intensive care unit. A belief in these four elements - story, voice, listening, spirit - is part of my own understanding of my Jewish ancestry and identity. This belief grounds my work as a storyteller, and has led me to work in places like Baycrest Health Sciences, where I do "storycare" with palliative patients, psychiatry groups, people with Alzheimer's, etc. It grounds my work with children in Toronto's poorest neighbourhoods, where the children are hungry for stories. It inspired *Talking You In*. I often think of the description of the *Baal Shem Tov's* storytelling in the middle of a village (he's wandering from place to place telling stories), where his words - as Martin Buber says - awaken the "lost melody" of those who come to listen. Such is the power of a story, told and heard at the right time. I hope that everything I do as a storyteller honors my Jewish heritage. (Yashinsky 13 May 2019)

Yashinsky's emphasis on story, voice, listening and spirit echoes the relational function of *musicking*.

First Representation of Musicking in Hebrew Bible

In concluding, I want to return to the beginning. By beginning I am referring to the representation of music in the Hebrew Bible. The 18th-century Hasidic Jews who read the text could learn about the primacy of music as early as Genesis. The first Biblical reference offers a model for musical performance that this chapter has explored. In *Discovering Jewish Music* Marsha Edelman characterizes music as the Hebrew Bible's "earliest art form, one basic to human nature" (1). Music emerges with the birth of Jubal. Jubal appears in a section about the genealogy of Cain. This section comes *after* Cain has killed his brother Abel, a detail that will be

important for Lamech's song, the first mention of song in the Hebrew text. [12] Lamech is Jubal's father. Thus, song is already positioned as a something that passes from parent to child. The first transmission is oral with Lamech's song (Genesis 4:23-24) and then Jubal, known as the "ancestor of all who play the lyre and the pipe" (Genesis 4: 21 Oxford Jewish Study Bible, 17) instrumentalizes music. This first reference to song emerges with a reference to other occupations including (farming) and technology (metal working with copper and iron). The Jewish Study Bible commentary suggests these functions illuminate ancient culture (17). "The emergence of occupations and technologies that it records is reminiscent of the Mesopotamian tradition about the pre-flood sages who founded the *basic institutions of civilization*" (Oxford 17 *emphasis mine*) These occupations (farming and technology) could also be included with Connerton's idea of embodied memory as an incorporating practice. Music is positioned as

[12] Lamech's song is the first Biblical reference but the there are many other associations of God, song and the power of musical expression. In *The Torah of Music,* Joey Weisenberg created a chronologically arranged repertoire of Jewish texts with musical references called "Open Library" (x) . The texts begin with the Torah and include Prophets, Writings, Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, Medieval, Mystical. Halakhic, Hasidic and other sections chronologically organized and including material of the twentieth century. Weisenberg explains the reader will find 'walk' into a traditional Jewish library in which the books are opened to their musical passages" (xvi). The section begins with Yuval, the father of all musicians (Genesis 4 20-21), The Song of the Sea, the most famous song of Freedom (Exodus 15: 1-2), Miriam's dancing and leading (Exodus 15: 20-21), Song as a strong force (Exodus 15:2) the shofar and synesthesia (Exodus 19:15, 20: 15) (Weisenberg 122-123).

something primal: “Lamech took to himself two wives: the names of the one was Adah, and the name of the other was Zillah. Adah bore Jabal; he was the ancestor of those who dwell in tents and amidst herds. And the name of his brother was Jubal; he was the ancestor of all who play the lyre and the pipe ” (Genesis 4: 19-22). These brothers are associated with mobility (Jabal amongst tents and herbs) and music (Jubal amongst the lyre and the pipe). Lamech’s song (Genesis 4-23-24) is considered an example of early Hebrew poetry (www.jewishvirtuallibrary/lamech). What is surprising it is a song about murder, and a proclamation of God’s protection. Lamech argues he is an accidental murderer, and he wants his wives to “hear my voice” (Genesis 4 :23 Oxford 17). Did his song soften their hearts? We never hear their response. How do we understand their silence? Lamech proclaims that if Cain is avenged for seven generations, then he (Lamech) will be protected for seventy seven generations. Lamech positions himself as one of Cain’s descendants, and argues through song that he is therefore under God’s protection. His murder was self defence. That Lamech turns to music suggests he already knows he needs to leverage melody where logic alone may fail. The singing is being deployed for a moral purpose, and it is for the repair of Lamech’s reputation.

For different reasons, Lamech and Heschel have come to the same conclusion: music has the power to go where text is unable to travel. Lamech positions music in relationship to its temporal power. Lamech suggests the song will provide protection for future progeny. Music ignores temporal boundaries between past, present and future. The legacy in song is imagined as moving through multiple generations. Music is “not created from nothing” (Small 203). In this way, the recollection of melody moves temporally forwards with new compositions and backwards at the same time, melodically recollecting other remembered soundscapes. As a form of expression, its endurance is related to its capacity to fill a gap: The *niggunim* soundscape

provides audiences with a mode of expression that responds to mystery, a mode that that functions as a mobile accessible salve against despair, as well as a mode of social connection through sound. Lastly the *niggun* functions as a musical form that can be repaired and reconstructed through the mobility of orality, unfolding inside as well as outside of parental transmission.

Conclusion

In May of 2019, a Canadian named Ben Carniol shared his history as a hidden child whose parents had been murdered in the Shoah with a small group of people in my living room in Toronto Ontario. Carniol is a Canadian Jewish professor of social work who has specialized in working with indigenous communities. He spoke without notes for about an hour about the Catholic couple who saved his life, about the parents he last saw when he was a five year old only child in Belgium, and about his aunt's family in Ottawa who adopted him after the war. His mother's sister had emigrated to Canada in the 1920s. This program in a private home was part of a phenomenon of providing historical remembrance that began in Israel as an alternative to public commemorations of the Holocaust. The program *Zikaron B'Salon* literally means remembering or remembrance in the living room. This remembrance unfolds in quiet settings. Survivors share their stories in their own words with room afterwards for questions. These events provide an intimate form of historical remembrance, face to face.

As I bring this project to a close, I want to share one story Ben Carniol transmitted. When he arrived at the airport in Ottawa, he was met by his aunt's family and their three teenage children. The family drove him to their home and showed him his bedroom which they had decorated to make him feel welcome. Ben made a hammering gesture with his hands, and then asked in French if he could have a hammer. The daughter in the family spoke French and translated. *Why would he need a hammer?* they asked. As a young boy, he had been told he was Jewish, but he had been warned he could not disclose this dangerous secret to anyone. During the war, he passed with forged papers, went to mass with the Catholic couple, and learned how to be an altar boy. He had never been to a synagogue. He opened his single suitcase. He pulled out a cross, and showed it to his Jewish family. His new Ottawa family were aghast at the thought of

putting up a cross on the wall. But one of the boys said in English to his parents "this kid has been through hell and been through a war. Let him put up the cross because he has been told that he needs to do that, and it will come down later." So they gave him a hammer. Over time, he learned what it meant to be Jewish. He said that his Ottawa grandmother gave him so much unconditional love that for him it functioned as the best type of medicine. Over time his cousins became siblings. Years passed. The Catholic couple came to visit him from Europe when he was 11 years old. The Ottawa family had adopted Ben. The Catholic woman asked to see where he was sleeping. He showed her his bedroom. The cross was no longer on the wall. She told him she had just one question for him. She asked, " Ben, do you believe in Jesus?" Ben explained that this woman named Minn had saved his life. She did not have any children of her own, and it had been painful for her to release him to go to Canada to be united with his Jewish family. He did not want to lie, but he did not want to hurt her feelings as she was a devout Catholic. His response was to ask Minn if she knew what a tree branch was. "Well of course I know what a tree branch is," she replied. And Ben replied " I am that branch. I was broken off my tree and now I am being reattached."

In the *Ethics of Memory* Margalit created a concept of a moral witness. He defines the moral witness as someone who has personally suffered from evil, and directly witnessed evil and faces risk to himself or herself. The risk may involve the fact that the witness has been part of a persecuted population. Margalit makes a distinction between the term moral and ethical. Ethical relationships are those he characterizes as "thick" relationships with family. Moral relationships are relationships with society and he characterizes these as thin. In my living room, Carniol functioned as one of these moral witnesses. He told me afterwards that this experience of sharing his story out aloud, which was new for him, was his way of "fighting the Nazi demons" because

the battle was far from over" (Carniol). He explained that the way he shared his own history with much gratitude for his life, compassion for those who risked their lives to save him, was part of his own ongoing resistance. During the evening, he said that it had taken him a so long to grieve the losses in his life, and particularly the losses of his parents. He had last seen them at a family dinner. When he went to a Toronto synagogue to say *Kaddish,* the Jewish memorial prayer for the dead, he put a *tallit,* the Jewish prayer shawl, over his head and said he had an internal yearning to talk with his parents, to ask them *what he should devote his life to*. He explained that it was an experience that was difficult to verbalize, but he felt as if he had somehow connected with them, he felt their presence with him under the shawl, and their answer came back to him: "Resist. Continue to resist."

This research has been designed to highlight transmissions of non-material legacy from Jewish parents to children as well as grandchildren. Not all of these chapters fit Margalit's precise definition of a moral witness because, for example, Alison Pick and Brian Katz did not witness evil directly nor are they personally direct sufferers from an evil regime. Nor did Margalit posit an idea of an ethical earwitness which is my own concept. However each chapter functions as an act of non-material legacy that encompasses resistance. Rabinowitz provided innovation by remembering with laughter, and delivering a robust experience of Jewish comedy. The Jewish ethics of comedy resists glorifying suffering. Pick created legacy by reclaiming her Jewish birthright for herself, and onwards for her child, an attempt to repair the future by fixing and reimagining the past. Reinhartz delivers a deliberate form of moral witnessing that highlights resistance that would otherwise be unknown. Katz and Yashinsky construct wordless music and legend as a mode of repair to resist despair. In collecting these case studies, it has been the goal of this project to highlight voices on the periphery and move them into the centre. In this way,

the research has aimed to illuminate modes of remembrance as well as moral witnessing. These individual acts of creative disruption function as modes of memory and ethical repair. We can thus hear these components of Jewish cultural memory one voice at a time, and in so listening we reimagine the possibilities of remembrance itself.

Future Considerations

This project has examined individual acts of Jewish cultural memory as acts of non-material legacy. The *Jewishness* contained in these transmissions emerges as something fluid. I am expanding Winter's list of cultural practices that constitute historical remembrance. Winter notes the novelists, playwrights, poets, filmmakers, museum designers and curators, as well as television producers (2006). Historical remembrance itself is broader than chronology. Because I am arguing to expand what historical remembrance may contain, remembering itself becomes reimagined, stretched, and repositioned. Thus, this dissertation redefines the possibilities for historical remembrance as well as what non-material legacy may include. To sum up, historical remembrance here includes the experience of Jewish comedy from Solomon Rabinovich, conversion as a memorial paradigm in *Between Gods,* resistance highlighted in Reinhartz's *Bits and Pieces*, as well as wordless music. Historical remembrance thus includes modes of remembrance that are inscribed and incorporated to borrow Connerton's terminology. Consequently, this project reimagines what non-material legacy may include, and in so doing redefines what was traditionally termed the Jewish ethical will. In this project, non-material legacy is no longer an act of passive reception but one characterized by active and interpretive engagement on the part of recipients. One way of reframing this change is to consider the letters of Edmond Rothschild or Theodor Herzl as closer to the paradigm of a traditional lecture, and to consider the examples of these transmissions as closer to the paradigm of a conversation in

which recipients are required to engage, listen, and interpret material. In so doing, the recipients become part of the process of what non-material legacy can unfold to become. This project has been exclusively concerned with remembrance as a *Jewish* cultural practice. One question that arises then is this material about remembrance exclusively and particular to Jewish civilization, or is there something about the priority on remembrance in Jewish cultural practice that would help to illuminate other cultural practices? I would think that this priority on remembrance can function as a departure gate to examine other cultural practices —from food practices within Diasporic communities, to the emergence of the skin tattoos as a form of embodied memory— as ways of opening up an unfolding conversation about what it means for all of us to remember.

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