

IMMOBILIZATION IN “CATTLE CARS”

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

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

Notes for this chapter begin on page 122.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Inside the Trains: The Assault on Space

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Transport Shame

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Responses to Confinement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sensory Assaults

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Space for Ethics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Fatigue of Time and Transit

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jumping Back into Time: Escapes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes

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

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

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

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

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

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