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What is This?

A R T I C L E

On the Social Construction of Moral Universals
The 'Holocaust' from War Crime to Trauma Drama

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Abstract

The following is simultaneously an essay in sociological theory, in cultural sociology, and in the empirical reconstruction of postwar Western history. Per theory, it introduces and specifies a model of cultural trauma – a model that combines a strong cultural program with concern for institutional and power effects – and applies it to large-scale collectivities over extended periods of time. Per cultural sociology, the essay demonstrates that even the most calamitous and biological of social facts – the prototypical evil of genocidal mass murder – can be understood only inside of symbolic codes and narratives; that these frames change substantially depending on social circumstances; and that this culture process is critical to establishing under-standings of moral responsibility. Empirically, this essay documents, in social and cultural detail, using both secondary and primary sources, how it was that the 'Holocaust' gradually became the dominant symbolic represen-tation of evil in the late twentieth century, and what its consequences have been for the development of a supra-national moral universalism that may restrict genocidal acts in the future.

Key words

■ evil ■ holocaust ■ moral universalism ■ progress ■ tragedy

'If we bear this suffering, and if there are still Jews left, when it is over, then Jews, instead of being doomed, will be held up as an example. Who knows, it might even be our religion from which the world and all peoples learn good, and for that reason and for that alone do we have to suffer now.' (Anne Frank, 1944)

'"Holocaust" has become so universal a reference point that even contemporary Chinese writers, who live thousands of miles from the place of Nazi brutality and possess only scanty knowledge of the details of the Holocaust, came to call their horrendous experiences during the Cultural Revolution "the ten-year holocaust".' (Sheng Mei Ma, 1987)

'The term history unites the objective and the subjective side, and denotes . . . not less what happened than the narration of what happened. This union of the two meanings we must regard as of a higher order than mere outward accident; we must suppose historical narrations to have appeared contemporaneously with historical deeds and events.' (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*)

How did a specific and situated historical event, an event marked by ethnic and racial hatred, violence, and war, become transformed into a generalized symbol of human suffering and moral evil, a universalized symbol whose very existence has created historically unprecedented opportunities for ethnic, racial, and religious justice, for mutual recognition, and for global conflicts to become regulated in a more civil way?[1] This cultural transformation has been achieved because the originating historical event, traumatic in the extreme for a delimited particular group, has come over the last fifty years to be redefined as a traumatic event for all of humankind.[2] Now free floating rather than situated – universal rather than particular – this traumatic event vividly 'lives' in the memories of contemporaries whose parents and grandparents never felt themselves even remotely related to it.

In what follows, I explore the social creation of a cultural fact, and the effects of this cultural fact upon social and moral life.

MASS MURDER UNDER THE PROGRESSIVE NARRATIVE

In the beginning, in April 1945, the Holocaust was not the 'Holocaust.' In the torrent of newspaper, radio, and magazine stories reporting the discovery by American infantrymen of the Nazi concentration camps, the empirical remains of what had transpired were typified as 'atrocities.' Their obvious awfulness, and indeed their strangeness, placed them for contemporary observers at the borderline of that unfortunately abused category of behavior known as 'man's inhumanity to man.' Nonetheless, qua atrocity, the discoveries were placed side by side – metonymically and semantically – with a whole series of other brutalities that were considered to be the natural results of the ill wind of this second, very unnatural, and most inhuman world war.

The first American reports on 'atrocities' during that second world war had not, in fact, even referred to actions by German Nazis, let alone to their Jewish victims, but to the Japanese army's brutal treatment of American and other allied prisoners of war after the loss of Corregidor in 1943. On January 27, 1944, the US released sworn statements by military officers who had escaped the so-called Bataan Death March. In the words of contemporary journals and magazines,

these officers had related 'atrocity stories' revealing 'the inhuman treatment and murder of American and Filipino soldiers who were taken prisoner when Bataan and Corregidor fell.' In response to these accounts, the US State Department had lodged protests to the Japanese government about its failure to live up to the provisions of the Geneva Prisoners of War Convention (*Current History*, March 1944, 6: 249). Atrocities, in other words, were a signifier specifically connected to war. They referred to war-generated events that transgressed the rules circumscribing how national killing could normally be carried out.[3] Responding to the same incident, *Newsweek,* in a section entitled 'The Enemy' and under the headline 'Nation Replies in Grim Fury to Jap Brutality to Prisoners,' reported that 'with the first impact of the news, people had shuddered at the story of savage *atrocity* upon Allied prisoners of war by the Japanese' (vol. 23 (6), February 7, 1944: 19, italics added).[4]

It is hardly surprising, then, that it was this nationally specific and particular war-related term that was employed to represent the grisly Jewish mass murders discovered by American GIs when they liberated the Nazi camps.[5] Through April 1945, as one camp after another was discovered, this collective representation was applied time after time.[6] When toward the end of that month, a well-known Protestant minister explored the moral implications of the discoveries, he declared that, no matter how horrifying and repulsive, 'it is important that the full truth be made known so that a clear indication may be had of *the nature of the enemy we have been dealing with*, as well as a realization of *the sheer brutalities that have become the accompaniment of war.*' *The New York Times* reported this sermon under the headline, 'Bonnell Denounces German Atrocities' (April 23, l945: 23, italics added). When alarmed American Congressmen visited Buchenwald, *The Times* headlined that they had witnessed first hand the '*War Camp* Horror' (April 26, 1945: 12, italics added). When a few days later the US Army released a report on the extent of the killings in Buchenwald, *The Times* headlined it an 'Atrocity Report' (April 29, 1945: 20). A few days after that, under the headline 'Enemy Atrocities in France Bared,' *The Times* wrote that a just released report had shown that 'in France, German brutality was not limited to the French underground or even to the thousands of hostages whom the Germans killed for disorders they had nothing to do with, but was practiced almost systematically against entirely innocent French people' (May 4, 1945: 6).

The Nazis' anti-Jewish mass murders had once been only putative atrocities. From the late thirties on, reports about them had been greeted with widespread public doubt about their authenticity. Analogizing to the allegations about German atrocities during the First World War that later had been thoroughly discredited, they were dismissed as a kind of Jewish moral panic. Only three months before the GI's 'discovery' of the camps, in introducing a first-hand report on Nazi mass murder from a Soviet liberated camp in Poland, *Collier's* magazine acknowledged:

> A lot of Americans simply do not believe the stories of Nazi mass executions of Jews and anti-Nazi Gentiles in eastern Europe by means of gas chambers, freight cars partly loaded with lime and other horrifying devices. These stories are so foreign to most

Americans' experience of life in this country that they seem incredible. Then, too some of the atrocity stories of World War I were later proved false' (January 6, 1945: 62).[7]

From April 3, 1945, however, the date when the GIs first liberated the concentration camps, all such earlier reports were retrospectively accepted as facts, as the realistic signifiers of Peirce rather than the 'arbitrary' symbols of Saussure. That systematic efforts at Jewish mass murder had occurred, and that the numerous victims and the few survivors had been severely traumatized, the American and world-wide audience now had little doubt.[8] Their particular and unique fate, however, even while it was widely recognized as representing the grossest of injustices, did not itself become a traumatic experience for the audience to which the mass media's collective representations were transmitted, that is, for those looking on, either from near or from far. Why this was not so defines my initial explanatory effort here.

Symbolic Extension and Psychological Identification

For an audience to be traumatized by an experience which they themselves do not directly share, symbolic extension and psychological identification are required. This did not occur. For the American infantrymen who first made contact, for the general officers who supervised the rehabilitation, for the reporters who broadcast the descriptions, for the commissions of Congressmen and influentials who quickly traveled to Germany to conduct on-site investigations, the starving, depleted, often weird-looking and sometimes weird-acting Jewish camp survivors seemed like a foreign race. They could just as well have been from Mars, or from Hell. The identities and characters of these Jewish survivors rarely were personalized through interviews or individualized through biographical sketches; rather, they were presented as a mass, and often as a mess, a petrified, degrading, and smelly one, not only by newspaper reporters but by some of the most powerful general officers in the Allied high command. This depersonalization made it more difficult for the survivors' trauma to generate compelling identification.

Possibilities for universalizing the trauma were blocked not only by the depersonalization of its victims but by their historical and sociological specification. As I have indicated, the mass murders semantically were immediately linked to other 'horrors' in the bloody history of the century's second great war and to the historically specific national and ethnic conflicts that underlay it. Above all, it was never forgotten that these victims were Jews. In retrospect, it is bitterly ironic but also sociologically understandable that the American audience's sympathy and feelings of identity flowed much more easily to the non-Jewish survivors, whether German or Polish, who had been kept in better conditions and looked more normal, more composed, more human. Jewish survivors were kept for weeks and sometimes even for months in the worst areas and under the worst conditions of what had become, temporarily, displaced persons camps. American and British administrators felt impatient with many Jewish survivors, even personal

repugnance for them, sometimes resorting to threats and even to punishing them.[9] The depth of this initial failure of identification can be seen in the fact that, when American citizens and their leaders expressed opinions and made decisions about national quotas for emergency postwar immigration, displaced German citizens ranked first, Jewish survivors last.

How could this have happened? Was it not obvious to any human observer that this mass murder was fundamentally different from the other traumatic and bloody events in a modern history already dripping in blood, that it represented not simply evil but 'radical evil,' in Kant's remarkable phrase (Kant, 1960),[10] that it was unique? To understand why none of this was obvious, to understand how and why each of these initial understandings and behaviors were radically changed, and how this transformation had vast repercussions for establishing not only new moral standards for social and political behavior, but unprecedented, if still embryonic, regulatory controls, it is important to see the inadequacy of common sense understandings of traumatic events.

Lay Trauma Theory

There are two kinds of common sense thinking about trauma, forms of thinking that comprise what I call 'lay trauma theory.'[11] These commonsensical forms of reasoning have deeply informed thinking about the effects of the Holocaust. They are expressed in the following, strikingly different conceptualizations of what happened after the revelations of the mass killings of Jews.

(a) *The Enlightenment version*: The 'horror' of onlookers provoked the postwar end of anti-semitism in the United States. The common sense assumption here is that, because people have a fundamentally 'moral' nature – as a result of their rootedness in Enlightenment and religious traditions – they will perceive atrocities for what they are, and react to them by attacking the belief systems that provided legitimation.

(b) *The psychoanalytic version*: When faced with the horror, Jews and non-Jews alike reacted, not with criticism and decisive action, but with silence and bewilderment. Only after two or even three decades of repression and denial were people finally able to begin talking about what happened and to take actions in response to this knowledge.

Enlightenment and psychoanalytic forms of lay trauma thinking have permeated academic efforts at understanding what happened after the death camp revelations. One or the other version has informed not only every major discussion of the Holocaust, but virtually every contemporary effort to investigate trauma more generally, efforts which are, in fact, largely inspired by Holocaust debates.[12]

An Alternative: the Theory of Cultural Trauma

What is wrong with this lay trauma theory is that it is 'naturalistic,' either in the naively moral or the naively psychological sense. Lay trauma theory fails to see

that there is an interpretive grid through which all 'facts' about trauma are mediated, emotionally, cognitively, and morally. This grid has a supra-individual, cultural status; it is symbolically structured and sociologically determined. No trauma interprets itself: Before trauma can be experienced at the collective (not individual) level, there are essential questions that must be answered, and answers to these questions change over time. Such an approach emphasizes the cultural rather than simply the social, structural, or individual elements of the trauma process.

THE CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF TRAUMA: CODING, WEIGHTING, NARRATING

Elie Wiesel, in a moving and influential statement in the late l970s, asserted that the Holocaust represents an 'ontological evil.' From a sociological perspective, however, evil is epistemological, not ontological. For a traumatic event to have the status of evil is a matter of its *becoming* evil. It is a matter of how the trauma is known, how it is coded.[13] 'At first glance it may appear a paradox,' Diner has noted – and certainly it does – but, considered only in and of itself, 'Auschwitz *has* no appropriate narrative, only a set of statistics' (Diner, 2000: 178). Becoming evil is a matter, first and foremost, of representation. Depending on the nature of representation, a traumatic event may be regarded as ontologically evil, or its badness, its 'evility,' may be conceived as contingent and relative, as something that can be ameliorated and overcome. This distinction is theoretical, but it is also practical. In fact, decisions about the ontological versus contingent status of the Holocaust were of overriding importance in its changing representation.

If we can deconstruct this ontological assertion even further, I would like to suggest that the very existence of the category 'evil' must be seen not as something that naturally exists but as an arbitrary construction, the product of cultural and sociological work. This contrived binary, which simplifies empirical complexity to two antagonistic forms and reduces every shade of gray between, has been an essential feature of all human societies, but especially important in those Eisenstadt (1982) has called the Axial Age civilizations. This rigid opposition between the sacred and profane, which in Western philosophy has typically been constructed as a conflict between normativity and instrumentality, not only defines what people care about but establishes vital safeguards around the shared normative 'good.' At the same time, it places powerful, often aggressive barriers against anything that is construed as threatening the good forces, defined not merely as things to be avoided but as sources of horror and pollution that must be contained at all costs.

The Material 'Base': Controlling the Means of Symbolic Production

Yet, if this grid is a kind of functional necessity, how it is applied very much depends on who is telling the story, and how. This is first of all a matter of cultural power in the most mundane, materialist sense: Who controls the means of symbolic production?[14] It was certainly not incidental to the public understanding of the Nazis' policies of mass murder, for example, that for an extended period of time it was the Nazis themselves who were in control of the physical and cultural terrain of their enactment. This fact of brute power made it much more difficult to frame the mass killings in a distinctive way. Nor is it incidental that, once the extermination of the Jews was physically interrupted by Allied armies in l945, it was America's 'imperial republic' – the perspective of the triumphant, forward-looking, militantly and militarily democratic new world warrior – that directed the organizational and cultural responses to the mass murders and their survivors. The contingency of this knowledge is so powerful that it might well be said that, if the Allies had not won the war, the 'Holocaust' would never have been discovered.[15] Moreover, if it had been the Soviets and not the Allies who 'liberated' most of the camps, and not just those in the Eastern sector, what was discovered in those camps might never have been portrayed in a remotely similar way.[16] It was, in other words, precisely and only because the means of symbolic production were not controlled by a victorious postwar Nazi regime, or even by a triumphant communist one, that the mass killings could be called the Holocaust and coded as evil.

Creating the Culture Structure

Still, even when the means of symbolic production came to be controlled by 'our side,' even when the association between evil and what would become known as the Holocaust trauma was assured, this was only the beginning, not the end. After a phenomenon is coded as evil, the question that immediately follows is, How evil is it? In theorizing evil, this refers to the problem, not of coding, but of weighting. For there are degrees of evil, and these degrees have great implications in terms of responsibility, punishment, remedial action, and future behavior. Normal evil and radical evil cannot be the same.

Finally, alongside these problems of coding and weighting, the meaning of a trauma cannot be defined unless we determine exactly what the 'it' is. This is a question of narrative: What were the evil and traumatizing actions in question? Who was responsible? Who were the victims? What were the immediate and long-term results of the traumatizing actions? What can be done by way of remediation or prevention?

What these theoretical considerations suggest is that even after the physical force of the Allied triumph and the physical discovery of the Nazi concentration camps, the nature of what was seen and discovered had to be coded, weighted, and narrated. This complex cultural construction, moreover, had to be achieved

immediately. History does not wait; it demands that representations be made, and they will be. Whether or not some newly reported event is startling, strange, terrible, or inexpressibly weird, it must be 'typified,' in the sense of Husserl and Schutz, that is, it must be explained as a typical and even anticipated example of some thing or category that was known about before.[17] Even the vastly unfamiliar must somehow be made familiar. To the cultural process of coding, weighting, and narrating, in other words, what comes before is all-important. Historical background is critical, both for the first 'view' of the traumatic event and, as 'history' changes, for later views as well. Once again, these shifting cultural constructions are fatefully affected by the power and identity of the agents in charge, by the competition for symbolic control, and the structures of power and distribution of resources that condition it.

Nazism as the Representation of Absolute Evil

What was the historical structure of 'good and evil' within which, on April 3, l945, the 'news' of the Nazi concentration camps was first confirmed to the American audience? To answer this question, it is first necessary to describe what came before. In what follows, I will venture some observations, which can hardly be considered definitive, about how social evil was coded, weighted, and narrated during the interwar period in Europe and the United States.

In the deeply disturbing wake of the First World War, there was a pervasive sense of disillusionment and cynicism among mass and elite members of the Western 'audience,' a distancing from protagonists and antagonists that, as Paul Fussell has shown, made irony the master trope of that first postwar era.[18] This trope transformed 'demonology' – the very act of coding and weighting evil – into what many intellectuals and lay persons alike considered to be an act of bad faith. Once the coding and weighting of evil were delegitimated, however, good and evil became less distinct from one another, and relativism became the dominant motif of the time. In such conditions, coherent narration of contemporary events becomes difficult if not impossible. Thus it was that, not only for many intellectuals and artists of this period but for many ordinary people as well, the startling upheavals of these interwar years could not easily be sorted out in a conclusive and satisfying way.

In this context of the breakdown of representation, racism and revolution, whether fascist or communist, emerged as compelling frames, not only in Europe but also in the United States. Against a revolutionary narrative of dogmatic and authoritarian modernism on the Left, there arose the narrative of reactionary modernism, equally revolutionary but fervently opposed to rationality and cosmopolitanism.[19] In this context, many democrats in Western Europe and the United States withdrew from the field of representation itself, becoming confused and equivocating advocates of disarmament, non-violence, and peace 'at any price.' This formed the cultural frame for isolationist political policy in both Britain and the United States.

Eventually, the aggressive military ambition of Nazism made such equivocation impossible to sustain. While racialism, relativism, and narrative confusion continued in the United States and Britain until the very beginning of the Second World War, and even continued well into it, these constructions were countered by increasingly forceful and confident representations of good and evil that coded liberal democracy and universalism as unalloyed goods, and Nazism, racism, and prejudice as deeply corrosive representations of the polluting and profane.

From the late 1930s on, there emerged a strong, and eventually dominant anti-Fascist narrative in Western societies. Nazism was coded, weighted, and narrated in apocalyptic, Old Testament terms as 'the dominant evil of our time.' Because this radical evil aligned itself with violence and massive death, it not merely justified but compelled the risking of life in opposing it, a compulsion that motivated and justified massive human sacrifice in what came later to be known as the last 'good war.'[20] That Nazism was an absolute, unmitigated evil, a radical evil that threatened the very future of human civilization, formed the presupposition of America's four-year prosecution of the world war.[21]

The representation of Nazism as an absolute evil emphasized not only its association with sustained coercion and violence, but also, and perhaps even especially, the manner in which Nazism linked violence with ethnic, racial, and religious hatred. In this way, the most conspicuous example of the practice of Nazi evil – its policy of systematic discrimination, coercion, and, eventually, mass violence against the Jews – was initially interpreted as 'simply' another horrifying example of the subhumanism of Nazi action.

Interpreting 'Kristallnacht': Nazi Evil as Anti-semitism

The American public's reaction to *Kristallnacht* demonstrates how important the Nazis' anti-Jewish activities were in crystallizing the polluted status of Nazism in American eyes. It also provides a prototypical example of how such representations of the evils of anti-semitism were folded into the broader and more encompassing symbolism of Nazism. *Kristallnacht* refers, of course, to the rhetorically virulent and physically violent expansion of the Nazi repression of Jews that unfolded throughout German towns and cities on November 9 and 10, 1938. These activities were widely recorded. 'The morning editions of most American newspapers reported the *Kristallnacht* in banner headlines,' according to one historian of that fateful event, 'and the broadcasts of H.V. Kaltenborn and Raymond Gram Swing kept the radio public informed of Germany's latest adventure' (Diamond, 1969: 198). Exactly why these events assumed such critical importance in the American public's continuing effort to understand 'what Hitlerism stood for' (Diamond, 1969: 201) goes beyond the simple fact that violent and repressive activities were, perhaps for the first time, openly, even brazenly displayed in direct view of the world public sphere. Equally important was the altered cultural framework within which these activities were observed. For *Kristallnacht* occurred just six weeks after the now infamous Munich

agreements, acts of appeasement to Hitler's expansion which at that time were understood, not only by isolationists but by many opponents of Nazism, indeed by the vast majority of the American people, as possibly reasonable accessions to a possibly reasonable man (Diamond, 1969: 197). What occurred, in other words, was a process of understanding fuelled by symbolic contrast, not simply observation.

What was interpretively constructed was the cultural difference between Germany's previously apparent cooperativeness and reasonableness – representations of the good in the discourse of American civil society – and its subsequent demonstration of violence and irrationality, which were taken to be representations of anti-civic evil. Central to the ability to draw this contrast was the ethnic and religious hatred Germans demonstrated in their violence against Jews. If one examines the American public's reactions, it clearly is this anti-Jewish violence that is taken to represent Nazism's evil. Thus, it was with references to this violence that the news stories of *The New York Times* employed the rhetoric of pollution to further code and weight Nazi evil: 'No foreign propagandist bent upon blackening the name of Germany before the world could outdo the tale of beating, of blackguardly assaults upon defenseless and innocent people, which degraded that country yesterday' (quoted in Diamond, 1969: 198). *The Times*'s controversial columnist, Anne O'Hare McCormick, wrote that 'the suffering [the Germans] inflict on others, now that they are on top, passes all understanding and mocks all sympathy,' and she went on to label *Kristallnacht* 'the darkest day Germany experienced in the whole post-war period' (quoted in Diamond, 1969: 199). The *Washington Post* identified the Nazi activities as 'one of the worst setbacks for mankind since the Massacre of St. Bartholomew' (quoted in Diamond, 1969: 198–9).

This broadening identification of Nazism with evil, simultaneously triggered and reinforced by *Kristallnacht*'s anti-Jewish violence, stimulated influential political figures to make more definitive judgments about the antipathy between American democracy and German Nazism than they had up until that point. Speaking on NBC radio, Al Smith, the former New York Governor and democratic presidential candidate, observed that the events confirmed that the German people were 'incapable of living under a democratic government' (quoted in Diamond, 1969: 200). Following Smith on the same program, Thomas E. Dewey, soon to be New York Governor and a future presidential candidate, expressed the opinion that 'the civilized world stands revolted by the bloody pogrom against a defenseless people . . . by a nation run by madmen' (quoted in Diamond, 1969: 201). Having initially underplayed America's official reaction to the events, four days later President Franklin Roosevelt took advantage of the public outrage by emphasizing the purity of the American nation and its distance from this emerging representation of violence and ethnic hatred: 'The news of the past few days from Germany deeply shocked public opinion in the United States . . . I myself could scarcely believe that such things could occur in a twentieth century civilization' (Quoted in Diamond, 1969: 205).

Judging from these reactions to the Nazi violence of *Kristallnacht*, it seems

only logical that, as one historian has put it, 'most American newspapers or jour-nals' could 'no longer . . . view Hitler as a pliable and reasonable man, but as an aggressive and contemptible dictator [who] would have to be restrained' (quoted in Diamond, 1969: 207). What is equally striking, however, is that in almost none of the American public's statements of horror is there explicit reference to the identity of *Kristallnacht*'s victims as Jews. Instead, they are referred to as a 'defenseless and innocent people,' as 'others,' and as a 'defenseless people' (quoted in Diamond, 1969: 198, 199, 201). In fact, in the public statement quoted above, President Roosevelt goes well out of his way to present his polluting judgment of the events as reflecting a typically American standard, strenuously removing his moral outrage from any link to a specific concern for the fate of the Jews. 'Such news from *any part* of the world,' the President insists, 'would inevitably produce similar profound reaction among Americans *in any part* of the nation' (Diamond, 1969: 205, italics added). In other words, despite the centrality of the Nazis' anti-Jewish violence to the emerging American symbolization of Nazism as evil, there existed – at that point in historical and cultural time – a reluctance for non-Jewish Americans to identify with Jewish people as such. Jews were highlighted as vital representations of the evils of Nazism: their fate would be understood only in relation to the German horror that threatened democratic civilization in America and Europe. This failure of identification would be reflected seven years later in the distantiation of the American soldiers and the domestic audience from the traumatized Jewish camp survivors and their even less fortunate Jewish compatriots whom the Nazis had killed.

Anti-anti-semitism: Fighting Nazi Evil by Fighting for the Jews

It was also during the 1930s, in the context of the Nazi persecution of German Jews, that there emerged in the United States an historically unprecedented attack on anti-semitism. It was not that Christians suddenly felt genuine affection for, or identification with, those whom they had villified for countless centuries as the killers of Christ.[22] It was that the logic of symbolic association had dramati-cally and fatefully changed. Nazism was increasingly viewed as the vile enemy of universalism, and the most hated enemies of Nazism were the Jews. The laws of symbolic antinomy and association thus were applied. If Nazism singled out the Jews, then the Jews must be singled out by democrats and anti-Nazis. Anti-semitism, tolerated and condoned for centuries in every Western nation, and for the preceding fifty years embraced fervently by proponents of American 'nativism,' suddenly became distinctly unpopular in progressive circles through-out the United States (Gleason, l98l; Higham, 1984).[23]

What I will call 'anti-anti-semitism'[24] became particularly intense after the US declared war on Nazi Germany. The nature of this concern is framed in a particu-lar clear manner by one leading historian of American Jewry: 'The war saw the merging of Jewish and American fates. Nazi Germany was the greatest enemy of both Jewry and the United States' (Shapiro, 1981–1982: 16). For the first time,

overtly positive representations of Jewish people proliferated in popular and high culture alike. It was during this period that the phrase 'Judeo-Christian tradition' was born. It appeared as Americans tried to fend off the Nazi enemy that threatened to destroy the sacred foundations of Western democratic life (Silk, 1986).

Constructing the Progressive Narrative in the War against Nazism

Nazism marked a traumatic epoch in modern history. Yet, while coded as evil and weighted in the most fundamental, *weltgesichte* (world-historical) terms, it was narrated inside a framework that offered the promise of salvation and triggered actions that generated confidence and hope.[25] What I will call the 'progressive narrative' proclaimed that the trauma created by social evil would be overcome, that Nazism would be defeated and eliminated from the world, that it would eventually be relegated to a traumatic past whose darkness would be obliterated by a new and powerful social light. The progressivity of this narrative depended on keeping Nazism situated and historical, which prevented this representation of absolute evil from being universalized and its cultural power from being equated, in any way, shape, or form with the power possessed by the good. In narrative terms, this asymmetry, this insistence on Nazism's anomalous historical status, assured its ultimate defeat. In the popular consciousness and in the dramas created by cultural specialists, the origins of Nazism were linked to specific events in the interwar period and to particular organizations and actors within it, to a political party, to a crazy and inhuman leader, to an anomalous nation that had demonstrated militaristic and violent tendencies over the previous one hundred years.

Yes, Nazism had initiated a trauma in modern history, but it was a liminal trauma presenting 'time out of time' in Victor Turner's sense.[26] The trauma was dark and threatening, but it was, at the same time, anomalous and, in principle at least, temporary. As such, the trauma could and would be removed, via a just war and a wise and forgiving peace.[27] The vast human sacrifices demanded by the winds of war were measured and judged in terms of this progressive narrative and the salvation it promised. The blood spilled in the war sanctified the future peace and obliterated the past. The sacrifice of millions could be redeemed, the social salvation of their sacred souls achieved, not by dwelling in a lachrymose manner on their deaths, but by eliminating Nazism, the force that had caused their deaths, and by planning the future which would establish a world in which there could never be Nazism again.

Inside the Progressive Narrative: Framing Revelations about the Jewish Mass Murder

While initially received with surprise, and always conceived with loathing, the gradual, halting but eventually definitive revelations of Nazi plans for displacing,

and quite possibly murdering, the entirety of European Jewry actually confirmed the categorizing of evil already in place: the coding, weighting, and narrating of Nazism as an inhuman, absolutely evil force. What had been experienced as an extraordinary trauma by the Jewish victims was experienced by the audience of others as a kind of categorical vindication.[28] In this way, and for this reason, the democratic audience for the reports on the mass murders experienced distance from, rather than identification with, the trauma's victims. The revelations had the effect, in some perverse sense, of normalizing the abnormal.

The empirical existence of Nazi plans for the 'Final Solution,' as well as extensive documentation of their ongoing extermination activities, had been publicly documented by June l942 (Dawidowicz, 1982; Laqueur, 1980; Norich, 1998–1999). In July of that year more than 20,000 persons rallied in Madison Square Garden to protest the Nazis' war against the Jews. Though he did not attend in person, President Franklin Roosevelt sent a special message that what he called 'these crimes' would be redeemed by the 'final accounting' following the Allied victory over Nazism. In March, 1943, the American Jewish Congress announced that two million Jews had already been massacred and that millions more were slated for death. Its detailed descriptions of the 'extermination' were widely reported in the American press.[29] By March, 1944, when the Germans occupied Hungary and their intention to liquidate its entire Jewish population became known, Dawidowicz attests to the fact that Auschwitz, for Americans, was no longer an unfamiliar name.

Yet, it was this very familiarity that seemed to undermine the sense of astonishment that might have stimulated immediate action. For Auschwitz was typified in terms of the progressive narrative of war, a narrative that made it impossible to de-normalize the mass killings, to make the Holocaust into the 'Holocaust.' As I indicated in my earlier reconstruction of the discourse about atrocity, what eventually came to be called the Holocaust was reported to contemporaries as a war story, nothing less but nothing more. In private conferences with the American president, Jewish leaders demanded that Allied forces make special efforts to target and destroy the death camps. In describing these failed efforts to trigger intervention, a leading historian explains that the leaders 'couldn't convince a preoccupied American President and the American public of the significance of Auschwitz for their time in history' (Feingold, 1974: 250). In other words, while Auschwitz was coded as evil, it simply was not weighted in a sufficiently dire way.

In these symbolically mediated confrontations, attention was not focused on the mass killings in and of themselves. What was definitely not illuminated or asserted was the discovery of an evil unique in human history. The evil of that time had already been discovered, and it was Nazism, not the massive killing of European Jews. The trauma which this evil had created was a second world war. The trauma that the Jews experienced in the midst of their liquidation was represented as one among a series of effects of Nazi evil. When the London *Times* reported Adolf Hitler's death, on May 2, 1945 – in the month following the death camp revelations – its obituary described the German dictator as 'the

incarnation of absolute evil,' and only briefly mentioned Hitler's 'fanatical aversion to Jews' (Quoted in Benn, 1995: 102). As one historian has put it, 'the processed mass murders became merely another atrocity in a particularly cruel war' (Quoted in Benn, 1995: 102).[30] The mass murders were explained, and they would be redeemed, within the framework of the progressive struggle against Nazism.

To fully understand the initial, frame-establishing encounter between Americans and the Jewish mass murder, it is vital to remember that narratives, no matter how progressive and future-oriented, are composed of both antagonists and protagonists. The antagonists and their crimes were well established: the German Nazis had murdered the Jews in a gigantic, heinous atrocity of war. The protagonists were the American GIs, and their entrance into the concentration camps was portrayed, not only as a discovery of such horrendous atrocities, but as another, culminating stage in a long and equally well-known sequence of 'liberation,' with all the ameliorating expectations that utopian term implies. 'When the press entered the camps of the western front,' the cultural historian Barbie Zelizer writes, 'it found that the most effective way to tell the atrocity story was as a chronicle of liberation.' (Zelizer, 1998: 63) In fact, Zelizer entitles her own detailed reconstruction of these journalist encounters 'Chronicles of Liberation' (Zelizer, 1998: 63–85). When readers of *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* were confronted, on April 16, 1945, with the photo from Buchenwald of bunk beds stuffed to overflowing with haunted, pathetically undernourished male prisoners, they were informed that they were looking at 'freed slave laborers' (Zelizer, 1998: 183). On May 5, the *Picture Post* published a six-page spread of atrocity photos. Framing the heart-wrenching visual images, the theme of forward progress was palpable. One collective caption read: 'These Were Inmates of Prison Camps Set Free in the Allied Advance: For Many We Came Too Late' (Zelizer, 1998: 129).

Photos of dead or tattered and starving victims were often juxtaposed with pictures of well-dressed, well-fed German citizens from the surrounding towns, pointedly linking the crime to the particular nature of the German people themselves. In a side-bar story entitled 'The Problem That Makes All Europe Wonder,' the *Picture Post* described 'the horror that took place within the sight and sound of hundreds of thousands of seemingly normal, decent German people. How was it possible? What has happened to the minds of a whole nation that such things should have been tolerated for a day?' (quoted in Zelizer, 1998: 128). These same photos often included a representative GI standing guard, passing judgment while looking on the scene. The text alongside another widely-circulated photo in the *Picture Post* made the progressive answer to such questions perfectly plain.

> It is not enough to be mad with rage. It is no help to shout about 'exterminating' Germany. Only one thing helps: the attempt to understand how men have sunk so far, and the firm resolve to face the trouble, the inconvenience and cost of seeing no nation gets the chance to befoul the world like this again. (quoted in Zelizer, 1998: 129)

It was within this highly particularized progressive narrative that the first steps toward universalization actually took place. Because the Jewish mass killings came at the chronological conclusion of the war, and because they without doubt represented the most gruesome illustration of Nazi atrocities, they came very quickly to be viewed not merely as symptoms but as emblems and iconic representations of the evil that the progressive narrative promised to leave behind. As the novelist and war correspondent Meyer Levin wrote of his visit to Ohrdruf, the first camp American soldiers liberated, 'it was as though we had penetrated at last to the center of the black heart, to the very crawling inside of the vicious heart' (quoted in Abzug, 1985: 19). On the one hand, the trauma was localized and particularized – it occurred in this war, in this place, with these persons. On the other hand, the mass murder was universalized. Within months of the initial revelations, indeed, the murders frequently were framed by a new term, 'genocide,' a crime defined as the effort to destroy an entire people which, while introduced earlier, during the war period itself, became publicly available and widely employed only after the discovery of the Nazi atrocities.[31]

In response to this new representation, the scope of the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal was enlarged. Conceived as a principal vehicle for linking the postwar Allied cause to progressive redemption, the trials were now to go beyond prosecuting the Nazi leaders for crimes of war to considering their role in the mass murder against the Jewish people. Justice Robert Jackson, the chief American prosecutor, promised that the trial would not only prosecute those responsible for the war but would present 'undeniable proofs of incredible events' – the Nazi crimes (quoted in Benn, 1995: 102). The first three counts of the 20,000-word indictment against the twenty-three high-ranking Nazi officials concerned the prosecution of the war itself. They charged conspiracy, conducting a war of aggression, and violating the rules of war. The fourth count, added only in the months immediately preceding the October trial in Nuremberg, accused the Nazi leaders of something new, namely of 'crimes against humanity.' This was the first step toward universalizing the public representation of the Jewish mass murder. From the perspective of the present day, however, it appears as a relatively limited one, for it functioned to confirm the innocent virtue and national ambitions of one particular side. In its first report on the indictments, for example, *The New York Times* linked the Jewish mass murder directly to the war itself, and placed its punishment within the effort to prevent any future 'war of aggression.' Under the headline, 'The Coming War Trials,' the paper noted that 'the authority of this tribunal to inflict punishment is directly from victory in war' and that its goal was 'to establish the principle that no nation shall ever again go to war, except when directly attacked or under the sanction of a world organization' (October 9, 1945: 20). The Nuremberg Trial was not, in other words, perceived as preventing genocide or crimes against humanity as such. At that time, the commission of such crimes could not be conceived of apart from the Nazis and the recently concluded aggressive war.

The force of the progressive narrative meant that, while the 1945 revelations confirmed the Jewish mass murder, they did not create a trauma for the postwar

audience. Victory and the Nuremberg war trials would put an end to Nazism and alleviate its evil effects. Postwar redemption depended on putting mass murder 'behind us,' moving on, and getting on with the construction of the new world.

> From the end of the war until the early 1960s, a 'can-do,' optimistic spirit pervaded America. Those who had returned from the war were concerned with building a family and a career, not with dwelling on the horrors of the past . . . It did not seem to be an appropriate time to focus on a painful past, particularly a past which seemed to be of no direct concern to this country. This event had transpired on another continent. It had been committed by another country against 'an-other' people. What relevance did it have for Americans? (Lipstadt, 1996: 195–214)

> [As for] the terms in which Americans of the mid-1950s were prepared to confront the Holocaust: a terrible event, yes, but ultimately not tragic or depressing; an experience shadowed by the specter of a cruel death, but at the same time not without the ability to inspire, console, uplift. . . Throughout the late 1940s and well into the 50s, a prevalent attitude was to put all of 'that' behind one and get on with life. (Rosenfield, 1995: 37–8)

> After the War, American Jewry turned – with great energy and generosity – to liquidating the legacy of the Holocaust by caring for the survivors [who] were urged to put the ghastly past behind them, to build new lives in their adopted homes . . . When a proposal for a Holocaust memorial in New York City came before representatives of the leading Jewish organizations in the late 1940s, they unanimously rejected the idea: it would, they said, give currency to the image of Jews as 'helpless victims,' an idea they wished to repudiate. (Novick, 1994: 160)

It was neither emotional repression nor good moral sense that created the early responses to the mass murder of the Jews. It was, rather, a system of collective representations that focused its beam of narrative light on the triumphant expulsion of evil. Most Americans did not identify with the victims of the Jewish trauma. Far from being implicated in it, Americans had defeated those responsible for the mass murders and righteously engaged in restructuring the social and political arrangements that had facilitated them. This did not mean that the mass murder of Jews was viewed with relativism or equanimity. According to the progressive narrative, it was America's solemn task to redeem the sacrifice of this largest of all categories of Nazi victims. In postwar America, the public redeemed the sacrifices of war by demanding the thorough de-Nazification, not only of German but of American society. As Sumner Welles eloquently framed the issue a month after the GIs had entered the Nazi death camps, 'the crimes committed by the Nazis and by their accomplices against the Jewish people are indelible stains upon the whole of our modern civilization.'

> They are stains which will shame our generation in the eyes of generations still unborn. For we and our governments, to which we have entrusted power during these years between the Great Wars, cannot shake off the responsibility for having permitted the

growth of world conditions which made such horrors possible. The democracies cannot lightly attempt to shirk their responsibility. No recompense can be offered the dead . . . But such measure of recompense as can be offered surely constitutes the moral obligation of the free peoples of the earth as soon as their victory is won. (Welles, 1945: 511)

Making Progress: Purifying America and Redeeming the Murder of the Jews

Propelled by the logic of this progressive understanding of redemption, in America's immediate postwar years the public legitimation of anti-semitism was repeatedly attacked and some of its central institutional manifestations destroyed. The long-standing anti-anti-semitism framing the progressive narrative, and crystallized during the interwar years by leading figures in the American intellectual and cultural elite, culminated in the immediate postwar period in a massive shift of American public opinion on the Jewish question (Stember, 1966). Only days after the hostilities ceased, in response to an appeal from the National Council of Christians and Jews, the three candidates for Mayor of New York city pledged to 'refrain from appeals to racial and religious divisiveness during the campaign.' One of them made explicit the connection of this public anti-anti-semitism to the effort to remain connected to, and enlarge upon, the meaning of America's triumph in the anti-Nazi war.

> This election will be the first held in the City of New York since our victory over nazism and Japanese fascism. It will therefore be an occasion for a practical demonstration of democracy in action – a democracy in which all are equal citizens, in which there is not and never must be a second class citizenship and in which . . . the religion of a candidate must play no part in the campaign. (*The New York Times*, October 1, 1945: 32)

In an influential article, Leonard Dinnerstein has documented the vastly heightened political activism of Jewish groups in the immediate postwar period from l945 to l948 (Dinnerstein, 1981). He records how these newly surfaced, and often newly formed groups held conferences, wrote editorials, and issued specific proposals for legal and institutional changes. By 1950, these activities had successfully exposed and often defeated anti-Jewish quotas and, more generally, created an extraordinary shift in the practical and cultural position of American Jews. During the same month that New York's mayoral candidates announced their anti-anti-semitism, *The American Mercury* published an article, 'Discrimination in Medical Colleges,' replete with graphs and copious documentation, detailing the existence of anti-Jewish quotas in some of America's most prestigious professional institutions. While the specific focus was anti-Jewish discrimination, these facts were narrated in terms of the overarching promise of America and democracy. The story began with a vignette about 'Leo, a bright and personable American lad,' who 'dreamed of becoming a great physician.'

> [He]made an excellent scholastic record [but] upon graduation . . . his first application for admission to a medical school . . . was mysteriously turned down. He filed another and another – at eighty-seven schools – always with the same heartbreaking result . . . Not one of the schools had the courage to inform Leo frankly that he was being excluded because he was a Jew . . . The excuse for imposing a quota system usually advanced is that there ought to be some correlation between the number of physicians of any racial or religious strain and the proportion of that race or religion in the general population [but] the surface logic of this arithmetic collapses as soon as one subjects it to *democratic or sheerly human*, let alone scientific, tests. [It is] spurious and *un-American* arithmetic. (vol. LXI, no. 262, October, 1945: 391–9, italics added)[32]

Earlier that year, an 'Independent Citizens Committee' had asked 300 educators to speak out against restricting Jewish enrollment in the nation's schools. Dartmouth President Ernest Hopkins refused, openly defending Dartmouth's Jewish quota on the grounds that German Nazism had been spurred because a large proportion of the German professions had become Jewish. A storm of public aprobrium followed Hopkins' remarks. *The New York Post* headlined, 'Dartmouth Bars Jews 'To end anti-semitism,' says Prexy.' The next day, the rival tabloid, *PM*, placed Hopkins' picture side by side with Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, and accused the Dartmouth President of 'spouting the Hitler-Rosenberg line' (Quoted in 'Sense or Nonsense?' *Time*, no. 46, August 20, 1945: 92, italics added). In an article entitled 'Anti-Semitism at Dartmouth,' *The New Republic* brought a progressive perspective to the controversy by suggesting that it could bring 'us a step nearer to amelioration of one of the outstanding blots on American civilization *today*.' Anti-semitism belonged to the outmoded past that had been shattered by the anti-Nazi war: 'We can *no longer* afford the luxury of these *obsolete* myths of racial differentiation, Mr. Hopkins; if you don't believe it, ask Hitler' (no. 113, August 20, 1945: 208–9, italics added).

In the years that followed, the fight against quotas continued to be informed by similar themes. In 1946, an educational sociologist wrote in *The American Scholar* that such restrictions were 'in contradistinction to the *growing* realization which has come as a result of the war.' Quotas must be abolished if postwar progress were to be made.

> *Today*, our society as a whole sees the relationship between social welfare and prejudices which thwart the development of the capacities of individuals. This threat to the basic concepts of democracy is so plain that almost all of us, except the vested interests, have seen it. The question is whether or not the colleges and universities have seen it and are willing to bring their practices into line with *present day* insights, even though some of their most precious traditions be jeapordized. (Dodson, 1946: 268, italics added)

Similar connections between the anti-Nazi war, anti-quotas, and the progress of anti-anti-semitism informed another popular magazine article the following year: 'It is extremely regrettable that *in 1946*, the children of [parents] who are returning from all parts of the world where they have been engaged in mortal combat to preserve democracy, are confronted with same closed doors that greeted their

'alien' fathers' (Hart, 1947: 61). In 1949, *Collier's* published an article describing the 'scores of college men to whom fraternities' for 'full-blooded Aryans' are a little nauseating *in this day*.' Quoting the finding of an Amherst College alumni committee that exclusive fraternities gave young men 'a false and undemocratic sense of superiority,' the article claimed that 'the anti-discrimination movement is hopping from campus to campus' (Whitman, 1949: 34–5, italics added).

While Jewish voluntary organizations had begun to organize in 1943–5, they entered the American public sphere as aggressive political advocates only from l945, an intervention that marked the first time Jews had forcefully entered the civil sphere as advocates for their own rather than others' causes. In the prewar period, and even less in earlier times, such an explicit and aggressively Jewish public intervention would certainly have been repelled; in fact, it would only have made anti-semitism worse. In the postwar period, however, despite their failure to identify with the Jewish victims of Nazism, the American non-Jewish audience was determined to redeem them. If, as Dinnerstein writes, Jewish groups intended to 'mobilize public opinion against intolerance, and [thus to] utilize the courts and legislative bodies in their anti-semitic fight,' they were able to carry on these political activities only because postwar public opinion had already been defined as committed to 'tolerance.'

Progress toward establishing civil relations between religious and ethnic groups was woven into the patriotic postwar narratives of the nation's mass circulation magazines. *Better Homes and Gardens* ran such stories as 'Do You Want Your Children to Be Tolerant?'

> The old indifference and local absorption cannot continue. If we relapse into our *before-the-war* attitudes and limitations, war will burst upon us as suddenly and as unexpectedly as the atomic bomb fell upon the people of Hiroshima – and we shall be as helpless. (Buck, 1947: 135, italics added)

In another piece in *Better Homes and Gardens* that same year, 'How to Stop the Hate Mongers in Your Home Town,' a writer observed: 'I suspect that many a decent German burgher, hearing tales of Nazi gangs, likewise shrugged off the implications of uncurbed racial and religious persecution' (Carter, 1947: 180). The following year, *The Saturday Evening Post* profiled 'the story of the Jewish family of Jacob Golomb.' The lengthy article concluded with the by now widely expected forward-looking line.

> As a family, the Golombs are more than just nice folks who lead busy, fruitful, decent lives; a family whose sons have sprung, in time of national emergency, with promptness to the defense of their country. As members of a race with a long history of persecution, they have kept the faith, since Abraham Golomb's time, that the United States really was, or *would soon be*, the land of the genuinely free. They are still convinced. (Perry, 1948: 96, italics added)

Four years later, America's most popular photo magazine published '*Life* Goes to a Bar Mitzvah: A Boy Becomes Man' (no. 33, October 13, 1952: 170ff.).

The anti-anti-semitism theme also entered popular culture through the movies. In the 1945 box office hit, *Pride of the Marines*, the Jewish protagonist

Larry Diamond chided a friend for pessimism about the possibility of eliminating prejudice in the postwar years. He did so by connecting their present situation to the progressive ideals that had sustained their the anti-Nazi war: 'Ah, come on, climb out of your foxholes, what's a matter you guys, don't you think anybody learned anything since 1930? Think everybody's had their eyes shut and brains in cold storage?' (Short, 1981: 161) Diamond goes on to remark that, if and when prejudice and repression dare to show their ugly heads in the postwar United States, he will fight to defeat them, just as he has learned to fight in the war: 'I fought for me, for the right to live in the USA. And when I get back into civilian life, if I don't like the way things are going, O.K. it's my country; I'll stand on my own two legs and holler! If there's enough of us hollering we'll go places – Check?' (Short, 1981: 161). The narrative of progress is forcefully extended from the anti-Nazi war into the post-Nazi peace. Diamond had been 'the pride of the marines,' and the war's progressive narrative is fundamentally tied to assertions about the utopian telos of the United States. As the movie's closing music turns into 'America the Beautiful,' Diamond wraps it up this way: 'One happy afternoon when God was feeling good, he sat down and thought of a rich beautiful country and he named it the USA. All of it, Al, the hills, the rivers, the lands, the whole works. Don't tell me we can't make it work in peace like we do in war. Don't tell me we can't pull together. Don't you see it guys, can't you see it?' (Short, 1981: 161–2).

Two years later, a movie promoting anti-anti-semitism, *Gentleman's Agreement,* won the Academy Award for best motion picture and another, *Crossfire*, had been nominated as well. Both are conspicuously progressive, forward-looking narratives. In the final dialogue of *Gentlemen's Agreement*, the film's future-oriented, utopian theme could not be more clear. 'Wouldn't it be wonderful,' Mrs. Green asks Phil, 'if it turned out to be everybody's century, when people all over the world, free people, found a way to live together? I'd like to be around to see some of that, even a beginning' (quoted in Short, 1981: 180).[33]

As they had immediately before and during the war, 'Jews' held symbolic pride of place in these popular culture narratives because their persecution had been preeminently associated with the Nazi evil. In fact, it was not tolerance as such that the progressive narrate demanded, but tolerance of the Jews.[34] Thus, despite their feelings of solidarity with their foreign coreligionists, Jewish leaders carefully refrained from publicly endorsing the wholesale lifting of anti-immigration quotas after 1945. They realized that the idea of immigration remained so polluted by association with stigmatized others that it might have the power to counteract the ongoing purification of Jewishness. In the preceding half century, anti-immigration and anti-semitism had been closely linked, and Jews did not want to pollute 'Jewishness' with this identity again. While demonstrating their support in private, Jewish leaders resolutely refused to make any public pronouncements against lifting the immigration quotas (Dinnerstein, 1981: 140).

Conclusion

What Dinnerstein has called the 'turnabout in anti-Semitic feelings' represented the triumph over Nazism, not recognition of the Holocaust trauma. News about the mass murder, and any ruminations about it, disappeared from newspapers and magazines rather quickly after the initial reports about the camps' liberation, and the Nazis' Jewish victims became represented as displaced persons, potential immigrants, and potential settlers in Palestine, where a majority of Americans wanted to see a new, and redemptive, Jewish state. This interpretation suggests that it was by no means simply real politik that led President Truman to champion, against his former French and British allies, the postwar creation of Israel, the new Jewish state. The progressive narrative demanded a future-oriented renewal. Zionists argued that the Jewish trauma could be redeemed, that Jews could both sanctify the victims and put the trauma behind them, only if they returned to Jerusalem. According to the Zionist worldview, if Israel were allowed to exist, it would create a new race of confident and powerful Jewish farmer-warriors, who would redeem the anti-Jewish atrocities by developing such an imposing military power that the massive murdering of the Jews would never, anywhere in the world, be allowed to happen again. In important respects, it was this convergence of progressive narratives in relation to the war and the Jewish mass killings that led the postwar paths of the United States and the state of Israel to become so fundamentally intertwined. Israel would have to prosper and survive for the redemptive telos of America's progressive narrative to be maintained.

These cultural-sociological considerations do not suggest that the postwar American fight against anti-semitism was in any way morally inauthentic. It was triggered by grassroots feelings as deep as those that had motivated the earlier anti-Nazi fight. When one looks at these powerful new arguments against anti-semitism, it is only retrospectively surprising to realize that the 'atrocities' revealed in 1945 – the events and experiences that defined the trauma for European Jews – figure hardly at all. This absence is explained by the powerful symbolic logic of the progressive narrative, which already had been established in the prewar period. With the victory in 1945, the United States got down to the work of establishing the new world order. In creating a Nazi-free future, Jewishness came for the first time to be analogically connected with core American symbols of 'democracy' and 'nation.'

In the course of this postwar transformation, American Jews also became identified with democracy in a more primordial and less universalistic way, namely as newly minted, patriotic representations of the nation. 'After 1945,' a leading historian of that period remarks, 'other Americans no longer viewed the Jews as merely another of the many exotic groups within America's ethnic and religious mosaic. Instead, they were now seen as comprising one of the country's three major religions' (Shapiro, 1992: 28). This patriotic-national definition was expressed by the Jewish theologian Will Herberg's insistence on the 'Judeo-Christian' rather than 'Christian' identity of the religious heritage of the US.

(Shapiro, 1992: 53)[35] As I have indicated, what motivated this intense identification of anti-anti-semitism with the American nation was neither simple emotional revulsion for the horrors of the Jewish mass killings nor common sense morality. It was, rather, the progressive narrative frame. To end anti-semitism, in President Truman's words, was to place America alongside 'the moral forces of the world' (quoted in Shapiro, 1992: 143). It was to redeem those who had sacrificed themselves for the American nation, and, according to the teleology of the progressive narrative, this emphatically included the masses of murdered European Jews.

The critical point is this: What was a trauma for the victims was not a trauma for the audience.[36] In documenting this for the American case, I have examined the principal carrier group for the progressive narrative, the nation that in the immediate postwar world most conspicuously took the lead in 'building the new world upon the ashes of the old.' I have shown that the social agents, both Jewish and non-Jewish Americans, who took the lead in reconstructing a new moral order, dedicated themselves to redeeming those who had been sacrificed to the anti-Nazi struggle, and most especially to the Jewish victims, by putting an end to anti-semitism in the United States. The goal was focused, not on the Holocaust, but on the need to purge postwar society of Nazi-like pollution.

TOWARD THE 'HOLOCAUST': JEWISH MASS MURDER UNDER THE TRAGIC NARRATIVE

In the second part of this article, I will show how a different kind of narrative developed in relation to the Nazis' mass murder of the Jews, one which gave the evil it represented significantly greater symbolic weight. I will treat this new culture structure both as cause and effect. After reconstructing its internal contours, I will examine the kind of 'symbolic action' it caused, and how these new meanings compelled the trauma of the mass murders to be seen in a radically different way, with significant consequences for social and political action that continue to ramify to the present day.[37] After completing this analytic reconstruction of the new cultural configuration, I will proceed to a concrete examination of how it was constructed in real historical time, looking at changes in carrier groups, moral contexts, and social structural forces. Finally, I will examine some of the long-term ramifications of the highly general, decontextualized, and universal status that the trauma of the Holocaust came to assume.

The New Culture Structure

Ever since Dilthey defined the method specific to the *Geisteswissenschaften* – literally 'sciences of the spirit' but typically translated as 'human sciences' – it has been clear that what distinguishes the hermeneutic from the natural scientific

method is the challenge of penetrating beyond the external form to inner meaning of actions, events, and institutions. Yet to enter into this thicket of subjectivity is not to embrace impressionism and relativism. As Dilthey emphasized, meanings are governed by structures just as surely as economic and political processes; they are just governed in different ways. Every effort at interpretive social science must begin with the reconstruction of this culture structure.[38]

Deepening Evil

In the formation of this new culture structure, the coding of the Jewish mass killings as evil remained, but its weighting substantially changed. It became burdened with extraordinary gravitas. The symbolization of the Jewish mass killings became generalized and reified, and, in the process, the evil done to the Jews became separated from the profanation of Nazism per se. Rather than seeming to 'typify' Nazism, or even the nefarious machinations of any particular social movement, political formation, or historical time, the mass killings came to be seen as not being typical of anything at all. They came to be understood as a unique, historically unprecedented event, as evil on a scale that had never occurred before.[39] The mass killings entered into universal history, becoming a 'world historical' event in Hegel's original sense, an event whose emergence onto the world stage threatened, or promised, to change the fundamental course of the world.[40] In the introduction to an English collection of his essays on Nazi history and the Holocaust, the German-Israeli historian Dan Diner observes that 'well into the 1970s, wide-ranging portraits of the epoch would grant the Holocaust a modest (if any) mention.'[41] By contrast, 'it now tends to fill the entire picture.'

> The growing centrality of the Holocaust has altered the entire warp and woof of our sense of the passing century . . . The incriminated event has thus become the epoch's marker, its final and inescapable wellspring. (Diner, 2000: 1)

The Jewish mass killings became what we might identify, in Durkheimian terms, as a sacred-evil, an evil that recalled a trauma of such enormity and horror that it had to be radically set apart from the world and all of its other traumatizing events, and which became inexplicable in ordinary, rational terms. As part of the Nazi scheme of world domination, the Jewish mass killing was heinous but at least it had been understandable. As a sacred evil, set apart from ordinary evil things, it had become mysterious and inexplicable. One of the first to comment upon, and thus to characterize, this post-progressive inexplicability was the Marxist historian, Isaac Deutscher. This great biographer of Trotsky, who had already faced the consequences of Stalinism for the myth of Communist progress, was no doubt already conditioned to see the tragic dimensions of the Holocaust. In 1968, in 'The Jewish Tragedy and the Historian,' Deutscher suggested that comprehending the Holocaust 'will not be just a matter of time,' i.e., that there would not be progress in this regard.

> I doubt whether even in a thousand years people will understand Hitler, Auschwitz, Majdanek, and Treblinka better than we do now. Will they have a better historical perspective? On the contrary, posterity may even understand it all even less than we do. Who can analyze the motives and the interests behind the enormities of Auschwitz . . . We are confronted here by a huge and ominous mystery of the generation of the human character that will forever baffle and terrify mankind. (Deutcher, 1968: 163)

For Deutscher, such a huge and mysterious evil, so resistant to the normal progress of human rationality, suggested tragedy and art, not scientific fact-gathering. 'Perhaps a modern Aeschylus and Sophocles could cope with this theme,' he suggested, 'but they would do so on a level different from that of historical interpretation and explanation' (Deutcher, 1968: 164).

Geoffrey Hartman, the literary theorist who has directed Yale University's Video Archive for the Holocaust since 1981 and has been a major participant in post-sixties discussions of the trauma, points to the enigma that, while no historical event has ever 'been so thoroughly documented and studied,' social and moral 'understanding comes and goes; it has not been progressive.' By way of explaining this lack of progress, Hartman acknowledges that

> The scholars most deeply involved often admit an 'excess' that remains dark and frightful . . . Something in the . . . Shoah remains dark at the heart of the event . . . A comparison with the French Revolution is useful. The sequence *French Revolution: Enlightenment* cannot be matched by *Holocaust: Enlightenment*. What should be placed after the colon? 'Eclipse of Enlightenment' or 'Eclipse of God'? (Hartman, 1996: 3–4)

To this day, the Holocaust is almost never referred to without asserting its inexplicability. In the Spring of 1999, a *New York Times* theater reviewer began his remarks on 'The Gathering,' a newly opened drama, by asserting that 'the profound, agonizing mystery of the Holocaust echoes through the generations and across international borders,' presenting 'an awesome human and theological enigma as an old century prepares to give way to a new millennium' (van Gelder, 1999: 1).

This separateness of sacred-evil demanded that the trauma be renamed, for the concept of 'mass murder,' and even the notion of 'genocide,' now appeared unacceptably to normalize the trauma, to place it too closely in proximity to the banal and mundane. In contrast, despite the fact that the word 'Holocaust' did have a formally established English meaning – according to the OED, 'something wholly burnt up' (Garber and Zuckerman, 1989: 199) – it no longer performed this sign function in everyday speech. Rather, the term entered into ordinary English usage, in the early 1960s, as a proper rather than a common noun.[42] Only several years after the Nazis' mass murder did Israelis begin to employ the Hebrew word *shoah*, the term by which the Torah evoked the kind of extraordinary sufferings God had periodically consigned to the Jews. In the official English translation of the phrase 'Nazi *shoah*' in the preamble to the 1948 Israeli Declaration of Independence, one can already find the reference to 'Nazi holocaust' (Novick, 1999: 132). With the decline of the progressive narrative, in other words, as 'Holocaust' became the dominant representation for the trauma, it

implied the sacral mystery, the 'awe-fullness,' of the transcendental tradition. 'Holocaust' became part of contemporary language as an English symbol that stood for that thing that could not be named.[43] As David Roskies once wrote, 'it was precisely the nonreferential quality of 'Holocaust' that made it so appealing' (quoted in Garber and Zuckerman, 1989: 201).

This new linguistic identity allowed the mass killings of the Jews to become what might be called a bridge metaphor: it provided the symbolic extension so necessary if the trauma of the Jewish people were to become a trauma for all humankind. The other necessary ingredient, psychological identification, was not far behind. It depended on configuring this newly weighted symbolization of evil in a different narrative frame.

Suffering, Catharsis, and Identification

The darkness of this new postwar symbolization of evil cast a shadow over the progressive story that had thus far narrated the mass murder of the Jews. The story of redeeming Nazism's victims by creating a progressive and democratic world order could be called an ascending narrative, for it pointed to the future and suggested confidence that things would be better over time. Insofar as the mass killings were defined as a Holocaust, and insofar as it was the very emergence of this sacred-evil, not its eventual defeat, that threatened to become emblematic of 'our time,'[44] the progressive narrative was blocked, and in some manner overwhelmed, by a sense of historical descent, by a falling away from the good. Recent Holocaust commentators have drawn this conclusion time and again. According to the progressive narrative, the Nazis' mass murder of the Jews would provide a lesson for all humankind, a decisive learning process on the way to a better world. Reflecting on the continuing fact of genocidal mass murders in the post-Holocaust world, Hartman revealingly suggests that 'these developments raise questions about our species, our preconceptions that we are the human, the "family of man." Or less dramatically, we wonder about the veneer of progress, culture, and educability.'

In dramaturgical terms, the issue concerns the position occupied by evil in the historical narrative. When Aristotle first defined tragedy in the *Poetics*, he linked what I have here called the weight of the representation of suffering to temporal location of an event in plot:

> Tragedy is the representation of a complete, i.e., whole action *which has some magnitude* (for there can be a whole action without magnitude). A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle and a conclusion. A beginning is that which itself does not of necessity follow something else, but after which there naturally is, or comes into being, something else. A conclusion, conversely, is that which itself naturally follows something else, either of necessity or for the most part, but has nothing else after it. A middle is that which itself naturally follows something else, and has something else after it. Well-constructed plots, then, should neither begin from a random point nor conclude at a random point, but should use the elements we have mentioned [i.e., beginning, middle and conclusion]. (Aristotle, 1987: 3.2.1, italics added)

In the progressive narrative frame, the Jewish mass killings were not an end but a beginning. They were part of the massive trauma of the Second World War, but in the postwar period they and related incidents of Nazi horror were regarded as a birth trauma, a crossroads in a chronology that would eventually be set right. By contrast, the newly emerging world-historical status of the mass murders suggested that they represented an end point, not a new beginning, a death trauma rather than a trauma of birth, a cause for despair, not the beginning of hope. In place of the progressive story, then, there began to emerge the narrative of tragedy. The endpoint of a narrative defines its telos. In the new tragic understanding of the Jewish mass murder, suffering, not progress, became the telos toward which the narrative was aimed.

In this tragic narrative of sacred-evil, the Jewish mass killings become not an event in history but an archetype, an event out-of-time. As archetype, the evil evoked an experience of trauma greater than anything that could be defined by religion, race, class, region – indeed, by any conceivable sociological configuration or historical conjuncture. This transcendental status, this separation from the specifics of any particular time or space, provided the basis for psychological identification on an unprecedented scale. The contemporary audience cares little about the second and third installments of Sophocles' archetypal story of Oedipus, the tragic hero. What we are obsessed with is Oedipus' awful, unrecognized, and irredeemable mistake, how he finally comes to recognize his responsibility for it, and how he blinds himself from guilt when he understands its full meaning. Tragic narratives focus attention not on some future effort at reversal or amelioration – 'progress,' in the terms I have employed here – but on the nature of the crime, its immediate aftermath, and on the motives and relationships that led up to it.

A tragic narrative offers no redemption in the traditionally religious, Judeo-Christian sense.[45] There is no happy ending, no sense that something else could have been done, and no belief that the future could, or can, necessarily be changed. Indeed, protagonists are tragic precisely because they have failed to exert control over events. They are in the grip of forces larger than themselves, impersonal, even inhuman forces that often are not only beyond control but, during the tragic action itself, beyond comprehension. This sense of being overwhelmed by unjust force or fate explains the abjection and helplessness that permeates the genre of tragedy, and the experience of pity it arouses.

Instead of redemption through progress, the tragic narrative offers what Nietzsche called the drama of the eternal return. As it now came to be understood, there was no 'getting beyond' the story of the Holocaust. There was only the possibility of returning to it: not transcendence but catharsis. Hartman resists 'the call for closure' on just these grounds. 'Wherever we look, the events of 1933–1945 cannot be relegated to the past. They are not over; anyone who comes in contact with them is gripped, and finds detachment difficult.' Quoting from Lawrence Langer's *Admitting the Holocaust*, Hartman suggests that 'those who study it must "reverse history and progress and find a way of restoring to the imagination of coming generations the depth of the catastrophe"' (Hartman, 1996: 2, 5).

As Aristotle explained, catharsis clarifies feeling and emotion. It does so not by allowing the audience to separate itself from the story's characters, a separation, according to Frye, that defines the very essence of comedy (Frye, 1971). Rather, catharsis clarifies feeling and emotion by forcing the audience to identify with the story's characters, compelling them to experience their suffering with them and to learn, as often they did not, the true causes of their death. That we survive and they do not, that we can get up and leave the theater while they remain forever prostrate – this allows the possibility of catharsis, that strange combination of cleansing and relief, that humbling feeling of having been exposed to the dark and sinister forces that lay just beneath the surface of human life, and of having survived.[46] We seek catharsis because our identification with the tragic narrative compels us to experience dark and sinister forces that are also inside of ourselves, not only inside others. We 'redeem' tragedy by experiencing it, but, despite this redemption, we do not get over it. Rather, to achieve redemption we are compelled to dramatize and re-dramatize, experience and re-experience the archetypal trauma. We pity the victims of the trauma, identifying and sympathizing with their horrible fate. Aristotle argued that the tragic genre could be utilized only for the 'sorts of occurrence [that] arouse dread, or compassion in us' (Aristotle, 1987: 4.1.2). The blackness of tragedy can be achieved only if, 'first and foremost, the [suffering] characters should be good,' for 'the plot should be constructed in such a way that, even without seeing it, someone who hears about the incidents will shudder and feel pity at the outcome, as someone may feel upon hearing the plot of the Oedipus' (Aristotle, 1987: 4.2.1, 4.1.1.3). It is not only the fact of identification, however, but its complexity that makes the experience of trauma as tragedy so central to the assumption of moral responsibility, for we identify not only with the victims but with the perpetrators as well. The creation of this cultural form allows the psychological activity of internalization rather than projection, acceptance rather than displacement.[47]

The Trauma Drama: Eternal Return and the Problem of Progress

In the tragic narration of the Holocaust, the primal event became a 'trauma drama' that the 'audience' returned to time and time again. This became, paradoxically, the only way to ensure that such an event would happen 'never again.' This quality of compulsively returning to the trauma drama gave the story of the Holocaust a mythical status that transformed it into the archetypical sacred-evil of our time. Insofar as it achieved this status as a dominant myth, the tragedy of the Holocaust challenged the ethical self-identification, the self-esteem, of modernity – indeed, the very self-confidence that such a thing as 'modern progress' could continue to exist. For to return to the trauma drama of the Holocaust, to identify over and over again with the suffering and helplessness of its victims, was in some sense to give that confidence-shattering event a continuing existence in contemporary life. It was, in effect, to acknowledge that it *could* happen again.

In this way, the tragic framing of the Holocaust fundamentally contributed to post-modern relativism and disquiet. Because the tragic replaced the progressive narrative of the Nazi mass murder, the ethical standards protecting good from evil seemed not nearly as powerful as modernity's confident pronouncements had promised they would be. When the progressive narrative had organized under-standing, the Nazi crimes had been temporalized as 'medieval,' in order to contrast them with the supposedly civilizing standards of modernity. With the emergence of the more tragic perspective, the barbarism was lodged within the essential nature of modernity itself.[48] This is the radical and corrosive theme of Bauman's provocative *Modernity and the Holocaust*. While Bauman himself professes to eschew any broader universalizing aims, the ethical message of such a perspective seems clear all the same. Rather than maintaining and perfecting modernity, as the postwar progressive narrative would have it, the path to a more just and peaceful society seems to lead to postmodern life (Bauman, 1989).[49]

It would be wrong, however, to imagine that because a trauma drama lies at the center of the Holocaust's tragic narration, with all the ambition of exciting pity and emotional catharsis that this implies, that this lachrymose narrative and symbol actually became disconnected from the ethical and the good.[50] While it is undeniable that the Jewish mass killings came to assume a dramaturgical form, their significance hardly became aestheticized, i.e., turned into a free-floating, amoral symbol whose function was to entertain rather than to instruct.[51] The events of the Holocaust were not dramatized for the sake of drama itself, but rather to provide what Martha Nussbaum once described as 'the social benefits of pity' (Nussbaum, 1992).[52] The project of renaming, dramatizing, reifying, and ritualizing the Holocaust contributed to a moral remaking of the (post) modern (Western) world. The Holocaust story has been told and retold in response not only to an emotional need but a moral ambition. Its characters, its plot, and its pitiable denouement have been transformed into a less nationally bound, less temporally specific, and more universal drama. This dramatic universalization has deepened contemporary sensitivity to social evil. The trauma drama's message, as every tragedy's, is that evil is inside all of us, and in every society. If we are all the victims, and all the perpetrators, then there is no audience that can legitimately distance itself from collective suffering, either from its victims or its perpetrators.

This psychological identification with the Jewish mass killings and the symbolic extension of its moral implications beyond the immediate parties involved has stimulated an unprecedented universalization of political and moral responsibility. To have created this symbol of sacred-evil in contemporary time, then, is to have so enlarged the human imagination that it is capable, for the first time in human history, of identifying, understanding, and judging the kinds of genocidal mass killings in which national, ethnic, and ideological groupings continue to engage today.[53] This enlargement has made it possible to compre-hend that heinous prejudice with the intent to commit mass murder is not some-thing from an earlier, more 'primitive' time or a different, 'foreign' place, committed by people with values we do not share. The implication of the tragic

narrative is not that progress has become impossible. It has had the salutary effect, rather, of demonstrating that progress is much more difficult to achieve than moderns once believed. If progress is to be made, morality must be universalized beyond any particular time and place.[54]

The New Social Processes

Most Western people today would readily agree with the proposition that the Holocaust was a tragic, devastating event in human history. Surely it was, and is. One implication of my discussion thus far, however, is that this perception of its moral status is not a natural reflection of the event itself. The Jewish mass killings first had to be dramatized – as a tragedy. Some of the most eloquent and influential Holocaust survivors and interpreters have disagreed sharply, and moralistically, with this perspective, insisting that fictional representations must not be allowed to influence the perception of historical reality. In 1978, Elie Wiesel excoriated NBC for producing the *Holocaust* mini-series, complaining that 'it transforms an ontological event into soap-opera' and that 'it is all make-believe.' Because 'the Holocaust transcends history,' Wiesel argued, 'it cannot be explained nor can it be visualized' (Wiesel, 1978: 1). In response to *Schindler's List*, Claude Lanzman said much the same thing. Writing that the Holocaust 'is above all unique in that it erects a ring of fire around itself,' he claimed that 'fiction is a transgression' and that 'there are some things that cannot and should not be represented' (quoted in Hartman, 1996: 84).[55]

I am obviously taking a very different perspective here. Thus far, I have reconstructed the internal patterning of the culture structure that allowed the new, tragic dramatization to take place. I would like now to turn to the historically specific social processes, both symbolic and social structural, that made this new patterning attractive and, eventually, compelling. While my reference here is primarily to the United States, I believe some version of this analysis also applies to those other Western societies that attempted to reconstruct liberal democracies after the Second World War.[56]

We have earlier seen how the struggle against anti-semitism became one of the primary vehicles by which the progressive narrative redeemed those who had been sacrificed in the war against Nazi evil. Fighting anti-semitism was not the only path to redemption, of course; for America and its victorious allies, there was a whole new world to make. At the same time, the struggle against anti-semitism had a special importance. The understanding of Nazism as an absolute evil stemmed not only from its general commitment to anti-civil domination, but also from its effort to legitimate such violence according to the principles of prejudice and primordiality. Because the Jewish people were by far the most conspicuous primordial target, symbolic logic dictated that to be anti-Nazi was to be anti-anti-semitic.[57]

As I have suggested earlier, the rhetorics and policies of this anti-anti-semitism did not require that non-Jewish Americans positively identify with Jews, any

more than the role that the Holocaust played in the postwar progressive narrative depended on a sense of identification with the weary and bedraggled survivors in the concentration camps themselves. To narrate the Holocaust in a tragic manner, however, did depend on just such an identification being made. This identification was a long time in coming, and it depended on a number of factors unrelated to public opinion and cultural change.[58] Nonetheless, it certainly depended, in addition to such social structural factors, on the fact that the cultural idiom and the organizational apparatus of anti-semitism had, indeed, been attacked and destroyed in the early 'Progressive' postwar years, and that, for the first time in American history, Jews seemed, to a majority of Christian Americans, not that much different from anybody else.

As this tragic narrative crystallized, the Holocaust drama became, for an increasing number of Americans, and for significant proportions of Europeans as well, the most widely understood and emotionally compelling trauma of the twentieth century. These bathetic events, once experienced as traumatic only by its Jewish victims, became generalized and universalized. Their representation no longer referred to events that took place at a particular time and place but to a trauma that had became emblematic, and iconic, of human suffering as such. The horrific trauma of the Jews became the trauma of all humankind.[59]

The Production of New Social Dramas

How was this more generalized and universalized status achieved? Social narratives are not composed by some hidden hand of history. Nor do they appear all at once. The new trauma drama emerged in bits and pieces. It was a matter of this story and that, this scene and that scene from this movie and that book, this television episode and that theater performance, this photographic capturing of a moment of torture and suffering. Each of these glimpses into what Meyer Levin had called, in April, 1945, 'the very crawling inside of the vicious heart' contributed some element to the construction of this new sensibility, which highlighted suffering, helplessness, and dark inevitability, and which, taken together and over time, reformulated the mass killing of the Jews as the most tragic event in Western history. It is not the purpose of the present discussion to provide anything approaching a thick description of this process of symbolic reconstruction, but only to identify the signposts along this new route and the changing 'countryside' that surrounded it.

Personalizing the Trauma and its Victims

In the course of constructing and broadcasting the tragic narrative of the Holocaust, there were a handful of actual dramatizations – in books, movies, plays, and television shows – that played critically important roles. Initially formulated for an American audience, they were distributed worldwide, seen by tens and possibly hundreds of millions of persons, and talked incessantly about by

high-, middle-, and low-brow audiences alike. In the present context, what seems most important about these dramas is that they achieved their effect by personalizing the trauma and its characters. This personalization brought the trauma drama 'back home.' Rather than depicting the events on a vast historical scale, rather than focusing on larger-than-life-leaders, mass movements, organizations, crowds, and ideologies, these dramas portrayed the events in terms of small groups, families and friends, parents and children, brothers and sisters. In this way, the victims of trauma became everyman and everywoman, every child and every parent.

The prototype of this personalizing genre was Anne Frank's famous *Diary*. First published in Holland in 1947,[60] the edited journals appeared in English in 1952. They became the basis for a Pulitzer prize winning Broadway play in 1955 and in 1959 a highly acclaimed and equally popular, but immensely more widely influential, Hollywood movie. This collective representation began in Europe, as the journal recorded by a young Dutch girl in hiding from the Nazis, and evolved, via a phase of Americanization, into a universal symbol of suffering and transcendence. This transmorgification was possible, in the first place, precisely because Anne's daily jottings focused less on the external events of war and Holocaust – from which she was very much shut off – than on her inner psychological turmoil and the human relationships of those who shared her confinement. Anne's father, Otto Frank, the only family member surviving the camps, supervised the publications and dramatizations of his daughter's journals, and he perceived very clearly the relation between Anne's personal focus and the *Diary's* potentially universalizing appeal. Writing to Meyer Shapiro, a potential dramatist who insisted, by contrast, on the specifically Jewish quality of the reminiscence, Otto Frank replied that 'as to the Jewish side you are right that I do not feel the same you do.'

> I always said, that Anne's book is not a war book. War is the background. It is not a Jewish book either, though [a] Jewish sphere, sentiment and surrounding is the background . . . It is read and understood more by gentiles than in Jewish circles. So do not make a Jewish play out of it. (quoted in Doneson, 1987: 152)[61]

When dramatists for the *Diary* were finally chosen – Francis Goodrich and Albert Hackett – Frank criticized their initial drafts on similar grounds.

> Having read thousands of reviews and hundreds of personal letters about Anne's book from different countries in the world, I know what creates the impression of it on people and their impressions ought to be conveyed by the play to the public. Young people identify themselves very frequently with Anne in their struggle during puberty and the problems of the relations [between] mother-daughter are existing all over the world. These and the love affair with Peter attract young people, whereas parents, teachers, and psychologists learn about the inner feelings of the young generation. When I talked to Mrs. [Eleanor] Roosevelt about the book, she urged me to give permission for [the] play and film as only then we could reach the masses and influence them by the mission of the book which she saw in Anne's wish to work for mankind, to achieve something valuable still after her death, her horror against war and discrimination. (quoted in Doneson, 1987: 153)

This impulse to facilitate identification and moral extension prompted the dramatists to translate into English the *Diary*'s pivotal Hanukkah song, which was sung, and printed, in the original Hebrew in the earlier book version. The Hacketts explained their reasoning in a letter to Frank. To have left the song in its original Hebrew, they wrote:

> Would set the characters in the play apart from the people watching them . . . for the majority of our audience is not Jewish. And the thing that we have striven for, toiled for, fought for throughout the whole play is to make the audience understand and identify themselves . . . to make them one with them . . . that will make them feel 'that, but for the grace of God, might have been I.' (quoted in Doneson, 1987: 154)

Frank agreed, affirming that it 'was my point of view to try to bring Anne's message to as many people as possible even if there are some who think it a sacrilege' from a religious point of view (quoted in Doneson, 1987: 154). Years later, after the unprecedented success of both the theatre and screen plays, the Hacketts continued to justify their decision to abandon Hebrew in the dramaturgic terms of facilitating psychological identification and symbolic extension.

> What we all of us hoped, and prayed for, and what we are devoutly thankful to have achieved, is an identification of the audience with the people in hiding. They are seen, not as some strange people, but persons like themselves, thrown into this horrible situation. With them they suffer the deprivations, the terrors, the moments of tenderness, of exaltation and courage beyond belief. (quoted in Doneson, 1987: 155)

In the course of the 1960s, Anne Frank's tragic story laid the basis for psychological identification and symbolic extension on a mass scale. In 1995, the Director of Jewish Studies at Indiana University reported that

> *The Diary of a Young Girl* is . . . widely read in American schools, and American youngsters regularly see the stage and film versions as well. Their teachers encourage them to identify with Anne Frank and to write stories, essays, and poems about her. Some even see her as a kind of saint and pray to her. During their early adolescent years, many American girls view her story as their story, her fate as somehow bound up with their fate. (Rosenfeld, 1995: 37)

The symbolic transformation effected by Anne Frank's *Diary* established the dramatic parameters and the stage for the rush of books, television shows, and movies that in the decades following crystallized the mass murder of the Jews as the central episode in a tragic rather than progressive social narrative. As this new genre became institutionalized, representation of Nazism and the Second World War focused less and less on the historical actors who had once been considered central. In 1953, the acclaimed Billy Wilder movie, *Stalag 17*, had portrayed the grueling plight of US soldiers in a German prisoner of war camp. It never mentioned the Jews (Shapiro, 1992: 4). In the early 1960s, a widely popular evening television show, *Hogan's Heroes*, also portrayed American soldiers in a Nazi prison. It didn't mention 'Jews' either. Indeed, the prison camp functioned as a site for comedy, lampooning the misadventures arising from the casual intermixing of Americans with Nazi camp guards and often portraying the latter as

bemusing, well-intended buffoons. By the late 1960s, neither comedy nor romance were genres that audiences felt comfortable applying to that earlier historical time. Nor was it possible to leave out of any dramatization what by then were acknowledged to be the period's central historical actor, the concentration camp Jews.[62]

This transition was solidified in Western popular culture by the mini-series *Holocaust*, the stark family drama that unfolded over successive nights to a massive American audience in April, 1978. The four-part, nine-and-a-half hour drama, watched by nearly 100 million Americans, personalized the grisly and famous landmarks of the Third Reich, following ten years in the lives of two fictional families, one assimilated Jews, the other of a high-ranking SS official.

This extraordinary public attention was repeated, to even greater cathartic effect, when the bathetic drama was later broadcast to record-breaking television audiences in Germany.[63] German critics, commentators, and large sections of the pubic at large were transfixed by what German commentators described as 'the most controversial series of all times' and as 'the series that moved the world.' During and after this German broadcast, which was preceded by careful public preparation and accompanied by extensive private and public discussion, German social scientists conducted polls and interviews to trace its remarkable effects. They discovered that the resulting shift in public opinion had put a stop to a burgeoning 'Hitler revival' and quelled long-standing partisan demands for 'balance' in the presentation of the Jewish mass murder. In the wake of the drama, neutralizing terms like 'the final solution' gave way in German popular and academic discussion to the English term, Holocaust; and the German Reichstag removed the statute of limitations on Nazis who had participated in what were now defined, not as war crimes, but as crimes against humanity. The trauma drama thus continued to work its universalizing effects.[64]

Enlarging the Circle of Perpetrators

Corresponding to the personalization that expanded identification with the victims of the tragedy, there developed a new understanding of the perpetrators of the Holocaust that removed them from their historically specific particularities and made them into universal figures with whom members of widely diverse groups felt capable, not of sympathizing, but of identifying. The critical event initiating this reconsideration was undoubtedly the 1961 trial of Adolph Eichmann in Jerusalem. Here was a personal and singular representation of the Nazis' murders brought back into the present from the abstract mists of historical time, compelled to 'face the music' after being captured by Israeli security forces in a daring extra-legal mission right out of a spy novel or science fiction book. The trial received extraordinary press coverage in the United States. That summer, Gallup conducted a series of in-depth interviews with 500 randomly selected residents of Oakland, California, and found that 84 percent of those sampled met the minimum criterion for awareness of this far away event, a striking statistic

given American indifference to foreign affairs (Lipstadt, 1996: 212, n. 54). At least seven books were published about Eichmann and his trial in the following year (Lipstadt, 1996: 196).

The first legal confrontation with the Holocaust since Nuremberg, the trial was staged by Israel, not to generalize away from the originating events, but to get back to them. As Prime Minister Ben-Gurion put it, the trial would give 'the generation that was born and educated after the Holocaust in Israel . . . an opportunity to get acquainted with the details of this tragedy about which they knew so little' (Braun, 1994: 183). The lessons were to be drawn from, and directed to, particular places and particular peoples, to Germany, the Nazis, Israel, and the Jews – in Ben-Gurion's words, to 'the dimensions of the tragedy which *our people* experienced' (Lipstadt, 1996: 213, italics added). By the time it was over, however, the Eichmann trial paradoxically had initiated a massive universalization of Nazi evil, best captured by Hannah Arendt's enormously controversial insistence that the trial compelled recognition of the 'banality of evil.' This framing of Nazi guilt became highly influential, even as it was sharply and bitterly disputed by Jews and non-Jews alike. For as a banally evil person, Eichmann could be 'everyman.' Arendt herself had always wanted to make just such a point. In her earliest reaction to the Nazi murders, the philosopher had expressed horror and astonishment at the Nazis' absolute inhumanity. For this she was rebuked by her mentor and friend Karl Jaspers, who cautioned against making the Nazis into 'monsters' and 'supermen.' To do so, Jaspers warned, would merely confirm the Nazis in their grandiose Nietzchean fantasies, and relieve others of responsibility as well.[65] Because of Arendt's singular influence, the antagonists in the trauma began to seem not so different from anybody else.[66] The trial and its aftermath eventually became framed in a manner that narrowed the once great distance between postwar democratic audiences and evil Nazis, connecting them rather than isolating them from one another. This connection between audience and antagonist intensified the trauma's tragic dramaturgy.

During this same period, other forces also had the effect of widening the circle of 'perpetrators.' Most spectacularly, there was Stanley Milgram's experiment demonstrating that ordinary, well-educated college students would 'just follow the orders' of professional authority, even to the point of gravely endangering the lives of innocent people. These findings raised profoundly troubling questions about the 'good nature' of all human beings and the democratic capacity of any human society. Milgram appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine, and 'the Milgram experiment' became part of the folklore of the 1960s. It generalized the capacity for radical evil, first demonstrated by the Nazis, to the American population at large, synergistically interacting with the symbolic reconstruction of perpetrators that Arendt had begun. In one interview Milgram conducted with a volunteer after he had revealed to him the true nature of the experiment, the volunteer remarked: 'As my wife said: "You can call yourself Eichmann" ' (quoted in Novick, 1999: 137).[67]

In the decades that followed, other powerful cultural reconstructions of the perpetrators followed in this wake. In 1992, Christopher Browning published a

widely-discussed historical ethnography called *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (Browning, 1992), which focused on the everyday actions and motives of Germans who were neither members of the professional military nor particularly ideological, but who, nonetheless, carried out systematic and murderous cleansings of the Jews. When four years later Daniel Goldhagen published *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (Goldhagen, 1996), his aim was to shift blame back to what he described as the unprecedented and particular kind of anti-semitism, what he called 'eliminationist,' of the Germans themselves. Browning's critical response to Goldhagen was based on historical evidence but it also decried the moral particularity that Goldhagen's argument seemed to entail. Indeed, Browning connected his empirical findings about the 'ordinariness' of perpetrators to the necessity for universalizing the moral implications of Nazi crimes, and in doing so he pointed all the way back to Milgram's earlier findings.

> What allowed the Nazis to mobilize and harness the rest of society to the mass murder of European Jewry? Here I think that we historians need to turn to the insights of social psychology – the study of pyschological reactions to social situations . . . We must ask, what really is a human being? We must give up the comforting and distancing notions that the perpetrators of the Holocaust were fundamentally a different kind of people because they were products of a radically different culture. (Browning, 1996)[68]

In the realm of popular culture, Steven Spielberg's blockbuster movie, *Schindler's List*, must also be considered in this light. In a subtle but unmistakable manner, the movie de-particularizes the perpetrators by showing the possibilities that 'even Germans' could be good.[69]

Losing Control of the Means of Symbolic Production: Deposing the Agents of the Progressive Narrative

It was in this context of tragic transformation – as personalization of the drama increased identification beyond the Jewish victims themselves, and as the sense of moral culpability became fundamentally widened beyond the Nazis themselves – that the United States Government, and the nation's authoritative interlocutors, lost control over the telling of the Holocaust story. When the Allies defeated Nazi Germany in 1945 and seized control of strategic evidence from the death camps, they had taken over control of the representation process from the Nazis and assured the fact that the Jewish mass murder would be presented in an anti-Nazi way. In this telling of this story, naturally enough, the former Allies – America most powerfully, but Britain and France as well – presented themselves as the moral protagonists, purifying themselves as heroic carriers of the good. As the 1960s unfolded, the Western democracies were forced to concede this dominant narrative position. This time around, however, control over the means of symbolic production changed hands as much for cultural reasons as for the force of arms.[70]

In the 'critical years' from the mid-1960s to the end of the 1970s, the United States experienced a sharp decline in its political, military, and moral prestige. It was during this period that, in the eyes of tens of millions of Americans and others, the domestic and international opposition to America's prosecution of the Vietnam War transformed the nation, and especially its government and armed forces, into a symbol, not of salvationary good, but of apocalyptic evil. This transformation was intensified by other outcroppings of 'the sixties,' particularly the revolutionary impulses that emerged out of the student and Black Power movements inside the United States and guerilla movements outside it. These 'real world' problems caused the United States to be identified in terms that had, up until that time, been reserved exclusively for the Nazi perpetrators of the Holocaust. According to the progressive narrative, it could only be the Allies' Second World War enemy who represented radical evil. As America became 'Amerika,' however, napalm bombs were analogized with gas pellets, and the flaming jungles of Vietnam with the gas chambers. The powerful American army that claimed to be prosecuting a 'good war' against Vietnamese communists – in analogy with the lessons that Western democracies had learned in their earlier struggle against Nazism – came to be identified, by influential intellectuals and a wide swath of the educated Western public, as perpetrating genocide against the helpless and pathetic inhabits of Vietnam. Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre established a kind of counter-'War Crimes Tribunal' to apply the logic of Nuremberg to the United States. Indefensible incidents of civilian killing, like the Mylai Massacre of 1968, were represented, not as anomalous incidents, but as typifications of this new American-made tragedy.[71]

This process of material deconstruction and symbolic inversion further contributed to the universalization of the Holocaust: It allowed the moral criteria generated by its earlier interpretation to be applied in a less nationally specific and thus less particularistic way. This inversion undermined still further the progressive narrative under which the mass killings of the Jews had early been framed. For the ability to leave the trauma drama behind, and to press ahead toward the future, depended on the material and symbolic existence of an unsullied protagonist who could provide salvation for survivors by leading them into the promised land. 'Vietnam' and 'the sixties' undercut the main agent of this progressive narrative. The result was a dramatic decline in the confidence that a new world order could be constructed in opposition to violence and coercion; if the United States itself committed war crimes, what chance could there be for modern and democratic societies ever to leave mass murder safely behind?

As a result of these material and symbolic events, the contemporary representatives of the historic enemies of Nazism lost control over the means of symbolic production. The power to present itself as the purified protagonist in the world wide struggle against evil slipped out of the hands of the American government and patriotic representatives more generally, even as the framing of the drama's triggering trauma shifted from progress to tragedy. The ability to cast and produce the trauma drama, to compel identification and channel catharsis, spread to other nations and to anti-government groups, and even to historic enemies of

the Jewish people. The archetypical trauma drama of the twentieth century became ever more generalized and more accessible, and the criteria for moral responsibility in social relations, once closely tied to American perspectives and interests, came to be defined in a more even-handed, more egalitarian, more self-critical, in short a more universalistic way.

Perhaps the most visible and paradoxical effect of this loss of the American government's control over the means of symbolic production control was that the morality of American leadership in the Second World War came to be questioned in a manner that established polluting analogies with Nazism.[72] One issue that now became 'troubling,' for example, was the justification for the Allied fire bombings of Dresden and Tokyo. The growing climate of relativism and reconfiguration threatened to undermine the coding, weighting, and narrating that once had provided a compelling rationale for those earlier events that were, in themselves, so massively destructive of civilian life. In a similar manner, but with much more significant repercussions, the symbolic implications of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki began to be fundamentally reconfigured. From being conceived as stages in the unfolding of the progressive narrative, influential groups of Westerners came to understand the atomic bombings as vast human tragedies. Younger generations of Americans, in fact, were increasingly responsive to the view of these events that had once been promoted exclusively by Japan, the fascist Axis power against which their elders had waged war. The interpretation of the suffering caused by the atomic bombings became separated from the historical specifics of time and place. With this generalization, the very events that had once appeared as high points of the progressive narrative came to be constructed as unjustifiable, as human tragedies, as slaughters of hundreds of thousands of innocent and pathetic human beings – in short, as typifications of the 'Holocaust.'[73]

Perhaps the most pointed example of what could happen after America lost control over the Holocaust story was the manner in which its redemptive role in the narrative was challenged. Rather than being portrayed as the chief prosecutor of Nazi perpetrators – as chief prosecutor, the narrative's protagonist along with the victims themselves – the American and the British war-time governments were accused of having at least indirect responsibility for allowing the Nazis to carry out their brutal work. A steady stream of revisionist historical scholarship emerged, beginning in the 1970s, suggesting that the anti-semitism of Roosevelt and Churchill, and of their American and British citizens, had prevented them from acting to block the mass killings. For they had received authenticated information about German plans and activities as early as June, 1942.[74]

This analogical linkage between the Allies and the Perpetrators quickly became widely accepted as historical fact. On September 27, 1979, when the President's Commission on the Victims of the Holocaust issued a report recommending the American establishment of a Holocaust Museum, it listed as one of its primary justifications that such a public construction would give the American nation an opportunity to compensate for its early, 'disastrous' indifference to the plight of

the Jews (quoted in Linenthal, 1995: 37). When the museum itself was eventually constructed, it enshrined this inversion of the progressive narrative in the exhibitions themselves. The third floor of the museum is filled with powerfully negative images of the death campus, and is attached by an internal bridge to a tower whose rooms display actual artifacts from the camps. As visitors approach this bridge, in the midst of the iconic representations of evil, they confront a photomural of a US Air Force intelligence photograph of Auschwitz-Birkenau, taken on May 31, 1944. The text attached to the mural informs visitors: 'Two freight trains with Hungarian Jews arrived in Birkenau that day; the large-scale gassing of these Jews was beginning. The four Birkenau crematoria are visible at the top of the photograph' (quoted in Linenthal, 1995: 217). Placed next to the photomural is what the principal ethnographer of the museum project, Edward Linenthal, has called 'an artifactual indictment of American indifference.' It is a letter, dated August 14, 1944, from Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy. According to the text, McCoy 'rejected a request by the World Jewish Congress to bomb the Auschwitz concentration camp.' This rejection is framed in the context not of physical impossibility, or in terms of the vicissitudes of a world war, but as the result of moral diminution. Visitors are informed that the US Air Force 'could have bombed Auschwitz as early as May 1944,' since US bombers had 'struck Buna, a synthetic-rubber works relying on slave labor, located less than five miles east of Auschwitz-Birkenau.' But, despite this physical possibility, the text goes on to note, the death camp 'remained untouched.' The effective alignment of Allied armies with Nazi perpetrators is more than implicit: 'Although bombing Auschwitz would have killed many prisoners, it would also have halted the operation of the gas chambers and, ultimately, saved the lives of many more' (quoted in Linenthal, 1995: 217–8). This authoritative reconstruction, it is important to emphasize, is not a brute empirical fact, any more than the framework which had held previous sway. In fact, within the discipline of American history, the issue of Allied indifference remains subject to intensive debate (Linenthal, 1995: 219–224).[75] At every point in the construction of a public discourse, however, factual chronicles must be encased in symbolically coded and narrated frames.

Eventually, this revision of the progressive narrative about exclusively Nazi perpetrators extended, with perhaps even more profound consequences, to other Allied powers and to the neutrals in that earlier conflict as well. As the charismatic symbol of French resistance to German occupation, Charles de Gaulle had woven a narrative, during and after the war, that purified his nation by describing France as first the victim, and later the courageous opponent, of Nazi domination and the 'foreign' collaborators in Vichy.[76] By the late 1970s and 1980s, however, a younger generation of French and non-French historians challenged this definition, seriously polluting the earlier Republican government, and even some of its postwar socialist successors, by documenting massive French collaboration with the anti-democratic, anti-Semitic regime.[77]

In the wake of these reversals, it seemed only a matter of time until the nations who had been 'neutral' during the earlier conflict would also be forced to

relinquish symbolic control over how the telling of their own stories, at least in the theatre of Western opinion if not on their own national stage. Austria, for example, had long depicted itself as a helpless victim of Nazi Germany. When Kurt Waldheim ascended to Secretary-General of the United Nations, however, his hidden association with the Hitler regime was revealed, and the symbolic status of the Austrian nation, which rallied beyond their ex-president, began to be publicly polluted as a result.[78] Less than a decade later, Switzerland became subject to similar inversion of its symbolic fortunes. The tiny republic had prided itself on its long history of decentralized canton democracy and the kind of benevolent, universalizing neutrality of its Red Cross. In the mid-1990s, jour-nalists and historians documented that the wartime Swiss government had laundered, i.e., 'purified,' Nazi gold. In return for gold that had been plundered from the bodies of condemned and already dead Jews, Swiss bankers gave to Nazi authorities acceptable, unmarked currency that could much more readily be used to finance the war.

This discussion of how the non-Jewish agents of the progressive narrative were undercut by 'real world' developments would be incomplete without some mention of how the Israeli Government, which represented the other principal agent of the early, progressive Holocaust story, also came to be threatened with symbolic reconfiguration. The rise of Palestinian liberation movements inverted the Jewish nation's progressive myth of origin, for it suggested, at least to more liberally inclined groups, an equation between Nazi and Israeli treatment of subordinate ethnic and religious groups. The battle for cultural position was not, of course, given up without a fight. When West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt spoke of Palestinian rights, Israel Prime Minister Menachem Begin retorted that Schmidt, a Wehrmacht officer in the Second World War, had 'remained faithful to Hitler until the last moment,' insisting that the Palestine Liberation Organization was a 'neo-Nazi organization' (Novick, 1994: 161). This symbolic inversion vis-a-vis the newly generalized and reconfigured Holocaust symbol was deepened by the not unrelated complicity of Israel in the massacres that followed the Lebanon invasion, and by the documented reports of Palestin-ian torture and occasional death in Israeli prisons.

THE HOLOCAUST AS BRIDGING METAPHOR: THE ENGORGEMENT OF EVIL AND ITS ETHICAL MANIFESTATION

Each of the cultural transformations and social processes I have described has had the effect of universalizing the moral questions provoked by the mass killings of the Jews, of detaching the issues surrounding the systematic exercise of violence against ethnic groups from any particular ethnicity, religion, nationality, time, or place. These processes of detachment and deepening emotional identification are

thoroughly intertwined. If the Holocaust were not conceived of as a tragedy, it would not attract such continuous, even obsessive attention; this attention would not be rewarded, in turn, if the Holocaust were not understood in a detached and universalizing way. Symbolic extension and emotional identification are both necessary if the audience for a trauma and its social relevance are to be dramatically enlarged. I will call the effects of this enlargement the 'engorgement of evil.'

Norms provide standards for moral judgment. What is defined as evil in any historical period provides the most transcendental content for such judgments. What Kant called radical evil, and what I have called here, drawing on Durkheim, sacred-evil, refers to something considered absolutely essential to defining the good 'in our time.' Insofar as the 'Holocaust' came to define inhumanity in our time, then, it served a fundamental moral function. 'Post-Holocaust morality'[79] could perform this role, however, only in a sociological way: it became a bridging metaphor that social groups of uneven power and legitimacy applied to parse ongoing events as good and evil in real historical time. What the 'Holocaust' named as the most fundamental evil was the intentional, systematic and organized employment of violence against members of a stigmatized collective group, whether defined in a primordial or an ideological way. Not only did this representation identify as radical evil the perpetrators and their actions but it polluted as evil non-actors as well. According to the standards of post-Holocaust morality, one became normatively required to make an effort to intervene against any Holocaust, regardless of personal consequences and cost. For as a crime against humanity, a 'Holocaust' is taken to be a threat to the continuing existence of humanity itself. It is impossible, in this sense, to imagine a sacrifice that would be too great when humanity itself is at stake.[80]

Despite the moral content of the Holocaust symbol, then, the primary, first-order effects of this sacred-evil do not work in a ratiocinative way. Radical evil is a philosophical term, and it suggests that evil's moral content can be defined and discussed rationally. Sacred-evil, by contrast, is a sociological term, and it suggests that defining radical evil, and applying it, involves motives and relationships, and institutions, that work more like those associated with religious institutions than with ethical doctrine. In order for a prohibited social action to be powerfully moralized, the symbol of this evil must become engorged. An engorged evil overflows with badness. Evil becomes labile and liquid; it drips and seeps, ruining everything it touches. Under the sign of the tragic narrative, the Holocaust became engorged, and its seepage polluted everything with which it came into contact.

Metonymy

This contact pollution established the basis for what might be called metonymic guilt. Under the progressive narrative, guilt for the genocidal mass killings depended on being directly and narrowly responsible in the legal sense worked out and applied at the Nuremberg Trials. It wasn't simply a matter of being

'associated' with mass murders. In this legal framework, any notion of collective responsibility, the guilt of the Nazi party, the German government, much less the German nation was ruled as unfair, as out of bounds. But as the Holocaust became engorged with evil, and as post-Holocaust morality developed, guilt could no longer be so narrowly confined. Guilt now came from simple propinquity, in semiotic terms from metonymic association.

To be guilty of sacred-evil did not mean, any more, that one had committed a legal crime. It was about the imputation of a moral one. One cannot defend oneself against an imputed moral crime by pointing to exculpating circumstances or lack of direct involvement. The issue is one of pollution, guilt by actual association. The solution is not the rational demonstration of innocence but ritual cleansing: purification. In the face of metonymic association with evil, one must engage in performative actions, not only in ratiocinative, cognitive arguments. As the 'moral conscience of Germany,' the philosopher Jürgen Habermas, put it during the now famous *Historikerstreit* among German historians during the 1980s, the point is to 'attempt to expel shame,' not to engage in 'empty phrases' (quoted in Kampe, 1987: 63). One must *do* justice and *be* righteousness. This performative purification is achieved by returning to the past, entering symbolically into the tragedy, and developing a new relation to the archetypal characters and crimes. Habermas wrote that it was 'only after and through Auschwitz' that postwar Germany could once again attach itself 'to the political culture of the West' (quoted in Kampe, 1987: 63). Retrospection is an effective path toward purification because it provides for catharsis, although of course it doesn't guarantee it. The evidence for having achieved catharsis is confession. If there is neither the acknowledgment of guilt nor sincere apology, punishment in the legal sense may be prevented but the symbolic and moral taint will always remain.

Once the trauma had been dramatized as a tragic event in human history, the engorgement of evil compelled contemporaries to return to the originating trauma drama and to re-judge every individual or collective entity who was, or might have been, even remotely involved. Many individual reputations became sullied in this way. The list of once admired figures who were 'outed' as apologists for, or participants in, the anti-Jewish mass murders stretched from such philosophers as Martin Heidegger to such literary figures as Paul de Man and such political leaders as Kurt Waldheim. In the defenses mounted by these tarnished figures or their supporters, the suggestion was never advanced that the Holocaust does not incarnate evil – a self-restraint that implicitly reveals the trauma's engorged, sacred quality. The only possible defense was that the accused had, in fact, never been associated with the trauma in any way.

More than two decades ago, the US Justice Department established an 'Office of Special Investigation,' the sole purpose of which was to track down and expel not only major but minor figures who had been associated in some manner with Holocaust crimes. Since then, the bitter denunciations of deportation hearings have echoed throughout virtually every Western country. In such proceedings, the emotional-cum-normative imperative is to assert the moral requirements for humanity. Media stories revolve around questions of the 'normal,' as in how

could somebody who seems like a human being, who since the Second World War has been an upstanding member of the (French, American, Argentinian) community, ever have been involved in what now is universally regarded as an anti-human event? Issues of legality are often overlooked, for the issue is purification of the community through expulsion of a polluted object.[81] Frequently, those who are so polluted give up without a fight. In the spate of recent disclosures about Jewish art appropriated by Nazis and currently belonging to Western museums, directors have responded simply by asking for time to catalogue the marked holdings to make them available to be retrieved.

Analogy

The direct, metonymic association with Nazi crimes is the most overt effect of the way in which evil seeps from the engorged Holocaust symbol, but it is not the cultural process most often employed. The bridging metaphor works much more typically, and profoundly, through the device of analogy.

In the 1960s and 1970s, such analogical bridging powerfully contributed to a fundamental revision in moral understandings of the historical treatment of minorities inside the United States. Critics of earlier American policy, and representatives of minority groups themselves, began to suggest analogies between various minority 'victims' of white American expansion and the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. This was particularly true of native Americans, who argued that genocide had been committed against them, an idea that gained wide currency and that eventually generated massive efforts at legal repair and monetary payments.[82] Another striking example of this domestic inversion was the dramatic reconfiguration, in the 1970s and 1980s, of the American Government's internment of Japanese-American citizens during the Second World War. Parallels between this action and Nazi prejudice and exclusion became widespread, and the internment camps became reconfigured as concentration camps. What followed from this symbolic transformation were not only formal governmental 'apologies' to the Japanese-American people but actual monetary 'reparations.'

In the 1980s, the engorged, free-floating Holocaust symbol became analogically associated with the movement against nuclear power and nuclear testing and, more generally, with the ecological movements that emerged during that time. Politicians and intellectuals gained influence in their campaigns against the testing and deployment of nuclear weapons by telling stories about the 'nuclear holocaust' that would be unleashed if their own, democratic governments continued their nuclear policies. By invoking this Holocaust-inspired narrative, they were imagining a disaster that would have such generalized, supra-national effects that the historical particularities of ideological rightness and wrongness, winners and losers, would no longer matter. In a similar manner, the activists' evocative depictions of the 'nuclear winter' that would result from the nuclear holocaust gained striking support from the images of 'Auschwitz,' the iconic representations of which were rapidly becoming a universal medium for

expressing demented violence, abject human suffering, and 'meaningless' death. In the environmental movement, claims were advanced that the industrial societies were committing ecological genocide against species of plant and animal life, and that there was a danger that earth itself would be exterminated.

In the 1990s, the evil that seeped from the engorged metaphor provided the most compelling analogical framework for framing the Balkan events. While there certainly was dispute over which historical signifier of violence would provide the 'correct' analogical reference – dictatorial purge, civil war, ethnic cleansing, or genocide – it was the engorged Holocaust symbol that propelled first American diplomatic and then American-European military intervention against Serbian ethnic violence.[83] The part played by this symbolic analogy was demonstrated during the early US Senate debate in 1992. Citing 'atrocities' attributed to Serbian forces, Senator Joseph Lieberman told reporters that 'we hear echoes of conflicts in Europe little more than 50 years ago.' During this same period, the Democratic presidential nominee, Bill Clinton, asserted that 'history has shown us that you can't allow the mass extermination of people and just sit by and watch it happen.' The candidate promised, if elected, to 'begin with air power against the Serbs to try to restore the basic conditions of humanity,' employing antipathy to distance himself from the polluting passivity that had retrospectively been attributed to the Allies during the initial trauma drama itself (quoted in *The Congressional Quarterly*, August 8, 1992: 2374). While President Bush initially proved more reluctant than candidate Clinton to put this metaphorical linkage into material form – with the resulting deaths of tens of thousands of innocents – it was the threat of just such military deployment that eventually forced Serbia to sign the Dayton Accords and to stop what were widely represented, in the American and European media, as its genocidal activities in Bosnia and Herzogovina.

When the Serbians threatened to enter Kosovo, the allied bombing campaign was initiated and justified by evoking the same symbolic analogies and the antipathies they implied. The military attacks were represented as responding to the widely experienced horror that the trauma drama of the Holocaust was being re-enacted 'before our very eyes.' Speaking to a veterans' group at the height of the bombing campaign, President Clinton engaged in analogical bridging to explain why the current Balkan confrontation should not be understood, and thus tolerated, as 'the inevitable result . . . of centuries-old animosities.' He insisted that these murderous events were unprecedented because they were a 'systematic slaughter,' carried out by 'people with organized, political and military power,' under the exclusive control of a ruthless dictator, Slobodan Milosevic.

> You think the Germans would have perpetrated the Holocaust on their own without Hitler? Was there something in the history of the German race that made them do this? No. We've got to get straight about this. This is something political leaders do. (*The New York Times*, May 14, 1999, Section A: 12)

The same day in Germany, Joschka Fischer, Foreign Minister in the coalition 'Red-Green' government, appeared before a special congress of his Green Party to

defend the allied air campaign. He, too, insisted that the uniqueness of Serbian evil made it possible to draw analogies with the Holocaust. Fischer's deputy foreign minister and party ally, Ludger Volmer, drew rousing applause when, in describing President Milosevic's systematic cleansing policy, he declared 'my friends, there is only one word for this, and that word is Fascism.' A leading opponent of the military intervention tried to block the bridging process by symbolic antipathy. 'We are against drawing comparisons between the murderous Milosevic regime and the Holocaust,' he proclaimed, because 'doing so would mean an unacceptable diminishment of the horror of Nazi Fascism and the genocide against European Jews.' Arguing that the Kosovars were not the Jews and Milosevic not Hitler protected the sacred-evil of the Holocaust, but the attempted antipathy was ultimately unconvincing. About 60 percent of the Green Party delegates believed the analogies were valid and voted to support Fischer's position.[84]

Two weeks later, when the allied bombing campaign had not yet succeeded in bringing Milosevic to heel, President Clinton asked Elie Wiesel to make a three-day tour of the Kosovar Albanians' refugee camps. A spokesperson for the US embassy in Macedonia explained that 'people have lost focus on why we are doing what we are doing' in the bombing campaign. The proper analogy, in other words, was not being consistently made. The solution was to create direct, metonymic association. 'You need a person like Wiesel,' the spokesperson continued, 'to keep your moral philosophy on track.' In the lead sentence of its report on the tour, *The New York Times* described Wiesel as 'the Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize winner.' Despite Wiesel's own assertion that 'I don't believe in drawing analogies,' after visiting the camps analogizing was precisely the rhetoric in which he engaged. Wiesel declared that 'I've learned something from my experiences as a contemporary of so many events.' What he had learned was to apply the post-Holocaust morality derived the originating trauma drama: 'When evil shows its face, you don't wait, you don't let it gain strength. You must intervene' (Rolde, 1999: 1).

During that tour of a camp in Macedonia, Elie Wiesel had insisted that 'the world had changed fifty years after the Holocaust' and that 'Washington's response in Kosovo was far better than the ambivalence it showed during the Holocaust.' When, two weeks later, the air war, and the growing threat of a ground invasion, finally succeeded in expelling the Serbian forces from Kosovo, *The New York Times* 'Week in Review' reiterated the famous survivor's confidence that the Holocaust trauma had not been in vain, that the drama erected upon its ashes had fundamentally changed the world, or at least the West. The Kosovo war had demonstrated that analogies were valid and that the lessons of post-Holocaust morality could be carried out in the most utterly practical way.

> It was a signal week for the West, no doubt about it. Fifty-four years after the Holocaust revelations, America and Europe had finally said 'enough,' and struck a blow against a revival of genocide. Serbian ethnic cleansers were now routed; ethnic Albanians would be spared further murders and rapes. Germany was exorcising a few of its Nazi ghosts. Human rights had been elevated to a military priority and a pre-eminent Western value. (Wines, 1999: 1)

Twenty-two months later, after Western support has facilitated the electoral defeat of Milosevic and the accession to the Yugoslav presidency of the reformer Vojilslav Kostunica, the former president and accused war criminal was arrested and forcably taken to jail. While President Kostunica did not personally subscribe to the authority of the war crimes tribunal in the Hague, there was little doubt that he had authorized Milosevic's imprisonment under intensive American pressure. Though initiated by the Congress rather than the US President, George W. Bush responded to the arrest by Holocaust typification. He spoke of the 'chilling images of terrified women and children herded into trains, emaciated prisoners interned behind barbed wire and mass graves unearthed by United Nations investigators,' all traceable to Milosevic's 'brutal dicatorship' (Perlez, 2001: 6). Even for those Serbian intellectuals, like Aleksa Djilas, who criticized the Hague tribunal as essentially a political, and thus particularistic court, there was recognition that the events took place within a symbolic framework that would inevitably universalize them and contribute to the possibility of a new moral order on a less particularist scale. 'There will be a blessing in disguise through his trial,' Djilas told a reporter on the day after Milosevic's arrest.

> Some kind of new international order is being constructed, intentionally or not . . . Something will crystallize: what kinds of nationalism are justified or not, what kinds of intervention are justified or not, how much are great powers entitled to respond, and how. It will not be a sterile exercise.' (Erlanger, 2001: 8)

In the 1940s, the mass murder of the Jews had been viewed as a typification of the Nazi war machine, an identification that had limited its moral implications. Fifty years later, the Holocaust had displaced its historical context. It had itself become the master symbol of evil in relation to which new instances of grievous mass injury would be typified.[85]

Legality

As the rhetoric of this triumphant declaration indicates, the generalization of the Holocaust trauma drama has found expression in the new vocabulary of 'universal human rights.' In some part, this trope has simply degendered the Enlightenment commitment to 'the universal rights of man,' first formulated in the French Revolution. In some other part, it blurs the issue of genocide with social demands for health and basic economic subsistence. Yet from the beginning of its systematic employment in the postwar period, the phrase has also referred specifically to a new legal standard for international behavior that would simultaneously generalize and make more precise and binding what came to be regarded as the 'lessons' of the Holocaust events. Representatives of various organizations, both governmental and nongovernmental, have made sporadic but persistent efforts to formulate specific, morally binding codes, and eventually international laws, to institutionalize the moral judgments triggered by metonymic and analogic association with the engorged symbol of evil. This possibility has inspired the

noted legal theorist, Martha Minow, to suggest an unorthodox answer to the
familiar question: 'Will the twentieth century be most remembered for its mass
atrocities?'

> A century marked by human slaughter and torture, sadly, is not a unique century in
> human history. Perhaps more unusual than the facts of genocides and regimes of
> torture marking this era is the invention of new and distinctive legal forms of response.
> (Minow, 1998: 1)

This generalizing process began at Nuremberg in 1945, when the long-
planned trial of Nazi war leaders was expanded to include the moral principle
that certain heinous acts are 'crimes against humanity' and must be recognized
as such by everyone (Drinan, 1987: 334). In its first report on those indictments,
The New York Times insisted that, while 'the authority of this tribunal to inflict
punishment is directly derived from victory in war,' it derived 'indirectly from
an intangible but nevertheless very real factor which might be called the dawn of
a world conscience' (October 9, 1945: 20). This universalizing process continued
the following year, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolu-
tion 95, committing the international body to 'the principles of international law
recognized by the charter of the Nuremberg Tribunal and the judgment of the
Tribunal' (quoted in Drinan, 1987: 334).[86] Two years later, the United Nations
issued *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, whose opening preamble
evoked the memory of 'barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of
mankind.'[87] In 1950, the International Law Commission of the United Nations
adopted a statement spelling out the principles that the *Declaration* implied.

> The core of these principles states that leaders and nations can be punished for their
> violations of international law and for their crimes against humanity. In addition, it is
> not a defense for a person to state that he or she was required to do what was done
> because of an order from a military or civilian superior. (quoted in Drinan, 1987: 334)

In the years since, despite President Truman's recommendation that the US
draft a code of international criminal law around these principles, despite the
'human rights' foreign policy of a later Democratic President, Jimmy Carter, and
despite the nineteen UN treaties and covenants condemning genocide and exalt-
ing the new mandate for human rights, new international legal codes were never
drafted (Drinan, 1987: 334). Still, over this same period, an increasingly thick
body of 'customary law' was developed that militated *against* non-intervention
in the affairs of sovereign states when they engage in systematic human rights
violations.

> The long-term historical significance of the rights revolution of the last fifty years is
> that it has begun to erode the sanctity of state sovereignty and to justify effective
> political and military intervention. Would there have been American intervention in
> Bosnia without nearly fifty years of accumulated international opinion to the effect
> that there are crimes against humanity and violations of human rights which must be
> punished wherever they arise? Would there be a safe haven for the Kurds in northern
> Iraq? Would we be in Kosovo? (Ignatieff, 1999: 62)[88]

When the former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet was arrested in Britain, and detained for more than a year, in response to an extradiction request by a judge in Spain, the reach of this customary law, and its possible enforcement by national police, first became crystallized in the global public sphere. It was at about the same time that the first internationally sanctioned War Crimes Tribunal since Nuremberg began meeting in the Hague to prosecute those who had violated human rights from any and all sides of the decade's Balkan wars.

The Dilemma of Uniqueness

As the engorged symbol bridging the distance between radical evil and what at some earlier point was considered normal or normally-criminal behavior, the reconstructed Holocaust trauma became enmeshed in what might be called the dilemma of uniqueness. The trauma could not function as a metaphor of archetypal tragedy unless it were regarded as radically different from any other evil act in modern times. Yet, it was this very status – as a unique event – that eventually compelled it to become generalized and departicularized. For as a metaphor for radical evil, the Holocaust provided a standard of evaluation for judging the evility of other threatening acts. By providing such a standard for comparative judgment, the Holocaust became a norm, initiating a succession of metonymic, analogic, and legal evaluations that deprived it of 'uniqueness' by establishing its degrees of likeness or unlikeness to other possible manifestations of evility.

In this regard, it is certainly ironic that this bridging process, so central to universalizing critical moral judgment in the post-Holocaust world, has time after time been attacked as depriving the Holocaust of its very significance. Yet these very attacks often revealed, despite themselves, the trauma drama's new centrality in ordinary thought and action. One historically-oriented critic, for example, mocked the new 'Holocaust consciousness' in the United States, citing the fact that the Holocaust 'is invoked as reference point in discussions of everything from AIDS to abortion' (Novick, 1994: 159). A literature professor complained about the fact that 'the language of 'Holocaust'' is now 'regularly invoked by people who want to draw public attention to human-rights abuses, social inequalities suffered by racial and ethnic minorities and women, environmental disasters, AIDS, and a whole host of other things' (Rosenfeld, 1995: 35). Another scholar decried the fact that 'any evil that befalls anyone anywhere becomes a Holocaust' (quoted in Rosenfeld, 1995: 35).[89]

While no doubt well-intentioned in a moral sense, such complaints miss the sociological complexities that underlie the kind of cultural-moral process we are exploring here. Evoking the Holocaust to measure the evil of a non-Holocaust event is nothing more, and nothing less, than to employ a powerful bridging metaphor to make sense of social life. The effort to qualify as the referent of this metaphor is bound to entail sharp social conflict, and in this sense social relativization, for successful metaphorical embodiment brings to a party legitimacy and resources. The premise of these relativizing social conflicts is that the

Holocaust provides an absolute and non-relative measure of evil. But the effects
of the conflict are to relativize the application of this standard to any particular
social event. The Holocaust is unique and not-unique at the same time. This
insoluble dilemma marks the life history of the Holocaust since it became a tragic
archetype and a central component of moral judgment in our time.[90] Inga
Clendinnen has recently described this dilemma in a particularly acute way, and
her observations exemplify the metaphorical bridging process I have tried to
describe here.

> There have been too many recent horrors, in Rwanda, in Burundi, in one-time
> Yugoslavia, with victims equally innocent, killers and torturers equally devoted, to
> ascribe uniqueness to any one set of atrocities on the grounds of their exemplary
> cruelty. I find the near-random terror practiced by the Argentinean military, especially
> their penchant for torturing children before their parents, to be as horrible, as 'unimag-
> inable,' as the horrible and unimaginable things done by Germans to their Jewish
> compatriots. Certainly the scale is different – but how much does scale matter to the
> individual perpetrator or the individual victim? Again, the willful obliteration of long-
> enduring communities is surely a vast offence, but for three years we watched the
> carpet-bombings of Cambodia, when the bombs fell on villagers who could not have
> had the least understanding of the nature of their offence. *When we think of innocence
> afflicted, we see those unforgettable children of the Holocaust staring wide-eyed into the
> camera of their killers, but we also see the image of the little Vietnamese girl, naked,
> screaming, running down a dusty road, her back aflame with American napalm.* If we
> grant that 'holocaust,' the total consumption of offerings by fire, is sinisterly appro-
> priate for the murder of those millions who found their only graves in the air, it is
> equally appropriate for the victims of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Dresden [and for]
> Picasso's horses and humans screaming [in Guernica] under attack from untouchable
> murderers in the sky. (Clendinnen, 1999: 14, italics added)

FORGETTING OR REMEMBERING? ROUTINIZATION
AND INSTITUTIONALIZATON

As the sense that the Holocaust was a unique event in human history crystallized,
and its moral implications became paradoxically generalized, the tragic trauma
drama became increasingly subject to memorialization. Special research centers
were funded to investigate its most minute details and to sponsor debates about
its wider applications. College courses were devoted to it and everything from
university chairs to streets and parks were named for it. Monuments were
constructed to honor the tragedy's victims. Major urban centers in the United
States, and many outside it as well, constructed vastly expensive, and vastly
expansive, museums to make permanent its moral lessons. The US military
distributed instructions for conducting 'Days of Remembrance,' and commem-
orative ceremonies were held annually in the Capitol Rotunda.

Because of the dilemma of uniqueness, all of these generalizing processes were

controversial; they suggested to many observers that the Holocaust was being instrumentalized and commodified, that its morality and effect were being displaced by specialists in profit-making, on the one hand, and specialists in merely cognitive expertise, on the other. In recent years, indeed, the idea has grown that the charisma of the original trauma drama is being routinized in a regrettable, but predictable, Weberian way.[91]

The moral learning process that I have described in the preceding pages does not necessarily deny the possibility that instrumentalization develops *after* a trauma drama has been created and *after* its moral lessons have been externalized and internalized. In American history, for example, even the most sacred of the founding national traumas, the Revolution and the Civil War, have faded as objects of communal effect and collective remembering, and the dramas associated with them have become commodified as well. Still, the implications of what I have presented here suggest that such routinization, even when it takes a monetized and commodity form, does not necessarily indicate meaninglessness. Metaphorical bridging shifts symbolic significance and audience attention from the originating trauma to the traumas that follow in a sequence of analogical associations. But it does not, for that, inevitably erase or invert the meanings associated with the trauma that was first in the associational line. Nor does the effort to concretize the cultural meanings of the trauma in monumental forms have this effect. The American Revolution and the Civil War both remain resources for triumphant and tragic narration, in popular and high culture venues. It is only very infrequently, and very controversially, that these trauma dramas are subjected to the kind of comic framing that would invert their still sacred place in American collective identity. As I have mentioned earlier, it is not commodification, but 'comedization' – a change in the cultural framing, not a change in economic status – that indicates trivialization and forgetting.

Memorials and Museums: Crystallizing Collective Sentiment

A less Weberian, more Durkheimian understanding of routinization is needed.[92] When they are first created, sacred-good and sacred-evil are labile and liquid. Objectification can point to the sturdier embodiment of the values they have created, and even of the experiences they imply. In the present period the intensifying momentum to memorialize the Holocaust indicates a deepening institutionalization of its moral lessons and the continued recalling of its dramatic experiences rather than to their routinization and forgetting. When, after years of conflict, the German parliament approved a plan for erecting a vast memorial of 2000 stone pillars to the victims of the Holocaust at the heart of Berlin, a leading politician proclaimed: 'We are not building this monument solely for the Jews. We are building it for ourselves. It will help us confront a chapter in our history.' (quoted in Cohen, 1999: 3)

In the Holocaust museums that are sprouting up throughout the Western

world, the design is not to distance the viewer from the object in a dry, deraci-
nated, or 'purely factual' way. To the contrary, as a recent researcher into this
phenomenon has remarked, 'Holocaust museums favor strategies designed to
arouse strong emotions and particular immersion of the visitor into the past' (Baer,
unpublished).[93] The informational brochure to the Simon Wiesenthal Museum
of Tolerance in Los Angeles, which houses the West Coast's largest Holocaust exhi-
bition, promotes itself as a 'high tech, hands-on experiential museum that focuses
on . . . themes through interactive exhibits' (Baer, unpublished).

From its very inception in 1979, the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C.
was metonymically connected to the engorged symbolism of evil. According to
the official *Report*, submitted to President Jimmy Carter by the President's
Commission on the Victims of the Holocaust, the purpose of the museum was
to 'protect against future evil' (quoted in Linenthal, 1995: 37). The goal was to
create a building through which visitors would re-experience the original tragedy,
to find 'a means,' as some central staff members had once put it, 'to convey both
dramatically and soberly the enormity of the human tragedy in the death camps'
(quoted in Linenthal, 1995: 212).[94] Rather than instrumentalizing or commodi-
fying, in other words, the construction was conceived as a critical means for deep-
ening psychological identification and broadening symbolic extension. According
to the ethnographer of the fifteen-year planning and construction process, the
design team insisted that the museum's interior mood should be so 'visceral' that,
as the ethnographer of the construction put it, museum visitors 'would gain no
respite from the narrative.'

> The feel and rhythm of space and the setting of mood were important. [The designers]
> identified different qualities of space that helped to mediate the narrative: construc-
> tive space on the third floor, for example, where as visitors enter the world of the death
> camps, the space becomes tight and mean, with a feeling of heavy darkness. Indeed,
> walls were not painted, pipes were left exposed, and, except for fire exits and hidden
> elevators on the fourth and third floors for people who, for one reason or another, had
> to leave, there is no escape. (Linenthal, 1995: 169)

According to the Museum's head designer:

> The exhibition was intended to take visitors on a journey . . . We realized that if we
> followed those people under all that pressure as they moved from their normal lives
> into ghettos, out of ghettos onto trains, from trains to camps, within the pathways of
> the camps, until finally to the end. . . . If visitors could take that same journey, they
> would understand the story because they will have experienced the story. (quoted in
> Linenthal, 1995: 174)[95]

The dramatization of the tragic journey was in many respects quite literal, and
this fosters identification. The visitor receives a photo passport/identity card
representing a victim of the Holocaust, and the museum's permanent exhibition
is divided into chronological sections. The fourth floor is 'The Assault: 1933–39,'
the third floor 'The Holocaust: 1940–44,' and the second floor 'Bearing Witness:
1945.' At the end of each floor, visitors are asked to insert their passports to find
out what happened to their identity-card 'alter egos' during that particular phase
of the Holocaust tragedy. By the time visitors have passed through the entire

exhibit, they will know whether or not the person with whom they have been symbolically identified survived the horror or perished (Linenthal, 1995: 169).

The identification process is deepened by the dramatic technique of personalization. The key, in the words of the project director, was connecting museum visitors to 'real faces of real people' (quoted in Linenthal, 1995: 181).[96]

> Faces of Holocaust victims in the exhibition are shattering in their power . . . Polish school teachers, moments before their execution, look at visitors in agony, sullen anger, and despair . . . Two brothers, dressed alike in matching coats and caps, fear etched on their faces, gaze at the camera, into the eyes of the visitors . . . The Faces . . . assault, challenge, accuse, and profoundly sadden visitors throughout the exhibition. (Linenthal, 1995: 174)[97]

At every point, design decisions about dramatization were made with the narrative of tragedy firmly in mind. In deciding against displays that might portray what some Holocaust writers have called the prisoners' 'passive resistance,' designers were afraid of triggering progressive narratives of heroism and romance. As an historian associated with such decisions remarked, the fear was that such displays might contribute to an 'epic' Holocaust narrative in which resistance would gain 'equal time' with the narrative of destruction (quoted in Linenthal, 1995: 192). This dark dramatization, however, could not descend into a mere series of grossly displayed horrors, for this would undermine the identification upon which the very communication of the tragic lessons of the Holocaust would depend.

> The design team faced a difficult decision regarding the presentation of horror. Why put so much effort into constructing an exhibition that was so horrible that people would not visit? They worried about word-of-mouth evaluation after opening, and feared that the first visitors would tell family and friends, 'Don't go, it's too horrible'. . . The museum's mission was to teach people about the Holocaust and bring about civic transformation; yet . . . the public had to *desire* to visit. (Linenthal, 1995: 198, italics in original)

It seems clear that such memorializations aim to create structures that dramatize the tragedy of the Holocaust and provide opportunities for contemporaries, now so far removed from the original scene, powerfully to re-experience it. In these efforts, personalization remains an immensely important dramatic vehicle, and it continues to provide the opportunity for identification so crucial to the project of universalization. In each holocaust museum, the fate of the Jews functions as a metaphorical bridge to the treatment of other ethnic, religious, and racial minorities.[98] The aim is manifestly not to 'promote' the Holocaust as an important event in earlier historical time, but to contribution to the possibilities of pluralism and justice in the world of today.

From Liberators to Survivors: Witness Testimonies

Routinization of charisma is certainly an inevitable fact of social life, and memorialization a much-preferred way to understand that it can institutionalize, not only undermine, the labile collective sentiments that once circulated in a liquid

form. It is important, nonetheless, not to view the outcome of such processes in a naturalistic, non-cultural way. It is not 'meaning' that is crystallized, but particular meanings. In terms of Holocaust memorialization and routinization, it is the objectification of a narrative about tragedy that has been memorialized over the last decade, not a narrative about progress.

The postwar memorials to the Second World War were, and are, about heroism and liberation. They centered on American GIs and the victims they helped. If the Holocaust had continued to be narrated within the progressive framework of the anti-Nazi war, it would no doubt have been memorialized in much the same way. Of course, the very effect of the progressive narrative was to make the Holocaust less visible and central, with the result that, as long as the representation of contemporary history remained within the progressive framework, few efforts to memorialize the Holocaust were made. For that very reason, the few that were attempted are highly revealing. In Liberty State Park, in New Jersey, within visual sight of the proud and patriotic Statue of Liberty, there stands a statue called *Liberation*. The metal sculpture portrays two figures. The larger, a solemn American GI, walks deliberately forward, his eyes on the ground. He cradles a smaller figure, a concentration camp victim, whose skeletal chest, shredded prison garb, outstretched arms, and vacantly staring eyes exemplify his helplessness (Young, 1993: 320–32). Commissioned not only by the State of New Jersey but also by a coalition of American Legion and other veterans' organizations, the monument was dedicated only in 1985. During the ceremony, the state's governor made a speech seeking to reconnect the progressive narrative still embodied by the 'last good war' to the growing centrality of the Holocaust narrative, whose symbolic and moral importance had by then already begun to far outstrip it. The defensive and patriotic tone of the speech indicates that, via this symbolic linkage, the state official sought to resist the skepticism about America's place in the world, the very critical attitude that had helped frame the Holocaust in a narrative of tragedy.

> To me, this monument is an affirmation of my American heritage. It causes me to feel deep pride in my American values. The monument says that we, as a collective people, stand for freedom. We, as Americans, are not oppressors, and we, as Americans, do not engage in military conflict for the purpose of conquest. Our role in the world is to preserve and promote that precious, precious thing that we consider to be a free democracy. Today we will remember those who gave their lives for freedom. (Young, 1993: 321)

The *Liberation* monument, and the particularist and progressive sentiments it crystallized, could not be further removed from the memorial processes that have crystallized in the years since. Propelled by the tragic transformation of the Jewish mass murder, in these memorials the actions and beliefs of Americans are often implicitly analogized with those of the perpetrators, and the US Army's liberation of the camps plays only a minimal role, if any at all. In these more universalized settings, the focus is on the broader, world-historical causes and moral implications of the tragic event, on creating symbolic extension by providing

opportunities for contemporaries to experience emotional identification with the suffering of the victims.

It is in the context of this transformation that there has emerged a new genre of Holocaust writing and memorializing, one which focuses on a new kind of historical evidence, direct 'testimony,' and a new kind of historical actor, the 'survivor.' Defined as persons who lived through the camp experiences, survivors provide a tactile link with the tragic event. As their social and personal role was defined, they began to write books, give speeches to local and national communities, and record their memories of camp experiences on tape and video. These testimonies have become sacralized repositories of the core tragic experience, with all the moral implications that this suffering has come to entail. They have been the object of two amply funded recording enterprises. One, organized by the Yale University Video Archive of the Holocaust, was already begun in 1981. The other, the Shoah Visual History Foundation, was organized by the film director, Steven Spielberg, in 1994, in the wake of the world-wide effects of his movie, *Schindler's List.*

Despite the publicity these enterprises have aroused, and the celebrity that has accrued to the new survivor identity, what is important to see is that this new genre of memorialization has inverted the language of liberation that was so fundamental to the earlier, progressive form. It has created not heroes, but anti-heroes. Indeed, those who have created and shaped this new genre are decidedly critical of what they see as the 'style of revisionism that crept into Holocaust writing after the liberation of the camps.' They describe this style as a 'natural but misguided impulse to romanticize staying alive and to interpret painful endurance as a form of defiance or resistance' (Langer, 200: xiv). Arguing that survivor testimony reveals tragedy, not triumph, they suggest that it demands the rejection of any progressive frame.

> No one speaks of having survived through bravery or courage. These are hard assessments for us to accept. We want to believe in a universe that rewards good character and exemplary behavior. We want to believe in the power of the human spirit to overcome adversity. It is difficult to live with the thought that human nature may not be noble or heroic and that under extreme conditions we, too, might turn brutal, selfish, 'too inhuman.' (Greene and Kumar, 2000: xxv–xxvi)

In reacting against the heroic, progressive frame, some of these commentators go so far as to insist on the inherent 'meaninglessness' of the Holocaust, suggesting that the testimonies reveal 'uncompensated and unredeemable suffering' (Langer, 2000: xv). Yet it seems clear that the very effort to create survivor testimony is an effort to maintain the vitality of the experience by objectifying and, in effect, depersonalizing it. As such, it helps to sustain the tragic trauma drama, which allows an ever-wider audience redemption through suffering. It does so by suggesting the survival, not of a few scattered and particular victims, but of humanity as such.

> The power of testimony is that it requires little commentary, for witnesses are the experts and they tell their own stories in their own words. The perpetrators work

diligently to silence their victims by taking away their names, homes, families, friends, possessions, and lives. The intent was to deny their victims any sense of humanness, to erase their individuality and rob them of all personal voice. Testimony reestablishes the individuality of the victims who survived – and in some instances of those who were killed – and demonstrates the power of their voices. (Greene and Kumar, 2000: xxiv)

Those involved directly in this memorializing process see their own work in exactly the same way. Geoffrey Hartman, the director of the Yale Video Archive, speaks about a new 'narrative that emerges through the alliance of witness and interviewer' (Hartman, 1996: 153), a narrative based on the reconstruction of a human community.

However many times the interviewer may have heard similar accounts, they are received as though for the first time. This is possible because, while the facts are known, while historians have labored – and are still laboring – to establish every detail, each of these histories is animated by something in addition to historical knowledge: there is a quest to recover or reconstruct a recipient, an 'affective community'. . . and [thus] the renewal of compassionate feelings. (Hartman, 1996: 153–4)

However 'grim its contents,' Hartman insists, testimonies do not represent an 'impersonal historical digest,' but rather 'that most natural and flexible of human communications, a story – a story, moreover, that, even if it describes a universe of death, is communicated by a living person who answers, recalls, thinks, cries, carries on' (Hartman, 1996: 154). The President of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, Michael Berenbaum – suggesting that the goal of the Spielberg group is 'to catalogue and to disseminate the testimonies to as many remote sites as technology and budget will permit, [a]ll in the service of education' – ties the contemporary moral meaning of the historical events to the opportunity for immediate emotional identification that testimonies provide: 'In classrooms throughout the world, the encounter between survivors and children [has] become electrifying, the transmission of memory, a discussion of values, a warning against prejudice, antisemitism, racism, and indifference' (Berenbaum, 1998: ix).

Is the Holocaust Western?

While the rhetoric of Holocaust generalization refers to its *weltgeschichte* relevance – its world-historical relevance – throughout this essay I have tried to be careful in noting that this universalization has primarily been confined to the West. Universalization, as I have described it, depends on symbolically generated, emotionally vicarious participation in the trauma drama of the mass murder of the Jews. The degree to which this participation is differentially distributed throughout the West is itself a question that further research will have to pursue. This 'remembering' is much more pronounced in Western Europe and North America than in Latin America. Mexicans, preoccupied with their national

traumas dating back to the European Conquest, are much less attached to the 'Holocaust' than their northern neighbors – against whose very mythologies Mexicans often define themselves. The result may be that Mexican political culture is informed to a significantly lesser degree by 'post-Holocaust morality.' On the other hand, it is also possible that Mexicans translate certain aspects of post-Holocaust morality into local terms, e.g., being willing to limit claims to national sovereignty in the face of demands by indigenous groups who legitimate themselves in terms of broadly human rights.

Such variation is that much more intense when we expand our assessment to non-Western areas. What are the degrees of attachment to, vicarious participation in, and lessons drawn from the 'Holocaust' trauma in non-Western civilizations? In Hindu, Buddhist, Confusion, Islamic, African, and still Communist regions and regimes, reference to the 'Holocaust,' when made at all, is by literary and intellectual elites with markedly atypical levels of participation in the global discourse dominated by the United States and Western Europe. Of course, non-Western regions and nations have their own identity-defining trauma dramas. What is unclear is the degree to which the cultural work that constructs these traumas, and responds to them, reaches beyond issues of national identity and sovereignty to the universalizing, supra-national ethical imperatives increasingly associated with the 'lessons of post-Holocaust morality' in the West.

The authorized spokespersons for Japan, for example, have never acknowledged the empirical reality of the horrific mass murder their soldiers inflicted on native Chinese in Nanking, China, during the run up to the Second World War – the 'Rape of Nanking.' Much less have they apologized for it, or made any effort to share in the suffering of the Chinese people in a manner that would point to a universalizing ethic by which members of different Asian national and ethnic groupings could be commonly judged. Instead, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima have become an originating trauma for postwar Japanese identity. While producing an extraordinary commitment to pacifism, the dramatization of this trauma, which was inflicted upon Japan by its wartime enemy, the United States, has had the effect of confirming rather than dislodging Japan in its role as narrative agent. The trauma has functioned, in other words, to steadfastly oppose any effort to widen the circle of perpetrators, which makes it that much less likely that the national history of Japan will be submitted to some kind of supranational standard of judgment.

Such submission is very difficult, of course, in any strongly national context, in the West as well as in the East. Nonetheless, the analysis presented in this article compels us to ask this question: Can countries or civilizations that do not acknowledge the Holocaust develop universalistic political moralities? Obviously, non-Western nations cannot 'remember' the Holocaust, but, in the context of cultural globalization, they certainly have become gradually aware of its symbolic meaning and social significance. It might also be the case that non-Western nations could develop trauma dramas that are functional equivalents to the Holocaust. It has been the thesis of this essay that moral universalism rests upon social processes that construct and channel cultural trauma. If this is

indeed the case, then globalization will have to involve a very different kind of social process than the ones that students of this supra-national development have talked about so far: East and West, North and South must learn to share the experiences of one another's traumas and to take vicarious responsibility for the other's afflictions.

Geoffrey Hartman has recently likened the pervasive status of the Holocaust in contemporary society to a barely articulated but nonetheless powerful and pervasive legend.

> In Greek tragedy . . . with its moments of highly condensed dialogue, the framing legend is so well known that it does not have to be emphasized. A powerful abstraction, or simplification, takes over. In this sense, and in this sense only, the Holocaust is on the way to becoming a legendary event. (Hartman, 2000: 16)

Human beings are story-telling animals. We tell stories about our triumphs. We tell stories about our tragedies. We like to believe in the verisimilitude of our accounts, but it is the moral frameworks themselves that are real and constant, not the factual material that we employ them to describe. In the history of human societies, it has often been the case that narrative accounts of the same event compete with one another, and that they eventually displace one another over historical time. In the case of the Nazis' mass murder of the Jews, what was once described as a prelude and incitement to moral and social progress has come to be reconstructed as a decisive demonstration that not even the most 'modern' improvements in the condition of humanity can ensure advancement in anything other than a purely technical sense. It is paradoxical that a decided increase in moral and social justice may eventually be the unintended result.

Notes

1 In the inaugural conference of the United States Holocaust Research Institute, the Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer made a critical observation and posted a fundamental question to the opening session.

'About two decades ago, Professor Robert Alter of California published a piece in *Commentary* that argued that we had had enough of the Holocaust, that a concentration of Jewish intellectual and emotional efforts around it was counterproductive, that the Holocaust should always be remembered, but that there were new agendas that to be confronted . . . Elie Wiesel has expressed the view that with the passing on of the generation of Holocaust survivors, the Holocaust may be forgotten . . . But the memory is not going away; on the contrary, the Holocaust has become a cultural code, a symbol of evil in Western civilization. Why should this be so? There are other genocides: Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda, possibly Ibos in Nigeria, Biharis in Bangladesh, Cambodia, and of course the dozens of millions of victims of the Maoist purges in China, the Gulag, and so forth. Yet it is the murder of the Jews that brings forth a growing avalanche of films, plays, fiction, poetry, TV series, sculpture, paintings, and historical, sociological, psychological and other research.' (Berenbaum and Peck, 1998: 12)

The same opening session was also addressed by Raul Hilberg. As the editors of the

subsequent volume suggest, Hilberg's 'magisterial work, *The Destruction of the European Jews*,' which had been 'written in virtual isolation and in opposition to the academic establishment nearly four decades earlier,' had since 'come to define the field' of Holocaust studies (Berenbaum and Peck, 1998: 1). Hilberg began his address as follows:

'When the question is posed about where, as academic researchers of the Holocaust, we stand today, the simple answer is: in the limelight. Never before has so much public attention been lavished on our subject, be it in North America or in Western Europe . . . Interest in our topic is manifest in college courses, which are developed in one institution or another virtually every semester; or conferences, which take place almost every month; or new titles of books, which appear practically every week. The demand for output is seemingly inexhaustible. The media celebrate our discoveries, and when an event in some part of the world reminds someone of the Holocaust, our researchers are often asked to explain or supply a connection instantaneously. (Berenbaum and Peck, 1998: 5)

This present essay may be viewed as an effort to explain where the 'limelight' to which Hilberg refers has come from and to answer Bauer's question, 'Why should this be so?'

2 As we will see below, to be defined as a traumatic event for all humankind does not mean that the event is literally experienced or even represented as such by all humankind. As I will suggest in the conclusion of this essay, indeed, we will see that only one part of contemporary humankind has even the normative aspiration of experiencing the originating event as a trauma – the 'Western' versus the 'Eastern' part of humankind – and that this cultural-geographical difference itself may have fateful consequences for international relations, definitions of legal-moral responsibility, and the project of global understanding today.

3 Once an 'atrocity' had involved murderous actions against civilians, but this definition was wiped out during the course of the Second World War.

4 The report continued in a manner that reveals the relation between such particular-istic, war-and-nation related definitions of atrocity and justifications for nationalistic military escalation of brutality in response: 'Even though the truth of Japan's tribal viciousness had been spattered over the pages of history down through the centuries and repeated in the modern slaughters of Nanking and Hong Kong, word of this new crime had been a shock . . . Secretary of State Cordell Hull speaking with bitter self-restraint [sic] excoriated the "demons" and "fiendishness" of Japan. Senator Alben W. Barkley exclaimed: "Retribution [must] be meted out to these heathens – brutes and beasts in the form of man." ' Lister Hill of Alabama was practically monosyllabic: "Gut the heart of Japan with fire!" ' The connection of such attributions of war-atrocity to pledges of future military revenge illuminates the lack of indignation that later greeted the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagaski. This kind of particularistic framing of mass civilian murder would be lifted only decades later – after the Jewish mass murder had itself become generalized as a crime that went beyond national and war-related justifications. I will discuss this below.

5 For a detailed 'thick description' of these first encounters, see Robert Abzug, *Inside the Vicious Heart* (1985).

6 During April, under the entry 'German Camps,' *The New York Times Index* (1945: 1184) employed the noun eight times.

7 For a broad discussion of the role played by such analogies with alleged German First World War atrocities in creating initial unbelief, see Lacquer (1980). The notion of

moral panic suggests, of course, a fantasied and distorted object or belief (Thompson, 1997). In this sense, trauma is different from panic. I discuss these issues in a forthcoming book on cultural trauma.

8 This is not to say that the fact of the Nazis' anti-Jewish atrocities was accepted all at once, but that the Allies' discovery of the concentration camps, relayed by reporters and photographers, soon did put an end to the doubts, which had not been nearly as thoroughly erased by revelations about the Majdanek death camp, liberated by Soviets months earlier. For a detailed discussion of this changing relationship between acceptance and doubt, see Zelizer (1989: 49–140).

9 In early October 1945, General George Patton, the much-heralded chief of the US Third Army, became embroiled in controversy over what were taken to be anti-semitic representations of the Jewish survivors in the camps Patton administered. The general had contrasted them pejoratively with the German and other non-German camp prisoners and gave them markedly worse treatment. In light of the argument I will make below, it is revealing that what was represented as intolerable about this conspicuous mistreatment of Jewish survivors was its implied equation of American and Nazi relations to Jews. The *New Republic* headlined its account of the affair, 'The Same as the Nazis.'

'Only on the last day of September did the nation learn that on the last day of August, President Truman had sent a sharp letter to General Eisenhower regarding the treatment of Jews in Germany. The President told the General bluntly that according to a report made by his special investigator, Earl Harrison, "we appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazi treated them, except that we do not exterminate them." Thousands of displaced Jews are still crowded in badly run concentration camps, improperly fed, clothed and housed, while comfortable homes nearby are occupied by former Nazis or Nazi sympathizers. These Jews are still not permitted to leave the camps except with passes, which are doled out to them on the absolutely incomprehensible policy that they should be treated as prisoners . . . Americans will be profoundly disturbed to learn that anti-Semitism is rife in the American occupation forces just as is tenderness to Nazis' (no. 113, October 8, 1945: 453).

Time reported the event in the same way:

'Plain G.I.s had their problems, too. Ever since they had come to Germany, the soldiers had fraternized – not only with *Fraulein* but with a philosophy. Many now began to say that the Germans were really O.K., that they had been forced into the war, that the atrocity stories were fakes. Familiarity with the eager German women, the free-faced German young, bred forgetfulness of Belsen and Buchenwald and Oswieczim' (no. 46, October 8, 1945: 31–2).

In a story headlined 'The Case of General Patton,' *The New York Times* wrote that Patton's transfer from his Barvarian post 'can have and should have just one meaning,' which was that the US government 'will not tolerate in high positions . . . any officers, however brave, however honest, who are inclined to be easy on known Nazis and indifferent or hard to the surviving victims of the Nazi terror' (October 3, 1945, p. 18). For more details on Patton's treatment of the Jewish camp survivors, see Abzug (1985).

10 In 'Radical Evil: Kant at War with Himself' (Bernstein, forthcoming), Richard Bernstein has provided an illuminating discussion of Kant's use of this term. While Kant intended the term to indicate an unusual, and almost unhuman desire not to fulfill the imperatives of moral behavior, Bernstein demonstrates that Kant contributed little to the possibility of providing standards of evaluation for what,

according to post-Holocaust morality, is called radical evil today. Nonetheless, the term itself was an important addition to moral philosophy. I want to emphasize here that I am speaking about social representations of the Holocaust, not its actual nature. I do not intend, in other words, either here or elsewhere in this chapter, to enter into the debate about the uniqueness of the Holocaust in Western history. As Norman Naimark (2001) and many others have usefully pointed out, there have been other terrible ethnically-inspired blood-lettings that arguably can be compared with it, e.g., the Armenian massacre by the Turks, the killing fields in Cambodia, which claimed three million of a seven-million-person population, the Rwanda massacre. My point here is not to make claims about the objective reality of what would later come to be called the 'Holocaust' but about the sociological processes that allowed estimations of its reality to shift over time. For a specific discussion of the discourse about uniqueness, see the section on 'The Dilemma of Uniqueness' below.

11 I am drawing here from a new approach to collective drama that has been developed collectively by Bernhard Giesen, Ron Eyerman, Piotr Sztompka, Neil J. Smelser, and myself during 1998–99 at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto. This special project was funded, in part, by the Hewlett Foundation, for which I would like to record my gratitude here. I have tried to articulate my own understanding of this collective effort in 'A Theory of Culture Trauma,' which will be published as the introductory essay to our collective publication, *Cultural Trauma* (University of California Press, forthcoming). The present essay will also be published in that collective effort, as well as in Roger Friedland and John Mohr, eds, *The Cultural Turn* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). I would like to record my gratitude to my colleagues in this joint project for their contributions to my thinking, not only about cultural trauma in general, but about the Holocaust in particular.

12 This common-sense link is repeated time and again, exemplifying not empirical reality but the semantic exigencies of what I will call below the progressive narrative of the Holocaust. In his pathbreaking article on the postwar attack on anti-semitism, for example, Edward Dinnerstein (1981–1982) suggests that 'perhaps the sinking in of the knowledge that six million Jews perished in the Holocaust' was a critical factor in creating the identification with American Jews. A similarly rationalist approach is exhibited by Edward Shapiro (1981–1982) in his book-length study of the changing position of Jews in postwar America. Shapiro observes that 'after the Holocaust, anti-Semitism meant not merely the exclusion of Jews from clubs [etc.] but mass murder' (Shapiro, 1992: 16). The issue here is what 'meant' means. It is not obvious and rational, but highly contextual, and that context is culturally established. The distinguished historian of American history, John Higham, represents this Enlightenment version of lay trauma theory when he points to the reaction to the Holocaust as explaining the lessening of prejudice in the US between the mid-1930s and the mid-1950s, which he calls 'the broadest, most powerful movement for ethnic democracy in American history.' Higham suggests that 'in the 30s and 40s, the Holocaust in Germany threw a blazing light on every sort of bigotry,' thus explaining the 'traumatic impact of Hitlerism on the consciousness of the Western world' (Higham, 1984: 154). Movements for ethnic and religious tolerance in the U.S., Higham adds, came only later, 'only as the war drew to a close and the full horrors of the Nazi concentration camps spilled out to an aghast world' (Higham, 1984: 171). Such Enlightenment versions of lay trauma theory seem eminently reasonable, but they simply do not capture the contingent, sociologically freighted nature of the trauma process. As I try to demonstrate below, complex symbolic processes of coding,

weighting, and narrating were decisive in the unpredicted postwar effort to stamp out anti-semitism in the US.

13 See the observation by the sociological theorist Gerard Delanty (2001: 43): 'What I am drawing attention to is the need to address basic questions concerning cultural values, since violence is not always an empirical objective reality, but a matter of cultural construction in the context of publicly shaped discourses and is generally defined by reference to an issue.'

14 For this notion of the 'means of ritual production,' see Collins (1992) and, more generally, Pierre Bourdieu, e.g., his *Language and Symbolic Power* (Bourdieu, 1991).

15 To think of what might have been, it is necessary to engage in a counterfactual thought experiment. The most successful effort to do so has occurred in a best-selling piece of middlebrow fiction called *Fatherland*, by Robert Harris, a reporter for the London *Times* (Harris, 1992). The narrative takes place in 1967, in Berlin, during the celebrations of Adolph Hitler's seventieth birthday. The former Soviet Union and the United Kingdom were both conquered in the early 1940s, primarily because Hitler's general staff had overruled his decision to launch the Russian invasion before he had completed his effort to subjugate Great Britain. The story's plot revolves around the protagonists' efforts to reveal the hidden events of the Holocaust. Rumors had circulated of the mass killings, but no objective truth had ever been available. As for the other contention of this paragraph, that Soviet control over the camps' discoveries would also have made it impossible for the story to be told, one may merely consult the Soviets' presentation of the Auschwitz death camp outside Krakow, Poland. While Jewish deaths are not denied, the focus is on class warfare, Polish national resistance, and communist and Polish deaths. It is well known, for example, that the East Germans, under the Soviet regime, never took responsibility for their anti-semitic past and its central role in the mass killing of Jews, focusing instead on the Nazis as non-national, class-based, reactionary social forces.

16 In her detailed reconstruction of the shifting balance between doubt and belief among Western publics, Zelizer demonstrates that the Soviets' discovery of the Majdanek death camp in 1944 failed to quell disbelief because of broad skepticism about Russian reporters, particularly a dislike for the Russian literary news-writing style and tendency to exaggerate: 'Skepticism made the Western press regard the liberation of the eastern camps as a story in need of additional confirmation. Its dismissive attitude was exacerbated by the fact that the US and British forces by and large had been denied access to the camps of the eastern front [which made it] easier to regard the information trickling out as Russian propaganda' (Zelizer, 1998: 51).

17 In contemporary sociology, the great empirical student of typification is Harold Garfinkel, who, drawing up Husserl and Schutz, developed a series of supple operationalizations such as ad-hocing, indexicality, and the 'etc. clause' to describe how typification is carried out empirically.

18 See Fussell (1975) for an unparalleled account of the rhetorical deconstruction of Romanticism and melodrama.

19 See Herf (1984) and also Philip Smith's investigations of the coding of Nazism and Communism as variations on the modernist discourse of civil society (Smith, 1998).

20 For how the coding of an adversary as radical evil has compelled the sacrifice of life in modern war, see Alexander (1998).

21 Just so, the earlier failure of such nations as France to vigorously prepare for war against Germans had reflected an internal disagreement about the evility of Nazism, a disagreement fuelled by the long-standing anti-semitism and anti-republicanism

triggered by the Dreyfus affair. For a discussion of this, see William Shire's classic, *The Collapse of the Third Republic* (Shirer, 1969).

22 Statements and programmes supporting better treatment of Jews were often, in fact, wittingly or unwittingly accompanied by anti-semitic stereotypes. In the months before America entered the war against Germany, *Time* reported: 'A statesmanlike program to get a better deal for the Jews after the war was launched last week by the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress, of which not invariably statesmanlike, emotional, and politics dabbing Rabbi Steven S. Wise is respectively president and chairman' (38: 44, July 7, 1941). Indeed, in his statistical compilation of shifting poll data on the personal attitudes of Americans during this period, Stember shows that the minority of Americans expressing anti-semitic attitudes actually increased immediately before and during the early years of the anti-Nazi war (Stember 1966). For one of the best recent discussions of anti-semitism in the early twentieth century, see Hollinger (1996).

23 Higham shows how left-leaning intellectuals, artists, academics, and journalists set out to oppose the nativism of the 1920s and viewed the rise of Nazism in this context. While they focused particularly on the Jewish problem, they also discussed issues of race.

24 From the phrase of Clifford Geertz: 'anti-anti-relativism' (Geertz, 1984), which he traced to the phrase from the McCarthy era, "anti-anti-communism." Geertz writes that his point was not to embrace relativism but to reject anti-relativism, just as anti-McCarthyites had not wanted to embrace communism but to reject anti-communism. Just so, progressive Americans of that time did not wish to identify with Jews but to reject anti-Semitism, because, I am contending, of its association with Nazism.

25 The premise of the following argument is that 'salvation' can continue to be a massive social concern even in a secular age. I have made this theoretical argument in relation to a reconsideration of the routinization thesis in Max Weber's sociology of religion and employed this perspective in several other empirical studies of secular culture.

26 See Turner's irreplaceable analysis of 'liminality' – his resconstruction of Van Gennep's ritual process – in *The Ritual Process* (Turner, 1969) and his later works.

27 In regard to the eventual peace treaty that would allow progress, the reference was, of course, to the disastrous Versailles Treaty of 1919, which was viewed in the interwar period has having thwarted the progressive narrative that had motivated the Allied side during the First World War. President Woodrow Wilson had definitely defined the progressive narrative of that earlier struggle by promising that this 'war to end all wars' would 'make the world safe for the democracy.'

28 I should add by the Jewish *and non-Jewish* victims as well, for millions of persons were victims of Nazi mass murder in addition to the Jews – Poles, gypsies, homosexuals, handicapped persons, and political opponents of all types. (For more discussion of this issue, see below.) That virtually all of these non-Jewish victims were filtered out of the emerging collective representation of the Holocaust underlines the 'arbitrary' quality of trauma as we have conceived it in this volume. By arbitrary, I mean to refer to Saussure's foundational argument, in his *Course in General Linguistics*, that the relation between signifier and signified is not based on some intrinsically truthful or accurate relationship. The definition of the signifier – what we normally mean by the symbol or representation – comes, not from its actual or 'real' social referent per se, but from its position within the field of other signifiers, which is itself structured by the broader sign system, or language, already in place. This is essentially the same sense

of arbitrariness that is invoked by Wittgenstein's argument against Augustine's language theory in the opening pages of *Philosophical Investigations*. This notion of arbitrariness does not mean, of course, that representation is un-affected by non-cultural developments, as the historically contextual discussion in this chapter demonstrates.

29   In February, 1943, the widely read popular magazine, *American Mercury*, published a lengthy story by Ben Hecht called 'The Extermination of the Jews' (no. 56, Feb. 1943: 194–203) that described in accurate detail the events that had already unfolded and would occur in the future. The following report also appeared in *Time*: 'In a report drawn from German broadcasts and newspapers, Nazi statements, smuggled accounts and the stories of survivors who have reached the free world, the [World Jewish] Congress told what was happening in Poland, slaughterhouse of Europe's Jews. By late 1942, the Congress reported, 2,000,000 had been massacred. *Vernichtungskolonnen* (extermination squads) rounded them up and killed them with machine guns, lethal gas, high-voltage electricity, and hunger. Almost all were stripped before they died; their clothes were needed by the Nazis' ('Total Murder,' 41: March 8, 1943: 29). Two months later, *Newsweek* reported the Nazi destruction of the Warsaw ghetto: 'When [the] Gestapo men and Elite Guard were through with the job, Warsaw, once the home of 450,000 Jews, was "judenrein" (free of Jews). By last week all had been killed or deported' (no. 21, May 24, 1943: 54). In October, 1944, the widely popular journalist, Edgar Snow, published details about the 'Nazi murder factory' in the Soviet liberated town of Maidanek, Poland, in the *Saturday Evening Post* (no. 217, October 28, 1944: 18–19).

Abzug (1985) agrees that 'the more sordid facts of mass slaughter, labor and death campus, Nazi policies of enslavement of peoples deemed inferior and extermination of Europe's Jews' were facts that were 'known through news sources and widely publicized since 1942' (Abzug, 1985: 17). In the manner of Enlightenment lay trauma theory – which would suggest that knowledge leads to redemptive action – Abzug qualifies his assertion of this popular knowledge by insisting that the American soldiers who opened up the camps and the American audience alike suffered from a failure of 'imagination' in regard to the Nazi terror (Abzug, 1985: 17). According to the theory of cultural trauma that informs our analysis, however, this was less a failure of imagination than a matter of collective imagination being narrated in a certain way. It points not to an absence of perception but to the power of the contemporary, progressive narrative framework, a framework that was brought into disrepute by later developments, which made it appear insensitive and even inhumane.

30   Another historian Peter Novick, makes the same point:

'For most Gentiles, and a great many Jews as well, [the Holocaust] was seen as simply one among many dimensions of the horrors of Nazism. Looking at World War II retrospectively, we are inclined to stress what was distinctive in the murderous zeal with which European Jewry was destroyed. Things often appeared differently to contemporaries . . . Jews did not stand out as the Nazis' prime victims until near the end of the Third Reich. Until 1938 there were hardly any Jews, qua jews, in concentration camps, which were populated largely by Socialists, Communists, trade unionists, dissident intellectuals, and the like. Even when news of mass killings of Jews during the war reached the West, their murder was framed as one atrocity, albeit the largest, in a long list of crimes, such as the massacre of Czechs at Lidice, the French at Oradour, and American prisoners of war at Malmedy' (Novick, 1994: 160).

31   The term was introduced in 1944 by an American author, Ralph Lemkin in his book

Axis Rule in Occupied Europe (Lemkin, 1944). As Lemkin defined it, genocide applied to efforts to destroy the foundations of national and ethnic groups, and referred to a wide range of antagonistic activities, including attacks on political and social institutions, culture, language, national feelings, religion, economic existence, personal security, and dignity. It was intended to cover all of the anti-national activities carried out by the Nazis against the occupied nations inside Hitler's Reich. In other words, when first coined, the term definitely did not focus on the element of mass murder that after the discovery of the death camps came to be attributed to it.

32 The author, Frank Kingdon, was a former Methodist minister.

33 In an article on the success of *Gentleman's Agreement*, in *The Saturday Review of Literature* (no. 30, December 13, 1947: 20), the author asserted that 'the Jewish people are the world symbol of [the] evil that is tearing civilization apart,' and suggested that the book and movie's success 'may mean that the conscience of America is awakening and that something at least will be done about it.'

34 Short makes this Jewish exceptionalism clear when he writes that 'with war raging in the Pacific, in Europe and in the shipping lanes of the Atlantic, Hollywood made a conscious effort to create a sense of solidarity amongst the nation's racial and ethnic groups (*excepting* the Japanese-Americans and the blacks)' (Short, 1981: 157, italics added).

35 See also Higham (1984) and Silk (1986).

36 It remains an empirical question whether American Jews were themselves traumatized by contemporary revelations about the Nazi concentration camps. Susan Sontag's remembered reactions as a California teenager to the revelatory photographs of the Belsen and Dachau death camps are often pointed to as typical of American Jewish reaction more generally: 'I felt irrevocably grieved, wounded, but a part of my feelings started to tighten; something went dead; something still is crying' (quoted in Shapiro, 1992: 3, and in Abzug, 1985: vii). Yet, that this and other oft-quoted retrospective reactions were shared by the wider Jewish public in the United States has been more of a working assumption by scholars of this period, particularly but by no means exclusively Jewish ones. Not yet subject to empirical demonstration, the assumption that American Jews were immediately traumatized by the revelations reflects Enlightenment lay trauma theory. It might also represent an effort at post-hoc exculpation vis-a-vis possible guilt feelings that many American and British Jews later experienced about their inability or even their lack of effort to block or draw attention to the mass murders.

37 'Symbolic action' is a term developed by Kenneth Burke to indicate that understanding is also a form of human activity, namely an expressive form related to the goal of parsing meaning. The term became popularized and elaborated in the two now classical essays published by Clifford Geertz in the early 1960s, 'Religion as a Cultural System' and 'Ideology as a Cultural System' (Geertz, 1973). My reference to 'culture structure' refers to my effort to treat culture as a structure in itself. Only by analytically differentiating culture from social structure – treating it as a structure in its own right – does it move from being a dependent to an independent variable.

38 See Friedrich Dilthey, 'Historical Reconstruction in the Human Sciences (Dilthey, 1976). For two related discussions of the idea of 'culture structure,' see Anne Kane (1998) and Eric Rambo and Elaine Chan (1990).

39 By the early 1990s, knowledge of the Holocaust among American citizens greatly exceeded knowledge about the Second World War. According to public opinion polls, while 97 percent of Americans knew about the Holocaust, far fewer could identify

'Pearl Harbor' or the fact that the US had unleashed an atomic bomb on Japan. Only 49 percent of those polled realized that the Soviets had fought with Americans during that war. In fact, the detachment of the Jewish mass killings from particular historical events had proceeded to the point that, according to an even more recent survey, more than one-third of Americans either don't know that the Holocaust took place during the Second World War or insisted that they 'knew' it did not. (Novick, 1999: 232).

40 Yehuda Bauer, in his 'Editor's Introduction' to the first issue of *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, suggested this new, *Weltgeschichte* (world-historical) sensibility:

'There is not much point in dealing with one aspect of the Holocaust, because that traumatic event encompasses all of our attention; therefore, no concentration on one discipline only would meet the needs . . . We arrived at the conclusion that we would aim at a number of readers' constituencies: students, survivors, high school and college teachers, academics generally, and that *very large number of people who feel that the Holocaust is something that has changed our century, perhaps all centuries*, and needs to be investigated.' (9 (1) 1986: 1, italics added).

This journal not only embodied the newly emerging generalization and universalization I am describing here, but can also be viewed as an institutional carrier that aimed to promote its continuation. Thus, two years later, in an issue of the journal dedicated to papers from a conference, 'Remembering for the Future,' held in Oxford in July 1988, Bauer pointedly observed that 'one half of the authors of the papers *are not Jewish*, bearing witness to the fact that among academics, at least, there exists a growing realization of the importance of the event to our civilization, *a realization that is becoming more widespread among those whose families and peoples were not affected by the Holocaust*' (3[3]: 255, italics added).

41 'Historian Peter Gay, who co-edited the *Columbia History of the World* in 1972, was reportedly embarrassed to find later that the enormous volume contained no mention of Auschwitz nor of the murder of six million Jews, an embarrassment exacerbated by the fact that he himself was a Jewish refugee from Germany' (Zelizer 1998: 164–65).

42 'In 1949, there was no "Holocaust" in the English language in the sense that word is used today. Scholars and writers has used "permanent pogrom" . . . or "recent catastrophe," or "disaster," or "the disaster." Sometimes writers spoke about annihilation and destruction without use of any of these terms. In 1953, the state of Israel formally injected itself into the study of the destruction of European Jewry, and so became involved in the transformation [by] establish[ing] Yad Vashem as a "Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority" . . . Two years later Yad Vashem translated *shoah* into "Disaster". . . . But then the change occurred quickly. When catastrophe had lived side by side with disaster the word holocaust had appeared now and then . . . Beween 1957 and 1959, however, "Holocaust" took on . . . a specific meaning. It was used at the Second World Congress of Jewish Studies held in Jerusalem, and when Yad Vashem published its third yearbook, one of the articles dealt with "Problems Relating to a Questionnaire on the Holocaust." Afterwards Yad Vashem switched from "Disaster" to "Holocaust" . . . Within the Jewish world the word became commonplace, in part because Elie Wiesel and other gifted writers and speakers, in public meetings or in articles . . . made it coin of the realm' (Korman, 1972: 259–61).

43 On 'Shoah,' see Ofer (1996). In telling the story of linguistic transformation inside the Hebrew language, Ofer shows that inside of Israel there was a similar narrative shift from a more progressive to a more tragic narrative frame, and that this shift was reflected in the adoption of the word *Shoah*, which had strong biblical connotations related to apocalyptic events in Jewish history, such as the flood and Job's sufferings:

Shoah was conspicuously not applied to such 'everyday' disasters as pogroms and other repeated forms of anti-semitic oppression. On the relative newness of the American use of the term 'Holocaust' – its emergence only in post-progressive narrative period – see John Higham's acute observation that 'the word does not appear in the index to Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* – in spite of the attention he gives to European influence and Jewish intellectuals' (Higham, personal communication).

According to Garber and Zuckerman (1989: 202), the English term was first introduced in relation to the Jewish mass murder by Elie Wiesel in *The New York Times Book Review* of October 27, 1963, but there is some debate about the originality of Wiesel's usage. Novick, for example, relates that the American journalist Paul Jacobs, employed the term in an article on the Eichmann Trial, in 1961, that he filed from Jerusalem for the American liberal magazine, *The New Leader*. Significantly, Jacobs wrote of 'the Holocaust, as the Nazi annihilation of European Jewry is called in Israel.' Whatever its precise origins – and Wiesel's 1963 usage may well have marked the beginning of a common useage – the symbolically freighted semantic transition, which first occurred in Israel and then America, had wide ramifications for the universalsation of meaning vis-à-vis the Jewish mass killing.

Until the late 1970s, for example, Germans still used 'bureaucratic euphemisms' to describe the events, such as the 'Final Solution.' After the German showing of the American television mini-series, *Holocaust*, however, 'Holocaust' replaced these terms, passing into common German usage. One German scholar, Jean-Paul Bier, described 'Holocaust' as an 'American word' (Bier, 1986: 203); another testified that, after the television series, the ' "Holocaust" became a metaphor for unhumanity' (Zielinski, 1986: 273).

44 For the central role of 'our time in the tropes of contemporary historical narratives, see Alexander's 'Modern, Post, Anti, and Neo: How Intellectuals have Interpreted the Crisis of "Our Times" ' (Alexander, 1995).

45 This is not to say, however, that Christological themes of redemption through suffering played no part in the tragic dramatization. As anti-Semitic agitation increased in the late nineteenth century, Jesus frequently was portrayed by Jewish artists as a Jew, and his persecution presented as emblematic not only of Jewish suffering but of the Christian community's hypocracy in relation to it. During this same period, important Christian artists like Goya and Grosz began to develop 'a new approach to Christ, using the Passion scenes outside their usual biblical context as archetypical of the sufferings of modern man, especially in times of war' (Amishai-Maisels, 1988: 457). As the Nazi persecution intensified before and during the Second World War, this theme emerged with increasing frequency, for example, in the despairing paintings of Marc Chagall. Again, the aim was to provide a mythically powerful icon of Jewish martyrdom and, at the same time, 'to reproach the Christian world for their deeds' (Amishai-Maisels, 1988: 464). With the liberation of the camps, there emerged a far more powerful way to establish this icon – 'through the emaciated, tortured bodies of the victims themselves. Immediately after the war, artists such as Corrado Cagli and Hans Grundig stressed the similarity between the camp corpses and Holbein's Dead Christ, and Grundig even set the corpses on a gold background, emphasizing their similarity to medieval representations of martyrs. . . The most telling similarity between Christ and the corpses was not, however, invented by artists, but was found in those corpses whose arms were spread out in a cruciform pose, which were immortalized by photographers and published under names such as *Ecce Homo*

– *Bergen Belsen.* This specific photograph had an immediate and lasting effect on artists' (Amishai-Maisels, 1988: 467). It was undoubtedly the case that, for many religious Christians, the transition of Jews from killers of Christ to persecuted victims of evil was facilitated by this series of iconographic analogies. Nonetheless, even here, in the pictorial equation of Jesus with the Nazi victims, the theme was tragedy but not redemption in the eschatological sense of Christianity. The symbolization held the pathos but not the promise of the crucifixion, and it was employed more as a criticism of the promises of Christianity than as an identification with its theodicy of hope. It should also be mentioned, of course, that the religious rituals surrounding the death of Christ draw heavily from the classical tragic aesthetic form.

46 'Pity involves both distance and proximity. If the sufferer is too close to ourselves, his impending misfortune evokes horror and terror. If he is too distant, his fate does not affect us . . . The ethical and political questions are: whom should we pity? . . . The tragic hero? Ourselves? Humanity? All three, and three in one' (Rorty, 1992: 12–13). Against Adorno's claim that the Holocaust must not be aestheticized in any way, Hartman insists that 'art creates an unreality effect in a way that is not alienating or desensitizing. At best, it also provides something of a sage-house for emotion and empathy. The tears we shed, like those of Aeneas when he sees the destruction of Troy depicted on the walls of Cathage, are an acknowledgment and not an exploitation of the past' (Hartman, 1996: 157).

47 In these psychological terms, a progressive narrative inclines the audience toward projection and scape-goating, defense mechanisms that allow the actor to experience no responsibility for the crime. This distinction also points to the difference between the genres of melodrama and tragedy, which have much in common. By breaking the world into complete blacks and whites, and by providing assurance of the victory of the good, melodrama encourages the same kind of projection and scape-goating as progressive narratives; in fact, melodramatic narratives often drive progressive ones. For the significance of melodramatic narratives in the nineteenth century and their connection to stories, both fictional and realistic, of ethical triumph, see Brook (1995). In practice, however, dramatizations of the Holocaust trauma, like virtually every other dramatization of tragedy in modern and postmodern society, often overlap with the melodramatic.

48 'By the early 1940s, the Polish Ministry of Information, independent journalists, and underground groups released photos of corpses tumbled into graves or stacked onto carts. One such depiction, which appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in March 1941 under the headline "Where Germans Rule: Death Dance before Polish Mass Execution," portrayed victims digging their own graves or facing the death squad. The journal told its readers that "behind these pictures is a story of cold-blooded horror reminiscent of the Middle Ages" ' (Zelizer, 1998: 43).

49 I am convinced that the distrust of abstract normative theories of justice, as expressed, for example, in Bauman's *Postmodern Ethics* (Z. Bauman, 1993) can be understood as a response to the Holocaust, as well, of course, as a response to Stalinism and elements of the capitalist West. In contrast to some other prominent postmodern positions, Bauman's ethics is just as strongly opposed to communitarian as to modernist positions, an orientation that can be understood by the centrality of the Holocaust in his critical understanding of modernity. Bauman's wife, Janina, is a survivor and author of an immensely moving Holocaust memoire, *Winter in the Morning* (J. Bauman, 1986). The dedication of *Modernity and the Holocaust* reads: 'To Janina, and all the others who survived to tell the truth.'

50 'Lachrymose' was the characterization given to the historical perspective on Jewish history developed by Salo Baron. The most important academic chronicler of Jewish history in the United States, Baron held the first Chair of Jewish History in Harvard. Baron was deeply affected by what seemed, at the time, to be the reversal of Jewish assimilation in the fin-de-siècle period. In response to this growth of modern anti-semitism, he began to suggest that the medieval period of Jewish–Gentile relations – the long period that preceded Jewish 'emancipation' in the Enlightenment and nineteenth century periods – actually may have been better for the Jewish people, culturally, politically, economically, and even demographically, than the post-emancipation period. Postwar Jewish historiography, not only in the US but also in Israel, often criticized Baron's perspective, but as the progressive narrative of the Holocaust gave way to the tragic frame, his lachrymose view became, if not widely accepted, then at least much more positively evaluated as part of the whole reconsideration of the effects of the Enlightenment on modern history. See Liberles (1995).

51 This has, of course, been the complaint of some intellectuals, from the very beginning of the entrance of the Holocaust into popular culture, from *The Diary of Anne Frank* to Spielberg's most recent dramas. As I will suggest below, the real issue is not dramatization per se but the nature of the dramatic form. If the comic frame replaces the tragic or melodramatic one, then the 'lessons' of the Holocaust are, indeed, being trivialized.

52 She adds that 'The appeal to pity is . . . also an appeal to fellow feeling.'

53 'Tragedy . . . provides us with the appropriate objects towards which to feel pity and fear. Tragedy, one might say, trains us or habituates us in feeling pity and fear in response to events that are worthy of those emotions. Since our emotions are being evoked in the proper circumstances, they are also being educated, refined, or clarified. . . Since virtue partially consists in having the appropriate emotional responses to circumstances, tragedy can be considered part of an ethical education.' (Lear, 1992: 318).

   Is it necessary to add the caveat that to be 'capable' of exercising such an ethical judgment is not the same thing as actually exercising it? This cultural shift I am referring to here is about capability, which, while clearly a prerequisite of action, does not determine it.

54 Such a notion of further universalization is not, of course, consistent with postmodern social theory or philosophy, and the intent here is not to suggest that it is.

55 I hope that my aim in this section will not be misunderstood as an effort to aestheticize and de-moralize the inhuman mass murders that the Nazis carried out. I am trying to de-naturalize, and therefore sociologize, our contemporary understanding of these awful events. For, despite their heinous quality, they could, in fact, be interpreted in various ways. Their nature did not dictate their interpretation. As Robert Braun suggests: 'Historical narratives do not necessarily employ past events in the form of tragedy and this form of employment is not the only mode of narration for tragic events' (Braun, 1994: 182).

   What I am suggesting here is a transparent and eerie homology between the tragic genre – whose emotional, moral, and aesthetic qualities have been studied since Aristotle – and how we and others have come to understand what the Holocaust 'really was.' Cultural sociology carries out the same kind of 'bracketing' that Husserl suggested for his new science of phenomenology: the ontological reality of perceived objects is temporarily repressed in order to search for those subjective elements in the actor's intentionality that establish the sense of verisimilitude. What the Holocaust

'really was' is not the issue for this sociological investigation. My subject is the social processes that allowed the events that are now identified by this name to be seen as different things at different times. For the lay actor, by contrast, the reality of the Holocaust must be taken as an objective and absolute. Moral responsibility and moral action can be established and institutionalized only on this basis.

In historical and literary studies, there has developed over the last two decades an intense controversy over the relevance of the kinds of cultural methods I employ here. Scholars associated with the moral lessons of the Holocaust, for example Saul Friedlander, have lambasted the deconstructive methods of narrativists like Hayden White for eliminating the hard and fast line between 'representation' (fiction) and 'reality.' In the tempestuous scholarly conference that gave birth to the collective volume *Probing the Limits of Representation* (Friedlander, 1992), for example, Friedlander equates the cultural historians' questioning of reality with the politically motivated efforts by contemporary Italian fascists, and all the so-called revisionists since then, to deny the mass murder of the Jews. While I would strongly disagree with Friedlander's line of criticism, there is no doubt that it has been stimulated by the manner in which the aestheticizing, debunking quality of deconstructive criticism has, from Nietzche on, sought to present itself as a replacement for, rather than a qualification of, the traditional political and moral criticism of the rationalist tradition. By contrast, I am trying here to demonstrate that the aesthetic and the critical approach must be combined.

56 Each national case is, of course, different, and the stories of France, the United Kingdom, Italy, and the Scandinavian countries would depart from the present account in significant ways. Nonetheless, as Diner remarks, insofar as 'the Holocaust has increasingly become a universal moral icon in the realm of political and historical discourse,' the 'impact of the catastrophe can be felt in various European cultures, with their disparate legacies [and] even within the realm of collective . . . identities' (Diner, 2000: 218). Non-Western countries, even the democratic ones, have entirely different traumas to contend with, as I have pointed out in my introduction.

57 In fact, I believe that it is because of the symbolic centrality of Jews in the progressive narrative that so relatively little attention has been paid to the Nazis' equally immoral and unconscionable extermination policies directed against other groups, e.g. Poles, homosexuals, gypsies, and handicapped people. Some frustrated representatives of these aggrieved groups – sometimes for good reasons, other times for anti-semitic ones – have attributed this lack of attention to Jewish economic and political power in the United States. The present analysis suggests, however, that cultural logic is the immediate and efficient cause for such a focus. This logic is also propelled, of course, by geopolitical and economic forces, but such considerations would apply more to the power and position of the United States in the world system of the post-war world than to the position of Jews in the US.

As we have seen, it was not the actual power of Jews in the US but the centrality of 'Jews' in the progressive American imagination that defined the crimes of Nazis in a manner that focused on anti-semitism. In terms of later developments, moreover, it was only because of the imaginative reconfiguring of the Jews that political-economic restrictions were eliminated in a manner that eventually allowed them to gain influence in mainstream American institutions. As we will see below, moreover, as American power declined, so did the exclusive focus on Jews as a unique class of Holocaust victims. This suggests, as I will elaborate below, that the contemporary 'omnipresence' of the Holocaust symbol has more to do with 'enlarging the circle of victims' than with focusing exclusively on Jewish suffering.

The most recent scholarly example of this tendentious focus on 'Jewish power' as the key for explaining the telling of the Holocaust story is Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life* (Novick, 1999). To employ the categories of classical sociological theory, Novick might be described as offering an instrumentally oriented 'status group' explanation à la Weber, in contrast to the more culturally oriented late-Durkheimian approach taken here. Novick suggests that the Holocaust became central to contemporary history because it became central to America, that it became central to America because it became central to America's Jewish community, and that it became central to Jews because it became central to the ambitions and of Jewish organizations who were central to the mass media in all its forms (Novick: 207). Jewish organizations began to emphasize the Holocaust when they wanted to 'shore up Jewish identity, particularly among the assimilating and intermarrying younger generations' (Novick: 186) and to maintain the Jews' 'victim status' in what Novick sees as the identity politics shell game of the 1980s – 'Jews were intent on permanent possession of the gold medal in the Victimization Olympics' (Novick: 185). Despite acknowledging that it is 'impossible to disentangle the spontaneous from the controlled' (Novick: 152), he emphasizes the 'strategic calculations' (Novick: 152) of Jewish organizations, which motivated them to emphasize the Holocaust in response to 'market forces'(Novick: 187).

The present analysis fundamentally departs from Novick's. Whereas Novick describes a particularization of the Holocaust – its being captured by Jewish identity politics – I will describe a universalization. Where Novick describes a nationalization, I trace an internationalization. Where Novick expresses skepticism about the metaphorical transferability of the 'Holocaust,' I will describe such metaphorical bridging as essential to the social process of moral engagement.

In terms of sociological theory, the point is not to deny that status groups are significant. As Weber clarified in his sociology of religion, such groups must be seen, not as creators of interest per se, but as 'carrier groups.' All broad cultural currents are carried by – articulated by, lodged within – particular material and ideal interests. Even ideal interests, in other words, are represented by groups, in this case status groups rather than classes. But, as Weber emphasized, ideal and material interests can be pursued only along the 'tracks' that have been laid out by larger cultural ideas.

The sense of the articulation between these elements in the Holocaust construction is much more accurately represented in Edward T. Linenthal's *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create the Holocaust Museum* (Linenthal, 1995). Linenthal carefully and powerfully documents the role of status group interests in the fifteen-year process involved in the creation of the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. He demonstrates, at the same time, that the particular parties were deeply affected by the broader cultural context of Holocaust symbolization. President Carter, for example, initially proposed the idea of such a museum partly on political grounds – in order to mollify a key democratic constituency, the Jews, as he was making unprecedented gestures to Palestinians in the diplomatic conflicts of the Middle East (Linenthal, 1995: 17–28). Yet, when a Carter advisor, Stuart Eizenstat, first made the written proposal to the president, in April 1978, he pointed to the great popularity of the recently broadcast *Holocaust* mini-series on NBC. In terms of the broader context, in which the Holocaust was already being universalized, Eizenstat also warned the president that other American cities, and other nations, were already engaged in constructing what could be competing Holocaust commemorative sites. Even Linenthal, however, sometimes loses sight of the broader context. Describing the contentious struggles

over representation of non-Jewish victims, for example, he speaks of 'those committed to Jewish ownership of Holocaust memory' (Linenthal, 1995: 39), a provocative phrasing that invites the kind of reductionist, status-group interpretation of strategic motivation that Novick employs. As I have shown in this essay, the Holocaust as a unversalizing symbol of human suffering was, in a fundamental sense, inextricably related to the Jews, for the symbol was constructed directly in relationship to the Jewish mass murder. This was not a matter of ownership but a matter of narrative construction and intensely experienced social drama, which had been crystallized long before the struggles over representation in the museum took place. As a result of the early, progressive narrative of the Nazis' mass murder, non-Jewish Americans had given to Jews a central pride of place, and had greatly altered their attitudes and social relations to them as a result. The conflicts that Linenthal documents came long after this crystallization of Jewish centrality. They were about positioning vis-à-vis an already firmly crystallized symbol, which had by then become renarrated in a tragic manner. Engorged with evil and universalized in its meaning, the 'Holocaust' could not possibly be 'owned' by any one particular social group or by any particular nation. The Holocaust Museum was able to gain consensual support precisely because the symbol of evil had already become highly generalized, such that other, non-Jewish groups could, and did, associate and reframe their own subjugation in ways that strengthened the justice of their causes. See my discussion of metonymy, analogy, and legality, below.

Norman G. Finkelstein's *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (Finkelstein, 2000) represents an even more tendentious, and decidedly more egregious treatment of Holocaust centrality than Novick's, in a sense representing a long and highly polemical asterisk to that earlier, more scholarly book. Finkelstein bothers not at all with the ambiguity of motives, flatly stating that the Jewish concentration on the Holocaust, beginning in the late 1960s, was 'a ploy to delegitimize all criticism of Jews' (Finkelstein, 2000: 37). The growing crystallization of the Holocaust as a metaphor for evil invites from Finkelstein only ridicule and ideology-critique: 'The abnormality of the Nazi holocaust springs not from the event itself but from the exploitive industry that has grown up around it . . . "The Holocaust" is an ideological representation of the Nazi holocaust. Like most ideologies, it bears a connection, if tenuous with reality . . . Its central dogmas sustain significant political and class interests. Indeed, The Holocaust has proven to be an indispensable ideological weapon' (Finkelstein, 2000: 150, 1).

58 Higham (1984) rightly notes a range of factors involving what might be called the 'modernization' of America's Jewish population – increasingly high rates of urbanization and education, growing professionalization – also facilitated the identification with them of non-Jews. Other, more specifically cultural processes, however, were also fundamentally involved.

59 According to a 1990 survey, when Americans were presented with a list of well-known catastrophic events, a clear majority said that the Holocaust 'was *the* worst tragedy in history' (quoted in Novick, 1999: 232, italics in original).

60 The tragic and personal qualities of the *Diary*, which set it against the 'progressive narrative' structure of the early postwar period, initially had made it difficult to find a publisher.

'Queriod, the literary publishing house in Amsterdam, rejected the manuscript of *Het Achterhuis*, giving as its reasons the fact that "in 1947 it was certain that war and everything to do with it was stone dead" . . . Immediately as the terror was over and

the anxieties of that pitch-black night were banished, people did not want to venture again into the darkness. They wished to give all their attention to the new day that was dawning' (Strenghold, 1988: 337).

61 Doneson's very helpful historical reconstruction of the dramatization of the *Diary* also emphasizes the personal focus. Like many other commentators (e.g., Rosenfeld, 1995), however, she suggests this focus undermines the tragic message of the Holocaust rather than generalizing it. In this, she joins the increasing ranks of those who decry the 'Americanization' of the Holocaust, an interpretation with which, as I have mentioned, the present approach strongly disagrees.

62 This clash of genres was demonstrated by the storm of controversy inside Germany that greeted the decision by a new German cable company to broadcast old episodes of *Hogan's Heroes* in 1995.

63 See the extensive social scientific discussion in Zielinski (1986), from which this discussion is derived.

64 It was after this crystallizing event that some of the intellectuals who had been most associated with focusing public discussion on the Holocaust began to criticize its transformation into a mass collective representation. Elie Wiesel made his famous declaration (quoted earlier) that the ontological nature of Holocaust evil made it impossible to dramatize. Complaining, in effect, that such dramatization stole the Holocaust from those who had actually suffered from it, Wiesel described the television series as 'an insult to those who perished, and those who survived' (quoted in Morrow, 1978). Such criticism only intensified in response to the subsequent flood of movie and television dramatizations. In *One, by One, by One: Facing the Holocaust*, for example, Miller issued a fervent critique of the appropriation of the original event by the mass media culture of the 'Holocaust industry' (Miller, 1990: 232). Rather than seeing the widespread distribution of the mass mediated experience as allowing universalization, he complained about its particularization via 'Americanization,' presumably because it was in the US that most of these mass media items were produced: 'Europe's most terrible genocide is transformed into an American version of kitsch.'

Aside from knee-jerk anti-Americanism, which has continued to inform critiques of the 'Holocaust industry' in the years following, such a perspective also reflects the anti-popular culture, hermeneutic tone-deafness of the Frankfurt School's 'culture industry' approach to meaning. (See Docker (1994) for a vigorous, postmodern criticism in this regard.) Such attacks stand outside the interpretive processes of mass culture. In place of interpretations of meaning, they issue moral condemnations: 'This vulgarization is a new form of historical titillation . . . In societies like America's, where the public attention span is measured in seconds and minutes rather than years or decades, where sentimentality replaces insight and empathy, it represents a considerable threat to dignified rememberance' (Miller, 1990: 232). Such complaints fundamentally misapprehend cultural processes in general and cultural trauma in particular. (See my discussion of the 'dilemma of uniqueness'.)

While these leftist complaints are well-intended, it is revealing that their 'anti-commidification' arguments overlap quite neatly with the conservative, sometimes anti-semitic language that German conservatives employed in their effort to prevent the *Holocaust* from being shown in their country. Franz Joseph Strauss, the right wing, nationalist leader of the Bavarian Christian Democrats, called the series 'a fast-buck operation.' The German television executives opposed to airing the series condemned it as 'a cultural commodity . . . not in keeping with the memory of the victims.' *Der*

Spiegel railed against 'the destruction of the Jews as soap opera . . . a commercial horror show . . . an imported cheap commodity . . . Genocide shrunken to the level of *Bonanza* with music appropriate to *Love Story*.' After the series was televised, and its great impact revealed, one German journalist ascribed its effect to its personal dramatization: 'No other film has ever made the Jews' road of suffering leading to the gas chambers so vivid . . . Only since and as a result of "Holocaust" does a majority of the nation know what lay behind the horrible and vacuous formula "Final Solution of the Jewish Question." They know it because a US film maker had the courage to break with the paralyzing dogma . . . that mass murder must not be represented in art' (quoted in Herf, 1986: 214, 217).

65 See the Arendt-Jaspers correspondence on these isses and the astute analysis by Richard J. Bernstein in *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question* (Bernstein, 1996).

66 'The capture and trial of Eichmann and, in the following years, the controversies surrounding Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* were something of a curtain raiser to the era of transition. For the mass public this was the first time the Holocaust was framed as a distinct and separate process, separate from Nazi criminality in general' (Novick, 1994: 161). It was only as a result of such cultural work that the poet A. Alvarez could have made his much noted remark in the *Atlantic Monthly*, to the effect that, 'while all miseries of World War II have faded, the image of the concentration camp persists' (quoted in Zelizer, 1998: 155).

67 Novick goes on to observe that 'it was in large part as a result of the acceptance of Arendt's portrait of Eichmann (with an assist from Milgram) that "just following orders" changed, in the Ameircan lexicon, from a plea in extenuation to a damning indictment.'

68 See, in more depth, Browning, 'Ordinary Germans or Ordinary Men? A Reply to the Critics,' in Berenbaum and Peck (1998: 252–265), and Goldhagen, 'Ordinary Men or Ordinary Germans?' in Berenbaum and Peck (1998: 301–308).

69 'Spielberg does not show what "Germans" did but what *individual* Germans did, offering hope that one of them – Schindler – would become one of many. Unlike *Holocaust* . . . Spielberg can tell a "true tale" that must seem doubly strange. While the events in *Schindler's List* may contradict the idea of the Nazi state as the perfect machine, the state's and Schindler's deficiencies provide a paradox of choice – "the other Nazi," the German who did good' (Wiessberg, 1997: 178); italics in original).

70 By force of arms, I refer to the ability of the North Vietnamese to successfully resist the US and South Vietnamese on the ground. David Kaiser's *American Tragedy* (Kaiser, 1999) demonstrates that, in purely military terms, the American and South Vietnamese forces were never really in the game, and that, in fact, the kind of interventionist war the US benightedly launched could not have been won short of nuclear arms. If the US had not intervened militarily in Vietnam, America may not have lost control over the means of symbolic production, and the Holocaust may not have been universalized in the same way.

71 The power of this symbolic reversal is attested to by the fact that, two decades later, an American psychologist, Herbert C. Kelman, and a sociologist, V. Lee Hamilton, published *Crimes of Obedience: Toward a Social Pyschology of Authority and Responsibility* (Kelman and Hamilton, 1989), which in developing a theory of 'sanctioned massacre' drew explicit connections between American military behavior at Mylai and German Nazi behavior during the Holocaust.

72 One recent demonstration of this polluting association was provided by *The New York Times* review of a much-trumpeted televised television show called *Nuremberg*.

'Here's the defining problem with 'Nuremberg,' TNT's ambitious, well-meaning two-part mini-series about the trial of Nazi war criminals: the "best" character in the movie is Hermann Goring. Through Brian Cox's complex performance, Goring (founder off the Gestapo, Hitler's No. 2) becomes his finest self. He is urbane, loyal and courageous – and he gets the best lines. "The victors will always be the judges, the vanquished always the accused," he says with world-weary knowingness.' (Julie Salamon, 'Humanized, but Not Whitewashed, at Nuremberg,' July 14, 2000, Section B: 22).

73 In 1995, the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC had planned to mount an exhibition commemorating the Allies' defeat of Japan and the successful conclusion of the Second World War. The plans included highlighting the plane that had dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The public uproar that greeted these plans eventually had the effect of preventing the exhibition from ever going forward. See Linenthal (1995).

74 These suggestions were made, for example, in both Laqueur (1980) and Dawidowicz (1982). The scholarly arguments along these lines culminated with the publication of David S. Wyman's *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (Wyman, 1984).

75 Unfortunately, Linenthal's very helpful discussion implies that, in this case as in others, there is a disjunction, perhaps a morally reprehensible one, between the dissensus about empirical facts and the interpretive frame. I would suggest that these are different arenas for the mediation of cultural trauma, and each arena has its own framework of justification.

76 See especially the brilliantly written, highly mythologizing biography of Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle: The Rebel, 1890–1944* (Lacouture, 1990). After the Allied armies, primarily British and American, had allowed the relatively small remnant of the French army under De Gaulle to enter first into Paris, as a symbolic gesture, De Gaulle dramatically announced to an evening rally that Paris 'has risen to free itself' and that it had 'succeeded in doing so with its own hands.'

77 Max Ophuls' *Le chagrin et la pitie* exercised a profound expressive effect in this regard, as did the American historian Robert O. Paxton's *La France de Vichy*. For an overview of these developments, see Hartman, 'The Voice of Vichy' (Hartman, 1996: 72–81).

78 Whether Austrians themselves – or the Swiss, for that matter (see below) – have come to accept this new position in the Holocaust story is not the issue; and it is obviously open to some doubt in light of the recent plurality given in the national elections to the Freedom Party, headed by Joerg Haider, who has famously minimized Nazi atrocities against Jews. There is, nonetheless, a significant group of Austrians who have accepted the symbolic inversion from victim to perpetrator. The *Los Angeles Times* recently reported on Austrian's *Gedenkdienst*, or Commemorative Service Program, a government-sponsored but privately organized program in which young men can perform alternative service by volunteering in a Holocaust-related institution somewhere in the world: 'The interns are challenging their country's traditional notion of its wartime victimization – that Austria simply feel prey to Nazi aggression. In fact, thousands of Austrians acted as Nazi collaboraters and likely committed war crimes against Jews . . . "I want to tell [people] that I acknowledge it," Zotti [a *Gedenkdienst* volunteer] says, "It's important for me. It's my country. It's my roots. I want to put it in the light of what it is" ' (Section E, July 30, 2000: 3).

79 The phrase has been evoked innumerable times over the last three decades in both theological and secular contexts, e.g., Vigen Guroian's "Post-Holocaust Political Morality" (Guroian, 1988).

80 In a recent poll, between 80 and 90 percent of Americans agreed that the need to protect the rights of minorities, and not 'going along with everybody else,' were lessons to be drawn from the Holocaust. The same proportion also agreed that, 'It is important the people keep hearing about the Holocaust so that it will not happen again' (quoted in Novick, 1999: 232).

81 On May 20, 1999, the *San Francisco Chronicle* ran the following story from the *Los Angeles Times* wire service:

The Justice Department renewed its long legal battle yesterday against alleged Nazi death camp guard John Demjanjuk, seeking to strip the retired Cleveland autoworker of his U.S. citizenship. For Demjanjuk, 79, the action marks the latest in a 22-year-old case with many twists and turns . . . The Justice Department first accused Demjanjuk of being Ivan the Terrible in 1977, and four years later a federal judge concurred. Demjanjuk was stripped of his U.S. citizenship and extradited in 1986 to Israel, where he was convicted of crimes against humanity by an Israeli trial court and sentenced to death. But Israel's Supreme Court found that reasonable doubt existed on whether Demjanjuk was Ivan the Terrible, a guard [in Treblinka] who hacked and tortured his victims before running the engines that pumped lethal gas into the chambers where more than 800,000 men, women and children were executed . . . Returning to a quiet existence in Cleveland, Demjanjuk won a second court victory last year when [a] U.S. District Judge – citing criticism of government lawyers by an appellate court panel – declared that government lawyers acted 'with reckless disregard for their duty to the court' by withholding evidence in 1981 that could have helped Demjanjuk's attorneys . . . The Justice Department [will] reinstitute denaturalization proceedings based on other evidence ('U.S. Reopens 22-Year Case Against Retiree Accused of Being Nazi Guard,' section A: 4).

82 The first issue of the journal *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* carried an article by Seena B. Kohl, entitled 'Ethnocide and Ethnogenesis: A Case Study of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw, a Genocide Avoided' (vol 1, no. 1, 1986: 91–100). After the publication of his *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (Stannard, 1991) David E. Stannard wrote:

'Compared with Jews in the Holocaust . . . some groups have suffered greater *numerical* loss of life from genocide. The victims of the Spanish slaughter of the indigenous people of Mesoamerica in the 16th century numbered in the tens of millions . . . Other groups also have suffered greater *proportional* loss of life from genocide than did the Jews under Hitler. The Nazis killed 60 to 65 per cent of Europe's Jews, compared with the destruction by the Spanish, British, and Americans of 95 per cent or more of numerous ethnically and culturally distinct peoples in North and South American from the 16th through the 19th centuries . . . Among other instances of clear genocidal intent, the first Governor of the State of California openly urged his legislature in 1851 to wage war against the Indians of the region 'until the Indian race becomes extinct.' (Stannard, 1996: 2, italics in original)

Stannard is ostensibly here denying the uniqueness of the Holocaust, even while he makes of it pivotal reference for moral determinations of evil.

83 Delanty (2001: 43) makes an apposite observation, suggesting that 'the discourse of war around the Kosovo episode was one of uncertainty about the cognitive status of war and how it should be viewed in relation to other historical events of large-scale violence.' Delanty also directly links this discursive conflict, which he locates in what he calls the 'global public sphere,' to the ethical questions of what kind of inter-ventionist action, if any, outsiders were morally obligated to take: 'The implications

of this debate in fact went beyond the ethical level in highlighting cultural questions concerning the nature of war and legtimate violence [,]. . . about what exactly constitutes violence [and] who was the victim and who was perpetrator [and] the constitution of the "we" who are responsible.' Yet, because Delanty views this discursive conflict as primarily cognitive, between more or less similarly valued 'cognitive models,' he fails sufficiently to appreciate the moral force that the Holocaust's engorged evility lent to the metaphors of ethnic cleansing and genocide. This leads Delanty to make the perplexing observation that 'as the war progressed, the nature of the subject of responsibility, the object of politics and whether moral obligations must lead to political obligation became more and more uncertain,' with the result that the 'obligation to intervene was severely limited.' If the analysis presented above is correct, it suggest precisely the opposite: Given the uneven weighting of the polluted symbols of violence, as the Yugoslavian wars progressed, during the decade of the 1990s, the Holocaust symbol gained increasing authority and, thus, the nature of the immanent obligations increasingly certain and the obligation to intervene increasingly available.

84 That very same day, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that Germany's deputy foreign minister for U.S. relations, a Social Democrat, 'suggested why Germany was able to participate in the NATO assault on Yugoslavia: The "68ers," veterans of the student movement, used to tell their elders, "We will not stand by, as you did while minority rights are trampled and massacres take place." Slobodan Milosevic gave them a chance to prove it' (May 14, Section A: 1).

85 For a detailed discussion of the fundamental analogizing role played during media construction of the Balkan crisis by recycled Holocaust photos, see Zelizer (1998: 210–30).

86 The date was December 11, 1946.

87 On the fiftieth anniversary of that proclamation, Micahel Ignatieff recalled that 'the Holocaust made the Declaration possible,' that it was composed in 'the shadow of the Holocaust,' and that, 'the Declaration may still be a child of the Enlightenment, but it was written when faith in the Enlightenment faced its deepest crisis of confidence' (Ignatieff, 1999: 58).

88 'The World War II trials [should] receive credit for helping to launch an international movement for human rights and for the legal institutions needed to implement such rights. Domestic trials, inspired in part by the Nuremberg trials, include Israel's prosecution of Adolph Eichmann for this conduct during World War II; Argentina's prosecution of 5000 members of the military junta involved in state terrorism and the murder of 10,0000 to 30,000 people; Germany's prosecution of border guards and their supervisors involved in shooting escapees from East Germany; and Poland's trial of General Jaruzelski for his imposition of martial law . . . Nuremberg launched a remarkable international movement for human rights founded in the rule of law; inspired the development of the United Nations and of non-governmental organizations around the world; encouraged national trials for human rights violations; and etched a set of ground rules about human entitlement that circulate in local, national, and international settings. Ideas and, notably ideas about basic human rights spread through formal and informal institutions. Especially when framed in terms of universality, the language of rights and the vision of trials following their violation equip people to call for accountability even where it is not achievable' (Minow, 1998: 27, 47–48).

89 Yehuda Bauer. See note 41.

90 Despite his misleading polemics against what he pejoratively terms the 'Holocaust

industry,' it is revealing that even such a critic of popularization as Finkelstein realizes the uniqueness of Holocaust evility does not preclude, and should not preclude, the event's generalization and universalization:

'For those committed to human betterment, a touchstone of evil does not preclude but rather invites comparisons. Slavery occupied roughly the same place in the moral universe of the late nineteenth century as the Nazi holocaust does today. Accordingly, it was often invoked to illuminate evils not fully appreciated. John Stuart Mill compared the condition of women in that most hallowed Victorian institution, the family, to slavery. He even ventured that in crucial respects it was worse.' (Finkelstein, 2000: 148)

Citing a specific example of this wider moral effect, Finkelstein observes that, 'seen through the lens of Auschwitz, what previously was taken for granted – for example, bigotry – no longer can be. In fact, it was the Nazi holocaust that discredited the scientific racism that was so pervasive a feature of American intellectual life before World War II' (Finkelstein, 2000: 148).

91   This instrumentalizing, de-sacralizing, de-magicalizing approach to routinization is captured in the quotation with which Max Weber famously concluded his essay, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 1958 [1904]: 182). Observing that modernity brought with it the very distinct possibility of 'mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance,' Weber added this apposite passage: 'Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.' This understanding has been applied to the memorialization process – as kind of inevitable, 'developmental' sequence – by a number of commentators, and, most critically, in Ian Burma, *The Wages of Guilt* (Buruma, 1994), and Peter Novick's, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Novick, 1999).

92   On the relationship between the liquid and crystallized forms of the sacred, see Alexander, 'Les Regles secrètes' (Alexander, 1996).

93   I am grateful to the author for sharing his findings with me.

94   Internal memo from Alice Greenwald, one of the museum's consultants, and Susan Morgenstein, the former curator and subsequently director of temporary exhibits, February 23, 1989.

95   Interview with Ralph Applebaum, Chief Designer of the Holocaust Museum.

96   Cindy Miller memo, March 1, 1989.

97   This is Linenthal's own observation.

98   A recent *Los Angeles Times* description of the museum brings together its tragic dramatization, its participatory, experiential emphasis, and its universalizing ambition: 'The 7-year-old West Los Angeles museum is internationally acclaimed for its high-tech exhibits, for pushing ideas instead of artifacts. You know right away that this is not the kind of museum where you parade past exhibits on the walls. The place is dark and windowless with a concrete bunker kind of feel, lit by flashes from a 16-screen video wall featuring images of civil rights struggles and blinking list of words*: Retard. Spic. Queen*' (Section E, July 30, 2000: 1, italics in original). The exhibition at the L.A. museum begins by asking visitors to pass through one of two doors marked 'unprejudiced' and 'prejudiced.'

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