

SENSORY WITNESSING AND RAILWAY SHOCK

Disorders of Vision and Experience

To what extent do extreme experiences call for an extreme historiography? What discourse or critical response can do justice to the corporeal and psychological effects, among many others, of immobility in trains? The telling of such effects is as burdensome for the victim as it is for the person reading, listening to, or watching a testimony. Anthropologist Michael Jackson argues that the ethnographic impulse of “co-existence” with suffering is perhaps the most that can be achieved through an ethical engagement with the other.¹ Still, the quest for explanation remains paramount: “But can the intellectual succeed in accomplishing what the sufferer cannot? Or are our attempts to communicate or publicize the pain of others little more than stratagems for helping us deal with the effects this pain has had on us?”² Jackson’s questions about the interpreter’s dilemma come from his interviews with refugees in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in the late 1990s. His provocations express a dilemma in the interrogator’s quest for soliciting usable anti-genocide testimony and the boundaries that should be recognized in the process. Silence, Jackson claims, might be a more ethical response than talk, a muting of conversation that persists in debates about the Holocaust’s representability. Although I acknowledge the ethical necessity of silence, the advocacy of extreme historiography undertaken in this chapter brings into view the spoken-word tellability of trauma and the undercurrent of “uselessness.” How does one compensate, Jackson inquires, for the “sheer banality of suffering—the fact that though it is so devastating to the sufferer, there is little that he or she can say about it, except recount the kind of matter-of-fact summaries of events ...?”³ Perhaps there is no final vocabulary for doing justice to violating experiences, but there is an argument for rethinking approaches to recovering embodied memories from cattle car transit.

This chapter probes the tellability of the train journey’s somatic traumas based on perspectives from cultural studies of witnessing, the body, and the senses. Through a close reading of testimonies from the David Boder archive,

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I examine how sensory witnessing emerged in the spoken-word traumas of displaced refugees before the Holocaust emerged as a universal motif of persecution. The model of sensory witnessing that I identify with train journeys is also applicable to other intense spatial experiences of forced closeness, such as in the trenches of World War I, bomb shelters, and living in underground sewers, among countless others.⁴ What did the motion and stillness of the train with its overcrowded passengers do to experiences of closeness, touch, and smell? This chapter is a conscious intervention in the interpretation of the train journey's stages of departure, transit, and arrival. In effect, it delays that narrative journey to the camps to become its own moment of suspension.

The chapter is divided into three parts. First, I consider the ways in which Holocaust witnessing has been interpreted in ways that uphold the visual as a normative, secure, and sustainable witness position and truth. Assumptions about the availability of sight-based witnessing tend to marginalize an alternative perceptual truth that struggles with differences in nuance, visual capacity, feeling, and mobile/immobile status. Second, I anchor sensory witnessing in deportation train journeys to the perceptual destabilization generated by the "railway shock" of the nineteenth-century train journeys, and Jewish encounters with modernity as experienced in traumatic encounters with ethnic others. The brief historicization of railway displacements aims to demonstrate continuities and discontinuities in interpreting traumatic transit histories. I do not argue for inevitability in the trajectory of European Jewish transit histories from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, rather I explore the prolonged sensory assault of Holocaust deportation trains as an unexpected confirmation of the potential of what Todd Presner has called "mobile modernity."⁵ Finally, I examine how the sensory traumas of mobile modernity were represented in David Boder's interviews with survivors in displaced persons camps in Europe in 1946. The temporal proximity of Boder's collection of testimony to wartime allowed him to be cattle car transit's first serious interpreter and anthropologist, a role that remains unsurpassed. Like the deportees, Boder was engaged in a representational struggle. His was with the scientific language of psychology and anthropology to explain what deportees told him was their embodiment of the twentieth century's most extreme form of railway shock.

Holocaust Witnesses: Construction and Perception

Analyses of Holocaust witnessing have not extensively explored its sensory sources. Recent studies have explored Holocaust victim testimony production in ghettos as a struggle with literary representability, while others have explored the theory and legacy of witnessing and witness testimony.⁶ Some

of this writing suggests paradoxes with the tellability of trauma, and the ethical and cultural position of the witness. Primo Levi introduced the long-term separation of the victims as the “drowned” and the “saved.”⁷ Froma Zeitlin spoke of fiction and literature as genres of “vicarious witnessing.”⁸ An influential though contestable theme has been a scholarly insistence on abjection in the denial of the possibility of witness. In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman suggested that the Shoah is an event without a witness.⁹ This position is provocatively exemplified by the philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who has generated vigorous debate about the meaning of a witness since the publication of *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*.¹⁰

Agamben mapped the etymology of the word “witness,” its heirs and claims, and its incarnation in the camps. In Latin, he writes, there are two words for witness: “The first word, *testis*, from which our word testimony derives, etymologically signifies the person who, in a trial or lawsuit between two rival parties, is in the position of a third party (*terstis*). The second word, *superstes*, designates a person who has lived through something, who has experienced an event from beginning to end and can therefore bear witness to it.”¹¹ Agamben insists on survivors, particularly Primo Levi, as not the third party of juridical importance, but as a survivor (*superstite*) who cannot judge: “the only thing that interests him is what makes judgment impossible: the gray zone in which victims become executioners and executioners become victims.”¹² Agamben suggests another breach, claiming that the figure of the Muselmann is the ultimate victim of the Shoah and hence its only authentic yet unavailable witness: “the sublime witness whose testimony would be truly valuable but who cannot bear witness.”¹³ But what would this witness reveal in his or her ontological essence that is so extraordinary and exceptional, other than to function as Agamben’s “other,” the objectified witness of eternal silence?

Agamben’s writings on the criteria for authentic witness have prior basis in the work of Jean-François Lyotard, who remains influential in current readings of Holocaust testimony’s utility. After reading Lyotard’s *The Differend*, Jelica Sumic-Riha claims that “what is fundamentally at stake in testifying to the impossible-real is...the destruction of the ‘ability to speak or to keep quiet,’ which threatens to undermine both relations that are constitutive of the witness as a speaking being: the relation to language and the relation to the Other.”¹⁴ Testimony is characterized by a constitutive impasse because the ethical obligation of bearing witness to inflicted wrongs stumbles on the impossibility of phrasing that wrong in the accepted idioms.¹⁵ The impasse not only concerns testimony as constitutive of the subject and a speaking position, but it also reflects a broader conflation of the Holocaust as a historical event and constructed cultural memory re-produced and re-presented across

the generations by primary witnesses (the intended victims) and secondary witnesses (cultural inheritors of their truths).

The responsibilities of secondary witnesses have been discussed by Geoffrey Hartman in ethical terms: “The burden of how to be a witness to the witness—how to attend, interpret, and value the testimonies—clearly falls on all for whom Nazism’s ‘culture of death’ is a frightening riddle. There is a duty of reception. Professional historians often avoid it, claiming that only contemporary testimony...has sufficient authenticity.”¹⁶ Hartman’s plea for an ethics of reception in the creation of a testimonial alliance of affective community is affirmed by Anne Cubilié. In *Women Witnessing Terror*, Cubilié proposes that the vocation of “giving testimony is about being a witness to impossible storytelling, and also a performative act between the mute witnesses, the dead, the survivor witness and the witness to the survivor.”¹⁷ James Hatley suggests that “by witness is meant a mode of responding to the other’s plight that exceeds an epistemological determination and becomes an ethical involvement.”¹⁸ In their analysis of how witness and testimony are produced, Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer offer an explicit distinction: witness is a visually “seen” or experienced event or act, while testimony is “told.” Testimonies are, for them, “representations of witnessing.”¹⁹

These authors focus on the social responsibilities of witnessing rather than the factors that shape its making. The assumption of sight as sustainable in different witnessing environments is by no means unusual given the cultural primacy accorded to vision and the visual in Western culture. The primacy of sight was arguably reinforced by the positivism of the Enlightenment and the emerging visual cultures of the eighteenth century, particularly the rise of typographic culture, and those of the nineteenth, such as the optical and mechanical arts of photography and cinema. The ascendance of sight as an esteemed, objective truth also coincided with the value placed on reason as an intellectual, vision-based cognition. The film theorist Christian Metz introduced the phrase “scopic drive” to describe the desire to see, a desire institutionalized in the cinema as a “scopic regime.”²⁰ He claims that the neglect of the “contact senses” of touch, taste, and smell in favor of the “senses at a distance,” such as sight and hearing, was reflected in the importance accorded to visual and auditory imaginaries in the cultural hierarchy of socially acceptable arts.²¹ The primacy of sight has been described as “ocular-centrism,” a primacy that is repeated in everyday language: “Sight is equated with understanding and knowledge in much of our vocabulary—insight, idea, illuminate, light, enlighten, visible, reflective, clarity.”²² Though I do not use “ocular-centrism” in my analysis of witnessing and visibility, I actively engage with its meaning and impact in constructions of what makes a Holocaust witness. An examination of the neglect of the sensory witness, particularly in an individual’s hearing and smelling capacities, uses insights

from areas that have made minimal impact in the analysis of victims' experiences in the Holocaust: anthropology, sociology, and critical theory.

I draw my critique of the visual from a postmodern approach to truth, knowledge, and narrative. I argue that to deconstruct sight as the preeminent sense of modernity means to unpack how vision and truths of the Holocaust witness are produced and represented. The multilayered assault on sight, particularly in twentieth-century French philosophy, has been discussed by Martin Jay: "Vision, it bears repeating, is normally understood as the master sense of the modern era, variously described as the heyday of Cartesian perspectivalism, the age of the world picture, and the society of the spectacle or surveillance. It will come therefore as no surprise that the critique of modernity would find congenial many of the same arguments against the hegemony of the eye."²³ Sight itself is inherently unstable, informed by embodiment, sensory feeling, and other diverse variants. Sight is, Anthony Synnott asserts, "individually subjective and culturally relative. What we see, and do not see, and how we define what we see, the meanings we impose on visual reality, reflect our personal values and interests as well as our cultural norms."²⁴ The evidentiary privileging given to sight-based witnessing is inherited from scientific visualism, and grounded in the relatively unchanging hierarchy of the senses, that sight, hearing, and smell were human senses, whereas taste and touch were characteristic of animal traits.²⁵ Many historians of the senses see their production and coming into being in cultural and social terms, a mediated process of the civilized world, where perception is the product of a multisensorial experience. David Howes, for example, has offered the paradigm of emplacement to suggest the "sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment."²⁶

The idea of emplacement can be further examined in relation to Ernst van Alphen's reading of visual imprints in Holocaust testimonies, and the epistemological limitations of seeing in the Holocaust. He claims that the Holocaust "disrupted conventional notions of seeing in the visual domain in Western culture. Since the Enlightenment, observation of the visual world has enjoyed a privileged epistemological status: it is a precondition and guarantee of knowledge and understanding. Being an 'eyewitness' automatically implies that one apprehends and comprehends the observed situation or event."²⁷ The issue of the authenticity of the visual is paramount for van Alphen, an authenticity further reinforced in media essentialism: "Vision does not automatically lead to 'authentic' witnessing. For witnessing requires, in addition to seeing, accounting for what is seen, and the problem may be situated in that mediation or transmission."²⁸ For van Alphen, the trauma of the Holocaust remains a "visual imprint" that is evidence of the discordant relationship between vision and comprehension in the encounter with abjection and violence, a recollection not readily tellable or speakable.

This “visual incapacitation” bears direct relationship to the sense memory of traumas as examples of “failed experiences.”²⁹ Van Alphen suggests that narrative memory is retrospective and trauma is embodied and reenacted at involuntary moments, much like the sense memory of olfactory intrusion and narrative returns to spaces of captivity in trains: “The person who experiences a traumatic re-enactment is still inside the event, present at it. This explains why these traumatic reenactments impose themselves as visual imprints. The original traumatic event has not yet been transformed into a mediated, distanced account. It reimposes itself in its visual and sensory directness.”³⁰ Van Alphen isolates sight, and connects it to an embodied memory as visually initiated, but not conclusively determined: “Visuality, the specific power of images, is definingly significant for the specific kind of memory that struggles to survive the Holocaust and remember it, yet transform the visual fixation that assaults into the active visual remembrance that works through.”³¹

Van Alphen’s articulation of visual imprints as being stuck in sense memory, at times a failed vocal or written delivery of unutterable experiences, echoes Charlotte Delbo’s recollection of her body traumas in the Holocaust. Delbo is one of the most eloquent interpreters of sense memory. Captivity in trains is one scene of the undoing of the self, with the attempt at its speakability and orderly presentation in writing as the process of rethinking and making valid experiences from moments and encounters that were beyond understanding at the time. Delbo uses the metaphor of skin renewal to explain the inexplicable: “There comes to mind the image of a snake shedding its old skin, emerging from beneath it in a fresh, glistening one.”³² Yet the shedding of skin through the telling of experience, where the old skin had a “bad smell,” and wore the visible traces of Auschwitz, is never fully exfoliated once the survivor returns to the world of ordinary gestures and regulations of bodily conduct through routines of sleep, eating, and conversation. Delbo writes that she had to relearn her olfactory sense, which was polluted by her memory of Birkenau, where “rain heightened the odor of diarrhoea. It is the most fetid odor I know.”³³ Her question, “how does one rid oneself of something buried far within: memory and the skin of memory?” can be applied to the permanence of body truths of train captivity in survivors. Delbo contends that the “skin enfolding the memory of Auschwitz is tough,” but that “it gives way at times, revealing all it contains.”³⁴ Delbo’s explanation of sense memory fuses the historical with the present self in repeated and subconscious journeys to Holocaust time:

In those dreams I see myself ... hardly able to stand on my feet, my throat tight, my heart beating wildly, frozen to the marrow, filthy, skin and bones; the suffering I feel is so unbearable, so identical to the pain endured there, that I feel it

physically, I feel it throughout my whole body which becomes a mass of suffering; and I feel death fasten on me, I feel that I am dying. Luckily, in my agony I cry out.³⁵

Delbo's ability to emerge from her subconscious journey and articulate it as a past story is explained as an "external memory," an intellectual act connected with thinking processes.³⁶ The pain of her embodied suffering is the "deep memory" of her Auschwitz skin, piercing the present self as a thinking subject. Her equation of deep memory with sense memory as the preservation of "physical imprints" on the degenerative, powerless body evokes many witness experiences of train transit. Though Delbo speaks of her historical self in Auschwitz, she has never left it. In her analysis, what becomes a speakable moment is an attempt to bear witness, to reappropriate the death threat and produce a testifying voice that is marked by incompleteness.

Although Delbo's writings have inspired readings of witness experiences during and beyond the Holocaust, her testimonies are a misplaced literary measure to which ordinary witness testimonies should aspire. The influence of her work in Holocaust literary studies, like the contributions of Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel, reinforces her preeminent witnessing truth and neglects investigation of experiences of body trauma that are not as eloquent, revealing, or sophisticated in their telling. Her insights have been used to explore the possibility and limits of representing embodied truths. Her articulation of deep memory has been critical to Lawrence Langer's anatomy of memory in video testimonies in *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*. The testimonies collated in this book stress the numbing impact of deep memory, rendering it unavailable to historical interpretation. What kind of historiography can be accorded to interpreting deep memory as the embodiment of train captivity? Langer reads Delbo's discourse on skin renewal, and her attempted exfoliations of deep memory, as evidence of the countertime of Auschwitz.³⁷ Rose Kamel reads Delbo's impact as a resculpting of the autobiographical genre in cyclical time, and the depiction of self and other through dismembered bodies and fragmented psyches.³⁸

The discussion about deep memory is not isolated to the Holocaust. Roberta Culbertson argues that sense memory and its impact on postwar experiences of embodied trauma often invites skepticism, for its "undeniable presences appear in non-narrative forms that seem to meet no standard test for truth or comprehensibility."³⁹ Channeling Delbo's wearing of two skins, her Auschwitz and postwar varieties, Culbertson suggests that "the demands of narrative ... operate as cultural silences to this sort of memory ... we lose sight of the body's own recall of its response to threat and pain, and of the ways in which it 'speaks' this pain, because this wordless language is unintelligible to one whose body is not similarly affected, and

because without words the experience has a shadowy quality, a paradoxical unreality.”⁴⁰ Culbertson’s body memories are quite possibly without words and without image, and “obey none of the standard rules of discourse: they are the self’s discourse with itself and so occupy that channel between the conscious and unconscious that speaks a body language.”⁴¹

Modernity as Railway Shock

The fraught tellability of embodied train traumas finds precedent in a range of popular, literary, and medical reports of shock, danger, and derailment associated with train journeys in nineteenth-century Europe. These responses took on an ethno-cultural dimension in Jewish accounts of travel, which commonly used the train journey experience as a metaphor of assimilation from East to West, an itinerary that is complicated with the immobilization of Jewish victims as deportees in the Holocaust. Rejecting the trajectory of the Holocaust as an inevitability of German-Jewish history, Todd Presner has commented that “railways represented progress because they were the technological realization of mobility, speed and exchange. They also became the first mode of transportation to move the masses, from the formation of mass politics to the implementation of mass deportations.”⁴²

The cultural history of the train’s impact as a mover of the masses and creator of trauma testimony was explored in Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century*. Schivelbusch argued that literary responses to train journeys made constant reference to a persistent destabilization of the senses. Critical for Schivelbusch was the way in which essayists and writers interpreted the impact of mechanized motion as a visual assault. He notes that early descriptions of rail journeys divided the railroad and the landscape through which it travels into two separate worlds. This separation was illusory: “the empirical reality that makes the landscape seen from the train window appears to be ‘another world’ is the railroad itself.”⁴³ The effect of the railroad on perceptions of travel is that “the traveller perceives the landscape as it is filtered through the machine ensemble.”⁴⁴ The loss of experience entailed in the new technology is interpreted in literature and journalism of the period as “denaturalization” and “desensualization.” Passengers cannot feel the movement entailed in the new technology except for the speed, which estranges and displaces the traveler from the landscape. This displacement was often represented as a loss of feeling and natural connection to the traversed landscapes.

The train passenger’s denaturalization by train travel was due to the abandonment of animal power in favor of steam, namely, the loss of the sense of space and motion that was based on it.⁴⁵ Because the traveler

cannot feel the attachment to the landscape, the meandering roads of animal power replaced with linear routes of railroads, he or she cannot feel the effort involved with travel. The loss of the traveler's connection to the landscape from horse-drawn power terminated the feeling of being anchored. Schivelbusch argues that while slow, preindustrial travel preserved and savored this space as natural, it virtually disappears on the railroad, for "the railroad knows only points of departure and destination."⁴⁶ The train was perceived as a projectile "and traveling on it, as being shot through the landscape—thus losing control of one's senses."⁴⁷ Features such as size, shape, quantity, and motion that can be objectively perceived in the real world now become the only qualities that the railroad traveler is able to observe in the landscape of mechanized travel. The traveler now experiences not only a loss of feeling or connection to the landscape, but visual perception is also compromised by the train's speed. Schivelbusch used the phrase "panoramic perception" to describe the train traveler's attempt to consume a total view of the landscape:

Panoramic perception, in contrast to traditional perception, no longer belongs to the same space as the perceived objects: the traveler sees the objects and landscapes through the apparatus that moves him *through* the world. That machine and the motion it creates become integrated into his visual perception: thus he can only see things in motion.⁴⁸

Adding to the sensory destabilization of travelers was the train's impact on perceptions of time and space. The concept that more space could be covered in less time was one of most commonly stated ambitions in developing rail networks across Europe. The effect of collapsing time and space through speed was borrowed from transport economics, yet with perceptually unprocessed effects as the annihilation of space and time produces shrinkage of the real world. Schivelbusch suggests:

[T]he notion that the railroad annihilates space and time is not related to that expansion of space that results from the incorporation of new spaces into the transport network. What is experienced as being annihilated is the traditional space-time continuum that characterized the old transport technology. Originally embedded in nature as it was, that technology, in its mimetic relationship to the space traversed, permitted the traveler to perceive that space as a living entity.⁴⁹

For Schivelbusch, the idea that the railroad annihilated space and time owed more to the shock of the new; and contemporary interpretations on the impact of the railroads confirms his reading. In *Remapping Memory*, Jonathan Boyarin argues that new technologies of transportation and communication such as shipping, railroads, airplanes and film, have "changed

the very conditions of our possible experiences of proximity and simultaneity.”⁵⁰ The alteration to the human experience of space and time made possible by the ability of the railroad to cut through landscapes was a prominent theme in the rhetoric of the railroad. Yet it was also the rhetoric of pacification for anxious and fearful travelers. Schivelbusch notes that the “annihilation of space and time is the topos that the early nineteenth century uses to describe the new situation into which the railroad places natural space after depriving it of its hitherto absolute powers. Motion is no longer dependent on the conditions of natural space, but on a mechanical power than creates its own spatiality.”⁵¹

The political and economic advantages of train travel, such as the potential to transform the relationships between nations, cultures and classes, occurred alongside more embodied if not negative effects. Train travelers increasingly expressed symptoms that were somatic, physiological, and psychological in nature. The continuous movement of the train caused a new kind of pathology where muscles and individual organs grew tired from constant vibration. While this physiological assault continued, challenges to perception also undermined travelers’ ability to feel “in place,” or “emplaced” to use David Howes’s reference. The rapidity with which the train’s speed caused optical impressions to change taxed the eyes to a much greater degree than did preindustrial travel and the sense of hearing had to cope with a deafening noise throughout the trip.⁵² The new ratio between traveling time and traversed space aggravated the symptoms of fatigue. The traveler was “subjected to a degree of wear and tear that did not exist in preindustrial travel, not to mention the purely psychological stress.”⁵³

Max Nordau suggested that the stresses of railroad travel of the late 1890s were physiological and symptomatic of the overloading of the nervous system through the pressures of modern life: “Even the little shocks of railway travelling, not perceived by consciousness, the perpetual noises and the various sights in the streets of a large town ... cost our brains wear and tear.”⁵⁴ These pathologies of railroad travel produced an association of the train as somewhat uncontrollable, a sign of the panic, anxiety, and degeneration of modernity.⁵⁵

Responses to nineteenth- and twentieth-century travel such as the loss of experience, the romanticization of the past (as symbolized by preindustrial travel), and the destabilization of travelers’ ability to perceive time and space, reflected a wider cultural anxiety related to modern practices of consumption, travel, and work. The railway’s assault on experiences of transit in the nineteenth century was a microcosm of the transformation of the senses by industrialization and technology.⁵⁶ Urbanization and manufacturing industries produced massive levels of noise pollution, smoke contamination, and

threats to public health, requiring the protection of society's hearing, smell, and sanitation: "The hectic life of the large cities, unhealthy factory labour and above all the new transport and communication technologies were widely held to have a negative effect on sensory perception. People believed they could feel tension all around them, and they attributed the ostensible increase of nervous complaints (notably neurasthenia) to this phenomenon."⁵⁷ Industrialization burdened the senses to the extent that the scopic regime, the growing dominance of sight and vision in all areas of life, was obscured by the impact of pollution. Yet the concern with pollution from urban stresses of uncontained smell and noise in public space was also privatized as a symbolic disorder of the body in need of constant olfactory vigilance.⁵⁸ The need for olfactory vigilance also extended to people travelling in train carriages. Even though carriages were divided according to classes with particular seating arrangements to maintain social order, the unexpected threat of contamination was expressed as the discomfort with the mechanized processes of modernity. The intrusion of the polluted other into ostensibly regulated space was an unwanted and frequent possibility, and consequently, had to be patrolled.

It is worthwhile to recall Michel de Certeau's interpretation of railway architecture and its spaces as anxiety inducing. He described the conditions of railway travel as an administered captivity, interpreting the train's impact on human experience as a "travelling incarceration. Immobile inside the train, seeing immobile things slip by. What is happening? Nothing is moving inside or outside the train ... the unchanging traveler is pigeon-holed, numbered, and regulated in the grid of the railway car, which is a perfect actualisation of the rational utopia."⁵⁹ De Certeau adds a mobile dimension to philosopher Jeremy Bentham's classification of the panoptic tendencies of modern architecture: "Everything has its place in a gridwork. Only a rationalised cell travels. A bubble of panoptic and classifying power, a module of imprisonment that makes possible the production of an order, a closed and autonomous insularity—that is what can traverse space and make itself independent of local roots."⁶⁰

Not unlike interpretations of Holocaust witness experiences, Schivelbusch, Nordau, and de Certeau based their analyses of trauma as contingent on vision of exterior landscapes from inside the train, a sight-based witnessing that was possible although difficult to sustain due to the train's motion. The challenge of vision or visual consumption of modernity and its various landscapes is repeated in Jewish responses to train transit. The experience of inside/outside, the separation of the traveler from the traveled space, railway fatigue, the construction of imaginary landscapes to compensate for lost ones, and the loss of connection to the natural world all converged in potentially traumatic train encounters.

In the work of historian Sander Gilman, the Jewish entry into European or Western society is interpreted as a passage or a journey, from the world of the Yiddish-speaking shtetl culture of the East to the urbanized destinations of Western high culture. The contrast between the Jewish cultures of old that were known, practiced in ideology, ritual, belief, custom and culture, with that of the new, the unknown, different, and the feared, was similar to the encounter with the new industrial form of travel the train offered. The vocabulary of the Jewish encounter with modernity was thus similar to the vocabulary associated with train travel. One talks of passages (from East to West), the entry from one society to another as a form of travel, one makes an entry into that society as one enters a train, and with a ticket, as payment for the journey. To Gilman, “the crossing of boundaries, as in the movement from the Eastern fringes to the centers of culture, such as Paris, evokes the train.”⁶¹

Gilman was invoking Sigmund Freud as a reference point. Freud’s obsession with trains and journeys was a life metaphor; transit was the trauma of modern civilization.⁶² For Jews, this trauma was especially evocative as a space for acting out the ambition of assimilation. Trains were one of the public spaces defined by class and economic power “in which the Jew could purchase status.”⁶³ A ticket bought for these carriages “assured one of traveling among one’s economic equals—but not as racial ‘equals.’”⁶⁴ Gilman contends that the association of trains and the “trauma of confronting one’s Jewish identity is a powerful topos at the end of the century.”⁶⁵

The displacement and estrangement of the journey were especially significant for Jews: the displacement of the anxiety associated with ethnic difference became associated with the train ride, for it is on trains that frightening events occur that reveal the innate difference between the self and the Other. For Freud, the train trip always held the anxiety of the articulation of his own difference.⁶⁶ His lifelong neurosis was about “missing a train” rather than being on a train, of having remained an Eastern European Jew had he not caught it, illuminates the anxieties of assimilation and acculturation and the East/West divide in late nineteenth-century Europe. Like interactions in civil society, the train carriage was but another expression of the potential racial anxiety of assimilation: “the train carriage was the space of confrontations with difference and anti-Semites.”⁶⁷

Freud’s lifelong neurosis about missing a train illuminates a fundamental ambivalence for Jewish encounters in modernity that becomes further complicated with the pernicious use of railways in the Holocaust. The idea of the West—the modernizing societies of Berlin, Vienna, and Prague in the late nineteenth century—always entailed a passage from East to West.⁶⁸ One was caught between his or her own (left, departed) and host (arrived) culture. Entry into modern society became a trade-off—one would have to

give up in order to gain. The passage of the Jews into this society was, like the modern traveler's experience of the train, a culture shock. Thus, the significance for Jews of the trains in nineteenth-century Europe reflects their encounter with modernity: "trains became part of the mental space associated with Jewishness and the trauma of that race."⁶⁹

For Jews on trains, the notion of "panoramic perception" was arguably a trauma of motion that was relocated from visions of the landscape to encounters inside train carriages. It was the traumatic panorama of other travelers that contributed to the railway shock. The panorama induced countless fears about unwanted encounters, strangers, and self-questioning about the social visibility of Jews as an ethnic minority in train carriages. It also inspired several literary reflections on the meaning of Jewish identity in assimilating societies (in East and West, and the routes between), and the creation of literary communities devoted to mapping Jewish journeys and cultural geographies. Railway shock was a thriving, if not portable, theme in Jewish literary history, crossing and deconstructing languages, genres, and borders.

The culture clash and somatic trauma associated with train travel have been examined by scholars of Yiddish and Hebrew literature.⁷⁰ Leah Garrett's engaging analysis of Yiddish writing adds a critical perspective to the use of archetypes of spatial encounters, exploration, and discovery to express ambivalent transit encounters. In *Journeys Beyond the Pale: Yiddish Travel Writing in the Modern World*, Garrett explored how writers in Jewish communities in the East from the 1870s to the 1930s—namely, the premodern shtetl world of Russia—welcomed and feared train travel, in particular, as the promise of a new, liberal modernity, as the space for collapsed encounters with other ethnic groups, and also as a scene of writing cultural tourism and anti-Semitism.⁷¹

Yiddish writers including Sholem Aleichem used modernist prose and the motif of the train to critique modernization and urbanization, as the railroads delivered the tides of change into and out of the shtetl. Garrett's book shows how a persecuted minority conceived of their transit experiences in ethno-cultural terms, as residents in ambivalent, displaced, and hostile territories, in and outside of train space. Yiddish travel writing produced an alternative, modern, and secular Jewish geography of suffering, a cultural commentary on the traumas of ethnic mobility, belonging, place, and security.

As Garrett contends, railway shock was embodied as a gendered, ethnic, and social assault in train space: the tormenting sounds of grating wheels on the tracks, screeching brakes and blaring whistles, the compartment's intimate dimensions and effects on social interaction and conversation, the representation of the self as an object in an industrial process, and finally, the difficulty in maintaining what was considered civilized behavior from unwanted and transgressive encounters. The response to modernity that

Yiddish writers telescoped through train transit is updated in Holocaust testimonies about the experience of interminable entrapment. Whereas Garrett discussed Yiddish literature as a space for reading identity construction and ethnic relations, Holocaust testimonies report on the destruction of those categories, and occasional resistance to that decline.

If, as Schivelbusch argued, nineteenth-century train travelers felt themselves and their bodies removed from a tactile experience of the landscape and the natural animal power of motion, then forced confinement reversed that disengagement. Freight car transit in the Holocaust resensualized passengers-as-victims to what had been desensualized by mechanized transit in the nineteenth century, namely, the disengagement from the landscape and from other travelers. Tense and volatile encounters in train space foregrounded the notion of embodied and mobile witnesses engaged in representational struggles to describe their journey experiences. Like the impact of nineteenth-century train transit on descriptions of intimacy, estrangement, and perception, the conditions of deportation trains “created their own spatiality, a spatiality that impacted on all forms of perception, bodily behaviours, and cognitive functions.”⁷² Cattle car transit provoked deportees to represent the spatiality of trains as disorientation in motion: the displacement of the scopic regime by acoustic and olfactory regimes of truth, and more intensely, the physical freight of other deportees.

Holocaust Trains as Railway Shock: David Boder and the Traumatic Inventory of Transit

An early archive that analyzed train experiences in the Holocaust was David Boder’s interviews with displaced persons in refugee camps in 1946.⁷³ His interviews raise many issues about narrative convention, speakability, and most important, the repression of transport shame in studies of Holocaust victims’ experiences.⁷⁴ Boder was not looking for explicit episodes of railway shock, but once articulated, they became an important marker of depersonalization and entrapment. In conducting these interviews, Boder was a self-conscious ethical interpreter, a secondary witness of the kind Michael Jackson described earlier. He solicited vivid and disturbing accounts on many aspects of the Holocaust, especially the interviewees’ transit experiences. Still displaced, they told Boder about their experiences in vocabulary that bore little resemblance to the rhetorical familiarity of “cattle car” transit of later postwar testimony.

Boder traveled from the United States to displaced persons (DPs) camps in the American Zone of postwar Europe in the summer of 1946. In the space of two months he interviewed 109 refugees, and over the course

of nine years with limited funding and academic interest in his project, managed to transcribe seventy of them into English. In addition to the transcribed interviews, Boder produced a “Traumatic Inventory”—his clinical assessment of the content of the interviews—which accompanied his “Topical Autobiographies of Displaced Peoples.”⁷⁵ The “Traumatic Inventory” is landmark and novel in its elucidation of deportation train journeys as “railway shock.” Boder frequently used the term “travel” as an indicator of the deportation journey, and he applied an empirical method to build a taxonomy of transit’s stresses. Boder also revealed himself, through his infrequent biographical introductions of interviewees and investigative questions, to be not only a facilitator of a multilingual canon of Holocaust voices. He was also its earliest formative interpreter, an ethical, astounded, and perplexed witness, often giving those reactions repeatedly in the course of an interview. He was aware of the monumental task he was undertaking in recording the magnitude of the stories of displaced persons, and also of his own interventionist role as an archivist of voice in preserving the spoken European-Jewish languages.⁷⁶ Indeed, it was the perplexity of English’s intrusion into interviews conducted in foreign tongues—German predominantly, but also Yiddish, Russian, Spanish, French and Polish—which he sought to preserve in the transcribed written text as a “peculiar verbal structure.”⁷⁷

In his analysis of language in *Topical Autobiographies*, Alan Rosen reads Boder’s shift from recording multilingual original voices to its printed monolingual English text as an exercise in archiving distortion.⁷⁸ My interpretation of Boder does not concentrate on the linguistic nuances and grammatical imperfections of a disrupted Holocaust voice as discussed by Rosen. Building from his analysis, however, I suggest that Boder’s insistence on the preservation of awkwardness is suggestive for an interpretation of transit captivity for four reasons, each of which reveals itself in exchanges between Boder and the interviewees, and particularly so in the examples of the difficult mediation of sense memory through the spoken, if not performed, word.

First, the transcriptions reveal how DPs spoke about, referred to, or were exasperated by, the demands of speaking about their journey experiences, evident in the sometimes combative and clarifying exchanges between Boder and his interviewees. Second, the disclosures in the interviews, preserved in their grammatical imperfections, including the transcription of silences and sometimes stupefied editorial interventions, reveals the spoken (and unspoken) word as the foundations of an experience that Boder believed to be “historically unprecedented” and “unique in occurrence.”⁷⁹ Third, Boder’s comprehension of the content of experiences was rendered in an emerging index of terms, such as “annihilation lager.” This index permits

an investigation of transit's effects before the words "Holocaust," "death camp," and "survivor" became common in the postwar lexicon of Nazi violence. Some of these words make an early appearance. For example, in discussing departures from the Warsaw Ghetto in January 1943, Hadassah Marcus makes a reference to what the word "Holocaust" meant to her. It was the powerlessness of the self:⁸⁰

Marcus: During all that time all the transports went to Treblinka.

Boder: Hm.

Marcus: In the year 1943, the 18th, the first /month/ ...

Boder: Yes?

Marcus: ... there was a great holocaust. They took all the shops away. Everything /was/ liquidated.

Boder: What does it mean, a holocaust?

Marcus: That there was ... nobody could save himself.

Finally, based on the content of the interviews, Boder created a psychological analysis of testimony's content. His anthropology of deportation train journeys isolated their impact as a fundamental rupture, commenting that "the experiences en route form the darkest memories of all those who were victims of this phase of Nazi depravity. Locked up in the crowded box cars normally used for transportation of cattle they made that fearful transition from the known to the unknown. That time was the beginning of the end of meaning to life as they had known it."⁸¹

Boder's analysis of the shifting pace and impact of Nazi policy on the everyday lives of his interviewees gives clear articulation to the genocidal intentions of Nazi deportation policy and its destructive impact much sooner than it was interpreted as such by historians and enshrined as a crime in the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 9 December 1948. Boder referred to the unmaking of the individual as "deculturation," the "gradual cutting down of a human being" through fitting him or her into the model of concentration and annihilation camps.⁸² Despite his extended focus on deportation, he surprisingly omits stating that these train journeys were a distinct contributor to deculturation. Deculturation emerges as an implicit genocidal method in its removal of the individual from an ethnic, biological and religious group, and social community. Deculturation terminates the conditions, environments, and stimuli that are critical to the continuity and regeneration of bonds of togetherness and identity.

Boder's analysis introduced categories that feature as an anatomy of the train journey's impact from the clinical appearance of the freight car to

deportees' unsuccessful adjustments to train space, as detailed in his itemization of the effects of Holocaust transit in the "Traumatic Inventory," of which there were 46 traumata, 116 interpretative expansions, and, in the index, an alphabetical roster of 377 items.⁸³ Those traumata relating to train transit, both cattle and freight cars,⁸⁴ included "bedding during travel," "bowel movements in trains," "dead bodies in travel," "deportation," "locked boxcars," "sanitation and travel," "sex separation on trains," "shelter in travel," "constriction of space in trains," and "toilets during travel." "Interpretative expansions" referred to sub-themes of a particular experience, based on deportees' attitudinal or physical responses.⁸⁵ For example, socio-economic displacement was evident in "the brutal and abrupt removal of a person from most environmental stimuli which have formed the conditioning framework of his everyday life."⁸⁶ The entry included the interpretative expansion of "relocation" to encompass eviction, compulsory evacuation, compulsory transfer of domicile and deportation to camps, but not the means of transportation or the destination.⁸⁷

In relation to displacement from one's community, for example, to and from ghettos, Boder made reference to the lack of recourse to law, and the new human milieu that emerged from "relocations," citing the "break-up of the family or ethnic group due to evacuation, deportation or flight."⁸⁸ His "Cultural-Affective" designation can be applied to multiple locations of persecution. In this designation he included reference to the creation of prolonged states of terror, and included "threats or conjectures of impending traumatization, such as the danger of being assigned to deportation," and in repeated scenes of "mass weeping and wailing (beyond family group) in public places" prior to separation.⁸⁹

Within the cultural-affective realm, Boder also paid attention to corporeal distress. His analysis recalled nineteenth-century anxieties concerning transgressive behavior in intimate spaces and violations specific to cattle car transit: "the abolition of traditions of decency and dignity by suspending the separation between the sexes and privacy for bodily care and processes of bowel movements."⁹⁰ Boder's item "Depersonalization" included the "ignominious treatment of the individual with the utmost disregard for his rights, standards and values."⁹¹ A feature of Nazi policy in general, its appearance in cattle car transit was expressed in descriptions of its violating actions of compression and degradation: people were "like cattle," (not simply in cattle cars), "driven," "shoved," and "not human."⁹²

Section V of the "Traumatic Inventory" concerned "Direct Bodily Violence," in which Boder included "death in travel by train" and "verbalized anguish caused by witnessing brutal acts perpetrated by prisoners on each other due to states of confusion or panic (such as in fights in overcrowded boxcars)."⁹³ The section on "Transportation" most explicitly

alludes to transit. The psychological ruin of deportees occurred, among other causes, from “travelling for days in overcrowded boxcars without facilities or room to sit down, wash, or lie down.” These intolerable conditions were exacerbated by no “toilet facilities in locked cars where men, women and children were locked in together” and in “the absence of regular stop-overs or adequate installations at stop-overs for bowel movements.”⁹⁴ Deportees’ experiences of the cattle car as a death site were further compounded by “the impossibility of removing the dead from the crowded boxcars for days,” and their “accumulation en route beyond the nearest stop.”⁹⁵

Boder interviewed the DPs from the position of the dispassionate, academic observer and psychologist of trauma, yet he was not entirely unaffected by their disclosures. Boder’s own interventions as both interviewer and listener made him directly complicit in the production of distorted voices. His reactions in the testimony bear witness to the limits of scientific methodology to absorb these extreme experiences. Like the deportees, he was engaged in a representational struggle. Unlike them, his was with the empirical aspirations of psychology and anthropology to explain the existential truth of the DPs. This tension was not resolved, but was arguably a core and binding testament to the project. Boder’s archive of interviews reveals frustrations, silences, edits, and a subliminal biography of Boder as a secondary witness to the tellability of the Holocaust.

A close reading of five testimonies that discuss excrement and urine trauma illuminates the olfactory intrusions, spatial assaults, and the tellability of transport shame that are the Holocaust’s version of modern railway shock. The tellability of transport trauma was particularly evident in Boder’s interviews with the following DPs: Alexander Gertner (26 August 1946, Geneva, Switzerland), Adolph Heisler (27 August 1946, Geneva, Switzerland), Jacob Schwarzfitter (31 August 1946, Tradate, Italy), Nechamah Epstein (31 August 31 1946, Tradate, Italy); and Benjmain Piskorz (1 September 1946, Tradate, Italy). Conducted over the space of one week, all five interviewees disclosed stories of transport shame. These differed in content and intensified through graphic descriptions and shock value, with the overflowing excrement and urine on deportees leaving its symbolic defilement on Boder and his vicarious entry into that space through an accruing knowledge of cattle car duress. The trauma of telling survives in Boder’s stunned replies, where he often asked DPs to repeat what they had just said. Boder used flexible interviewing methods, which included “tell all” and “episodic” emphases to economize on limited time, an approach which also undermined the ambition of his project to be a comprehensive oral chronicle. In his interview with Gertner, Boder insisted on full telling.⁹⁶

Boder: Where you have been when the war started and what happened to you. Make yourself comfortable and start telling.

Gertner: From the beginning.

Boder: Don't omit details.

Gertner: Yes?

Boder: We want to know everything that happened.

And so Gertner begins to disclose the evidence of his war trauma: experiences of ghettoization, cramped living conditions, and finally his selection for deportation. Although Boder seeks clarification on the method of transport, eventually the topic of the train journey's provisions and deprivations enters the conversation, for which Gertner's "you understand?" haunts Boder long after the exchange:

Gertner: You understand? We were taken right away to the wagons. There we already saw whole /many/ wagons were standing, maybe dozens /?/ of wagons. And the SS distribute /the people into/ the wagons. There was a superior group leader with a few SS officers. They counted up the /people for the/ wagons, and they did ... I went into the first wagon. We were counted off eighty people, and ... and we went into the wagon.

Boder: What kind of wagons were they?

Gertner: They were freight wagons ...

Boder: Yes.

Gertner: ... used for transportation of cattle.

Boder: A freight wagon.

Gertner: Freight wagon, freight wagons.

Boder: Yes.

Gertner: They were small wagons. We entered eighty, eighty-five people into one wagon, and we were locked in. They said, "Who is missing ... if one will be missing, then the whole wagon will be shot." So said the Hungarian gendarmerie. They said that.

Boder: Hm.

Gertner: And then someone was made the leader of the wagon. He should supervise.

Boder: A Jew?

Gertner: Also a Jew. There were only Jews there.

Boder: Yes.

Gertner: And we were locked in there. On Thursday at twelve o'clock ...

Boder: You were there with whom?

Gertner: I was ... by accident I was able to be with my ... with my relatives, /word not clear/ only with the aunt, because the uncle remained in the hospital. She alone—the others were thrown into another wagon. One couldn't choose.

Boder: Hm.

Gertner: We remained there with strangers, such from the same city, acquaintances [*sic*]. And eighty people in a wagon, a small wagon. For the whole wagon was ... was ... was allotted a jar of water, and a half a bread to each.

Boder: Hm.

Gertner: A small piece /?/ of black bread. This was for the whole journey, and we had nothing prepared /?/.

Boder: Were you told where you were being taken?

Gertner: We were told nothing. Absolutely nothing was said. The train started moving Thursday noon at twelve o'clock, and we went ...

Boder: Nu, a convenience ...

Gertner: There was nothing.

Boder: ... a toilet.

Gertner: There were in the wagons absolutely no toilets. Absolutely nothing. It was ... we went out /releaved [*sic*] ourselves / ... one ... it was ... impossible to tell.

Boder: Tell it ... how was it?

Gertner: We went out. We had containers or such. We poured it out through the window. One saw another ... we couldn't ... we took a dress, covered there a corner of the wagon and there. When one came out another went in. So in a line ...

Boder: Hm.

Gertner: We didn't have any water to wash one's self and such.

Boder: Hm. One made it on the /in English:/ floor ... /in German:/ on the floor?

Gertner: Right on the floor. The children screamed. They had no water, and the ... on the first day there was still water that had been given, and we could /get/ a little on the way. And then on the second day there was absolutely no water. The children—it was a pity—the children cried. The parents did not drink any water so that it should remain for the children.

Boder: Hm.

Gertner: So we journeyed for four days and four nights till ... till Sunday evening.

Boder: Yes. Where did you come to?

Gertner: Sunday evening we came to ... to Birkenau, to Auschwitz. This is near Auschwitz.

Boder: Yes.

Gertner: And so in the wagons was ... we thought we shall perish from thirst. There were terrible heat spells then, and ...

Boder: Just a moment. /Words not clear./

Gertner: Yes. It was terribly hot, and the wagons were closed ...

Boder: When was it? In June or May?

Gertner: June. The first of June.

Boder: The first of June. Nu?

Gertner: We couldn't stand it. We said, "If we go another night, then ..." We were all undressed, naked, only in the trousers, because of the heat. We arrived on the first of June. We arrived at ...

Boder: Nu?

Gertner: On the first of June we arrived in Auschwitz.

In this exchange, Boder is concerned with the duration of the train journey and its destination. The impact of the journey on deportees—the disposal of excrement through windows,⁹⁷ the management of the toilet queue, the rationing of water, and inconsolable children—makes difficult passage to words that Boder can add to his traumatic inventory. Notably, English intrudes in the exchange to verify the location where people excreted, although its expression itself as “one made it on the ... floor” is testament to the shame of uttering the memory of that action. In relation to depersonalization, the stripping of clothes in front of others to cope with the heat was, in one sense, a symbolic decline of the self, yet it was also a necessary survival strategy.

Boder's insistence on full disclosure continued in his interview with Adolph Heisler.⁹⁸ In relation to Heisler's telling of his deportation sequence, Boder is concerned, as in the Gertner interview, with clarifying the method of transport, its interior design, the number of deportees, and the duration of the journey.⁹⁹

Heisler: And on the next day in the morning we were not permitted to leave the barracks. We saw a great number of rr-cars arriving. And they packed in many /?/ people in those rr-cars, a hundred people to a wagon, without food, without anything, and we were transported ... where we are being transported to nobody knew. We were riding and riding, two weeks in the train. And then we arrived in Auschwitz. We did not know ...

Boder: Yes? Nu ...

Heisler: We did not know about any Auschwitz, about extermina- ... We saw people dressed in prisoner clothes, but we did not know what it meant. Only afterwards we found out the entire story.

Boder: All right. And so let us go back a little. You were put into rr-cars.

Heisler: Yes.

Boder: What kind of rr-cars were they?

Heisler: They were those freight cars for cattle.

Boder: Yes?

Heisler: Not passenger cars. And they were very crowded, without water. They did not supply any water. Food, there was none, because from home we had not been able any more to bring any food along. Because we had already been four weeks in that ghetto, everything had given out.

Boder: How many persons were you in one wagon?

Heisler: We were a hundred people in a wagon.

Boder: Were there any seats, any benches?

Heisler: No, no, just so. They had taken away the bundles. They had taken away everything. We lay on the bare boards.

Boder: Was your father and mother with you?

Heisler: Yes, still there in the rr-car, but ...

Boder: And the two brothers?

Heisler: Also. All of us were still together. Only in Auschwitz, when we arrived, were we all dispersed /separated/.

Boder: One moment. And so you were shoved into the rr-cars. Was there a toilet?

Heisler: Nothing, nothing.

Boder: So then, how did one do it when one wanted to go to ... to ... to relieve oneself or ...?

Heisler: We had a few pots, so we ...

Boder: Yes?

Heisler: ... made a toilet in the pots and poured it out.

Boder: Poured it out where?

Heisler: Out of the rr-car, outside /?/.

Boder: Were the rr-cars open?

Heisler: There was a small opening, through the window ...

Boder: Yes.

Heisler: ... and covered with wire.

Boder: Yes.

Heisler: We could barely put the hand through.

Boder: And how did the men and women use the pots?

Heisler: Well, everything was the same /did not matter/. People there did not look /care/ so much any more.

Boder: Nu. And so, how long did the journey last?

Heisler: Two weeks.

Boder: /With surprise:/ Two weeks?

Heisler: Yes.

Boder: Were the wagons opened every day?

Heisler: No.

Emptying the excrement pots involved a delicate negotiation of the barbed wire, while the shame of excreting in front of others eventually became routinized and inconsequential. Interestingly, Boder's perplexity manifests through the insertion of "surprise" into the transcription as evidence of his own reaction to the duration of train transit ("two weeks"), because this was fairly unusual. The duration provokes Boder to enquire about the society of transit, how people behaved and what they discussed. Heisler's inference that deportees were "already not normal" suggests that people were to some extent conditioned to sharing limited space in ghetto housing:

Boder: Yes. Nu, did all of you ... What did the people do all day in the rr-cars?

Heisler: Nothing. We were sitting. One said we are being taken there, and one said this will happen. We did not know ourselves. We were completely mixed up. We were already not normal from all the "story" that had happened.

Although the interviews of Gertner and Heisler demonstrated that deportees were forced to remove the excrement from the freight cars, the horror of its chronic invasion remained with Boder in his subsequent interviews. Three of the eight interviews conducted at Camp Tradate in Italy contain extensive disclosures about urine and its powerful status as both violator and rescuer of the deportees, particularly thirst-ridden children. These disclosures are repeated over two days in Boder's interviews with Schwarzfitter, Epstein, and Piskorz, the approach to which he stated was episodic, rather than to "take the whole story."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Boder's reoriented interview protocol at Tradate to extract the high points of trauma may have provided speaking and listening room for stories of the "shameful" in transport accounts to be more tellable and intense.¹⁰¹ The episodic, selective approach may have consequently impacted on the disclosure of these scenes of urine trauma after fifty-five interviews already conducted during August 1946. In his quest for the recuperation of traumatic content from the victims, Boder insisted that refugees not rehearse or refine their testimony prior to being interviewed.¹⁰²

A sense of rehearsal also implicates Boder as a perplexed interviewer in the questions he asks. These questions are shaped by his reactions to the graphic and violating stories of urine trauma, as someone who has heard the story before, but nevertheless exhibits authentic shock as a listening witness in relation to variations in its content. Of interest is how Boder attempts to negotiate familiarity and shock in the disclosure of transit truths, of being critical yet compassionately receptive to urine trauma as a unique disclosure.

Boder's perplexity about the witness's claims of urine trauma surfaces in his inquisitive yet disbelieving reaction to its first mention by Schwarzfitter and is repeated, perhaps obsessively so, in his questioning of it as a returning trauma scene in the testimonies of Epstein and Piskorz.

The following exchange between Schwarzfitter and Boder concentrates on Schwarzfitter's numerous camp evacuations during the months of German defeat, from February to April 1945.¹⁰³ Schwarzfitter tells Boder how, incredibly, he survived a six-week death march to Nordhausen, and then moves to his train journey by freight car to Bergen Belsen from a camp in the Harz. Train journeys in the final months of the war as part of evacuations and death marches to camps, and to points of ostensible German refuge, were often more shocking than those to the extermination camps because of the utter deprivation of material provisions, the climate, and the endurance of marathon foot journeys as part of these marches. Although camp inmates were under no illusions about the capacity of guards to inflict violence, Schwarzfitter presents this train confinement as worse than his previous experiences. As in the interviews with Gertner and Heisler, Boder is concerned with the design of freight cars used, as having "four wheels" per railroad car and being old "forty and eight" carriages.¹⁰⁴ Schwarzfitter insists on the authenticity of their appearance and thus capacity to compress human bodies:

Schwarzfitter: But they were fifteen-ton /cars/, so it was written on them, fifteen-ton cars. The entrance had to be perfectly clear. There stood a little cot with a hay sack /hay mattress/ on it, and there slept two SS men. And the capos were two professional criminals, Germans, who had to keep order. They were selected at the departure from the lager to be in charge of surveillance over us. Woe is to the man who falls under a master who was once a slave. With every order /?/?/ they were beating us /?/?/. We were ordered to embark, to sit down on the floor, and one had to sit down next to the other. But it was impossible to sit ... , to sit that way.

Boder: Hm ...

Schwarzfitter: When somebody dared to complain to a chief, then everybody was beaten. Nobody was spared among us. An incident once happened that, in spite of the fact that we have seen so many cases of death, but I shall never forget that moment when a Jew was beaten, somebody was beaten, and he started saying *Vida* /the prayer of those who are approaching death/.

Boder: Hm ... in the rr-car.

Schwarzfitter: In the rr-car. At that moment went through our mind the old memories. By that time we were not anymore human beings like we remembered from once at home, because all ... , all that belonged to the past. But at that moment a man ... , a man remembered /?/ that once there was a home, /where/ humans died like humans, and not under such conditions, and such circumstances. No food, no drink, were given to us. Not even swallowing /catching our breath?/, standing up was permitted. And so we remained for five days.

Boder: What does it mean? Why did they not permit to swallow?

Schwarzfitter: Nothing. One could not. They were beating, pushing one another. It was an impossibility to swallow /to breath?/. The thirst was so strong ...

Boder: The what? ... ?

Schwarzfitter: The thirst ...

Boder: The thirst ...

Schwarzfitter: The thirst, the thirst ...

Boder: The thirst ...

Schwarzfitter: The thirst /only now the word became understandable due to context/ was so strong that people drank their own urine.

Boder: Was that really so?

Schwarzfitter: That was really so. And people got sick of the so-called sickness of the rose /erysipelas/.

Boder: What is that?

Schwarzfitter: A rose ...

Boder: Tell it in Yiddish ... , Yes a rose ...

Schwarzfitter: Yes.

Boder: Oh!

Schwarzfitter: ... rose sickness. Very many. They had violent fever. Day in and day out; we were traveling /the train was in motion/ three, four to five hours a day. The rest of the time we were standing on sidings /?/, where we had to unload people who died. There happened to be in our rr-car stronger people ...

Boder's first encounter with urine trauma provoked him to seek confirmation, in Yiddish, of what he had just heard: "Was that really so?" The reconfirmation of these disclosures continued in Boder's second encounter with the shame of urine trauma in as many days with Nechamah Epstein, whose transit experience painfully details the effects of "dead bodies in travel." The following excerpt from his somewhat combative interview with Epstein highlights the effects of carrying dead bodies during transit, and of confinement as a discrete death space ("the real death began"), a site of deculturation that does the work of stripping deportees, literally and symbolically, of their humanity.¹⁰⁵

Epstein was deported from the Umschlagplatz in the Warsaw Ghetto and escaped from the train en route to Treblinka with her brother, who was shot and killed during the attempt. Important in the following exchange is not only the presence of the dead among the living. Also excruciating is the entangling of bodies, their heat and nakedness, in the weighted memory of Epstein's crushed body in the carriage:

Epstein: He said to walk in rows of five. We got into the rr-cars. Two hundred persons were packed into one rr-car. Riding in these wagons everyone saw death before the eyes at any instance. We lay one on top of the other. One pinched pieces from another. We were tearing pieces.

Boder: Why?

Epstein: Because everybody wanted to catch ... to save oneself. Everybody wanted to catch air. One lay suffocating on top of another.

Boder: Hm.

Epstein: We could do nothing to help ourselves. And then real death began.

Boder: In the rr-cars?

Epstein: In the rr-cars. After we had traveled for four hours, it became terribly hot. But so fast did the train travel that there was nothing /to do/ ... faster than an express.

Epstein: And we were in that rr-car a whole night. There had begun a great thirst. It became terribly hot. Everybody undressed nude.

Boder: Men and women?

Epstein: Men , ... no. What does completely naked mean? We undressed ... in the shirts we went around.

Boder: Nu?

Epstein: Men, women, children.

Boder: Hm.

Epstein: There were small children who began to cry terribly, "Water!" German guards sitting on top of the trains began to shoot inside:

Epstein: And they began to shoot inside. When they began to shoot inside, very many people fell /were killed/. I was sitting and looking how one gets /hit by/ a bullet, another one gets /hit by/ a bullet. I, too, expected to get hit in a moment.

Boder: Yes?

Epstein: And I saved myself by hiding under the dead. I lay down underneath the dead. The dead lay on top of me. The blood of the killed was flowing over me.

Boder: The what?

Epstein: Blood.

Boder: Yes.

Epstein: I was completely bespattered with blood.

Boder: Hm.

Epstein: There lay a little girl of four years. She was calling to me, "Give me a little bit of water. Save me." And I could do nothing. Mothers were giving the children urine to drink. You know what urine is?

Boder: Is it really true?

Epstein (screaming): I saw it. I did it myself, but I could not drink it. I could not stand it any more. The lips were burned from thirst.

Epstein: From the heat, perspiration /precipitation/ was pouring from the girders. This we ... one lifted the other one up. It was high up, and we licked /the moisture/ off the grinders [*sic*].

Boder: Hm.

Epstein: We traveled this way the whole night, and we were approaching ever closer to the real death. And so my mommie began to cry very much.

Boder: You were liking [*sic*] the perspiration from the cold ...

Epstein: Yes, from the cold girders.

Boder: Yes, from the ...

Epstein: There was nothing to drink.

In this exasperated exchange, Epstein portrays an unrelenting sensory onslaught, which rendered deportees powerless and vulnerable. These actions included the undressing of women, and the guards' killing of passengers, under whom Epstein becomes trapped, provoking allusions to the entwinement of bodies in gas chambers.¹⁰⁶ Boder's interventions in this exchange seek confirmation of the children's cries for water, for which urine is substituted: "is it really true?" This quest for reaffirmation is possibly a reference to his interview a day earlier with Schwarzfitter. Epstein seeks Boder's recognition in the extremity of what she has just said: "you know what urine is?" His disbelief provokes Epstein to claim a credible historical truth in her sight: "I saw it myself."

Epstein's brief testimony about urine trauma provokes speculation about self-representation and truth, particularly about how female deportees might represent themselves as confirming or violating gender expectations in the captive space of trains. In the representation of their responses to captivity, former deportees seem hesitant to go into explicit detail about what was experienced. If they did engage in activities in the train that they perceived as transgressive, testimonies provide an opportunity to recover the self from that space, and interpret their responses as consistent with constructions of femininity.

The urine trauma that Boder traced in his interviews is a disturbing example of disrupted gender behavior and its tellability. Descriptions of urine trauma are a stress for both interviewee and interviewer. Its telling reaches a distressing climax in Boder's interview with Benjamin Piskorz, conducted on the same day as Epstein's. In his interview, Piskorz described his deportation from the Umschlagplatz, presumably after the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto following the month-long uprising that began on 19 April 1943;¹⁰⁷

Piskorz: So they threw in also the dead people. In ... in the wagón I was still feeling very bad. And also during the ride I was terribly thirsty. So there was there an acquaintance, a comrade of mine whom I begged, from the terrible thirst, /that/ he should for me even ... nu ... I don't know how to say it, because ... urine.

Boder: Yes?

Piskorz: He made urine into my mouth.

Boder: How? Directly?

Piskorz: In the wagón, directly.

Boder: What does it mean, he made directly into ...

Piskorz: He made into my ... directly.

Boder: He urinated ...

Piskorz: Urinated.

Boder: From his ...

Piskorz: From his ... yes.

Boder: From his body?

Piskorz: Yes.

Boder: Into your mouth?

Piskorz: Straight into the mouth, because of the terrible thirst. This wasn't the first case, because all the people drank this way.

Boder: Hm.

Piskorz: And also ... the ... the ... the relief was for me very great, because the urine absorbed the heat of the tongue ... the heat of the tongue, and the tongue became ... the swelling of the tongue went down. I arrived ... sent out ... I was sent out to Treblinka. I have already mentioned before that this was one of the large extermination camps. In Treblinka a selection was made. They looked for people who could speak German. Having learned German at home, because I went to a trade school ...

Boder's perplexity is clear in his own lack of preparation for what he has just heard, despite accounts of urine trauma in other testimonies. His prompting of Piskorz to give utterance to his transgression is evident in Piskorz's shame of "I don't know how to say it," to which Boder replies, seeking clarification, "What does it mean ...". Piskorz's exchange with Boder suggests that the interviewee sought recognition for the transgression, an acknowledgment of the corporeal suffering and the intense throat pain of deportees. Piskorz's abrupt transition from depersonalization to survival at Treblinka through language marks the passage from one corporeal scene to another. From his conversations with refugees, Boder, too, entered this domain of struggle, as a listening witness previously exposed to stories of urine trauma yet unprepared for Piskorz's disclosures. His perplexity registers

in the preserved aura of his shock, enduring quite possibly a destabilization of the cognitive frameworks he initiated to retrieve the authentic, if not episodically isolated experience, in this instance. Boder sought clarification of the source of Piskorz's relief, "from his body." He wanted to be convinced of Piskorz's ingestion of urine. This truth would also reinforce what was, presumably for Boder, the shocking method of its direct delivery, a directness that was more appalling because of its frequent occurrence, which presumably included but remained untold as male-female deliveries, because "all people drank this way."

Boder's interviews highlight the frustrations of telling deep memory as an embodied experience. Deep memory is confined in time and on the body of transit, struggling to become a told testimony, thus complicating its social status as not only the topic of talk and understanding between teller and listener, but also of its place in the history of Holocaust train journeys. These examples from the Boder archive also permit speculation about how train journeys produced gendered behavior and zones of impact. In Holocaust testimonies, experiences of train confinement are told in ways that both secure and disrupt gender roles particularly in relation to choice, compliance, defiance, and compassion. Gendered zones of impact in the trains can be read through actions that motivated care and community, risk assessments relating to escape attempts, particularly scenes of heroism and utter desperation through jumping from trains, the desire to share provisions, and indifference to the suffering of others. Instances of female expression included protecting children; despair at the separation from family, husbands, and lovers; a concern with femininity, body image, and health; and violations of modesty, particularly in references to "going to the toilet." Numerous accounts of ingesting urine, or of mothers giving it to children, while seen as potentially disruptive, were also nurturing acts because of the journey's cruel deprivations, an indication of the environment rather than the ostensible immorality of the action.

If gendered zones of impact were one effect of train journeys, the stench of train space was surely its most universal, if not least interpretable, degradation. Stench was an instrument of defilement in many locations where deportees were located, confined, and forced to suffer. The olfactory assault of the camp world makes an appearance in "The Stench of Auschwitz."¹⁰⁸ Historians of the senses—Constance Classen, David Howes, Anthony Synnott—argued that excrement was associated with decay, and that in the concentration camps, victims' self image of their bodies and minds as morally contaminated was the product of physical inseparability from, and therefore identification with, excrement. The authors analyze other odors in the camp world, such as the burning of bodies in the crematoria, the smell of which would have polluted the air of nearby communities. In the camps,

as in train captivity, bursts of violence and noise could be contained, but smell could not. The minimal critical attention to the olfactory experiences of Holocaust victims is exemplary of the broader status of smell as the silent sense of modernity. Smell is perceived to threaten the “abstract and impersonal regime of modernity by virtue of its radical interiority, its boundary-transgressing propensities and its emotional potency.”¹⁰⁹ The olfactory dimension has particular resonance in the sensory ruptures of Holocaust train transit, where we can read excrement’s presence, expulsion and closeness, and occasionally, taste by deportees as an unquestionable marker of civilizational decay.

The neglected social place of olfactory truths is not isolated to interpretations of Holocaust experiences. In *Charting the Cultural History of the Senses*, Alain Corbin reviewed the relegation of smell in historical assessments of the value of the senses. He explored the divisional work of smell, considering the boundaries of the perceived and the unperceived. Corbin contended that the tension of interpreting the senses’ meaning was social: sight and hearing were rational senses, touch was a fundamental sense, and taste and smell were senses of survival, which revealed the ostensibly true nature of things.¹¹⁰ The senses have also been interpreted as predominantly Western and binary in construct, symbolizing nature and culture, savagery and innocence. The rise of smell as emitting social truths occurs under threat: “it is only when our faculty of smell is impaired for some reason that we begin to realize the essential role olfaction plays in our sense of well-being.”¹¹¹ As deportees often testified, stench was associated with putrefaction, moral corruption, and a regression to primality; stench’s lasting effect was a contaminated transit community. The smell of stench carried both actual and symbolic invasions that were more indelible than torments from other senses. Corbin contends that “it is from the sense of smell, rather than from the other senses, that we gain the fullest picture of the great dream of disinfection and of the new intolerances, of the implacable return of excrement, the cesspool epic.”¹¹² It was not only the emission of smells that was considered foul and disempowering, but also their inhalation, for this, too, confirmed the powerlessness of escape.

Anthony Synnott suggested that smell was the characteristic animal sense, and sight was the dominant human sense, with the development of “erect human posture resulting in the replacement of the nose by the eye.”¹¹³ In what ways are these episodes of intrusion, particularly of the presence of filth and excrement, told in terms of empirical, emotional, and bodily truths? What makes and unmakes body image in the train journeys? The denial of sanitation was a deliberate policy of Nazi officers and guards in degrading deportees, and evident in the attitudes of non-German auxiliary police guards who, on those stops in the journey, mercilessly exploited the

desperate condition of deportees by offering water and clean buckets in exchange for gold and valuables. Deportees were not only reminded of the captivity of the individual in the carriage, of the train carriage in the larger topography of countries held captive or collaborating with the Nazis, but of being held captive to one's psychology and body. The DRB charged the SS for "exceptional filth and damage" to the cars, which implied an expectation of that possibility during deportation journeys.¹¹⁴

The analysis of sensory assaults and their witnessing truths speak to larger issues about what can and cannot be said about daily life in the Holocaust by its interpreters and analysts. Despite the abundant appearance of excrement and urine trauma in testimonies, why are their impacts marginalized in studies of victims' experiences? What can be gained from focusing on them? In his study of Oskar Rosenfeld's notebooks from the Lodz Ghetto, Berel Lang suggests that there is evidence of a variety of discursive taboos on certain aspects of daily life in the Holocaust, such as sex, shit, and status, which consequently pass largely unspoken and unwritten in historiography. He writes that "these 'habits of the mind,' it seems, are sustained or renewed even for the writer committed to Realism in all its facticity and even under conditions as urgent and unmistakable as those constituting the Holocaust as an historical subject."¹¹⁵ The absence of reportage in historical representation betrays its appearance in memoirs, chronicles and testimonies. Lang asks:

Does it require more than an awareness of these rudimentary facts to imagine their effect on everyday life? The consequences extend farther than to the smell or stink: the shit together with the waste and dirt of other kinds—garbage, dead and sick bodies, the refuse of everyday life after anything with the slightest possibility of use had been appropriated and removed? What would be left? And how would its presence be marked?¹¹⁶

To what extent can the olfactory pollution of train journeys be evoked by wiping away the presence and smell of excrement, by the deodorization and cleansing of transit captivity as a footnote in historical accounts? Excrement's grimy presence and stink grounded deportees in abjection. Its recall in conventional language becomes a shameful narrative intervention, polluted by the very attempt of making it tellable. The social taboo on the act of excretion becomes reinforced in its telling and writing, in halting descriptions of it—"bowel movement," "relieve yourself," and "going to the toilet." These euphemisms sanitize the representation of excremental assault, and its memory as a symbolic staining of testimonies is more than simply evidence of the Nazi degradation of its victims. Excrement's stench and ubiquitous psychological terror also undermine the attempted maintenance of social and physical order in the carriage. Studies of embodiment

and olfactory sense witnessing among victims of genocide and displacement and in confined spaces such as prisons, camps, and in this case, cattle cars, have much to gain from cultural theory and studies of the body in crisis and abjection. As Anthony Synnott has discussed in his cultural study of the body and its senses, odors play roles in virtually all forms of social interaction: “Odour is many things: a boundary-marker, a status symbol, a distance-maintainer, an impression management technique ... Odours define the individual and the group, as do sight, sound and the other senses; and smell, like them, mediates social action.”¹¹⁷

Smell was not the only sense that defined the self and the mediation of social action. It was, however, subordinated to the visual as the primary truth in outcasting the racial other. The visual was the preferred sense of Enlightenment philosophers, such as Immanuel Kant, to explain the “different races of man.”¹¹⁸ Racial origins, difference, and hybridity were constructed in primarily visual terms in a color-coded taxonomy that indicated varieties of the human species each with apparently separate dispositions: the four “races of man” were Whites, Negroes, the Hunnic race, and the Hindu race.¹¹⁹ Eighteenth-century naturalists examined the racial traits of the Negro in visual terms, identifying variations in skin color, lips, hair, olfactory stench, and intellect. In the debate between monogenesis and polygenesis about the evolution of the human species, nineteenth-century naturalists expanded their categories of the “otherness” of the Negro to include sex organs, sexuality, civilization, and the fertility of hybrids.¹²⁰ The scopic regime was heavily implicated in the hierarchical construction of the ostensibly different races of men.¹²¹ Jews, too, were included in this panorama of otherness. The historical construction of Jews’ visual difference in European philosophy, literature, and culture was internalized by the turn to the body in the nineteenth-century racial discourses, particularly in medical and race hygiene, which extended difference to include smell and intellect.¹²² This sense of otherness was internalized by Holocaust deportees in the representation of their decline.

Pestilent and fermenting odors of excrement, urine and vomit in transit worked to unmake the body in transit captivity, the symbolic undoing of civilization’s order. Disturbingly, deportees described their body image, health, and hygiene in terms that were removed from the vocabulary of the human. The conditions of transit induced deportees to see their bodies in negative terms as propagated by Nazi anti-Semitism—they were “like cattle,” “like animals,” and “no longer human beings.” This regressive imaging was internalized in the senses, and extended to the smell of the self as “Other.”

In the search for a social place for the journey, testimonies of Holocaust transit deliver a disturbing conclusion: cattle car space becomes a symbolic displacement for the (unknown) gas chamber experience. By their very

survival, camp inmates testify to an experience of death in chambers that was not in the camps, but in the cattle cars. The bodily compression, the stench of suffering, and the unknowable outcome—these conditions are the unspeakable truths of train journeys that for many historians and survivors are resistant to understanding and to social discourse. Unspeakability perpetuates its own taboos of tellability, as indicated by Ruth Klüger's recollection of her transport from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz:

People who have experienced fear of death in cramped quarters have a bridge to understanding the kind of transport I have been describing. As I believe myself to have some understanding of dying in gas chambers from having lived through such a transport. Europeans who have sat in air-raid shelters have something in common with me that Americans don't. Isn't all reflection about the human condition (or conditions) a process of deducing from ourselves to others? What tools are left if we don't compare?¹²³

For Klüger, and many other deportees, transit captivity was a mobile chamber that anticipated, if not appropriated, features of the principal process of killing in camps: forced entry, nakedness and invasion, the crushing and suffocation of bodies, the explosion of hope, and death.

The comparison of experiences of cattle car captivity to a gas chamber death is at first glance curious, because the latter remains an unknown horror for there were no survivors, notwithstanding the Sonderkommando witnesses who assisted in the camps' darkest labors. Yet the comparison is not as disturbing as it may sound given that many of testimonies of transit are a post hoc interpretation. Rather the comparison is a telling comment about why survivors as writers, tellers, and testifiers of transit have felt the need to make that appeal in the first place. The comparison is a critique of the marginalization of the cattle car "death" and its battle to find life in the historiography of the Holocaust. Survivors of train journeys struggled to find social validation for transit's corporeal shock once the horrible reality of the gas chambers in the camps was exposed. This reality was the basis to representations of the camps' horror as the core human geography of the Holocaust, and all other experiences outside of it as peripheral.

The effort involved in breaking discursive taboos on what can be said and written about the daily life of victims is not only the responsibility of the witnesses, but also of interpreters, however extreme or disruptive these taboos might pose to Holocaust historiography. Yet some scholars are not convinced of testimony's possibility for integration, preferring to preserve its existential uniqueness. Paul Ricoeur has discussed the status of testimony in *Memory, History, Forgetting*. He questions whether Holocaust testimony is an exception to the historiographical process: "To be received, a

testimony must be appropriated, that is, divested as much as possible of the absolute foreignness that horror engenders. This drastic condition is not satisfied in the case of survivors' testimonies."¹²⁴ With this quote, Ricoeur positions extreme testimony outside of history, and extends on Michael Jackson's positioning of the listener or reader as oppressed by exposure to victims' experiences of trauma. What happens if the listener or reader is the interpreter charged with making sense of suffering? Indeed, the embodied experience of deep memory continues to be for some scholars a focal point of representation in crisis. Testimony becomes excessive, ruptured by the experiences imposed on it by the speaker or writer. It is such moments of experiential rupture, argues Dan Stone, that make the Holocaust difficult to integrate into conventional historiography.¹²⁵ Stone's assertion, however, requires clarification. Although the historical causes of the Holocaust are interpretable to scholars, it is the witness's deep memory as an embodied, subjective experience—and its unpredictable return as disturbing flashes—that remain the undoing of that history.

Testimony's work in undoing history is not necessarily a negative outcome. For the standards by which the emotional, combative testimony of acoustic, sensory, and embodied traumas can be assessed have yet to be determined or agreed upon. Indeed it is highly questionable that these standards should seek consensus given testimony's personal pain, suffering, and cultural specificity. The testimony of cattle car transit—as the told story of deep memory's body traumas—promotes a rethinking of the form and intention of Holocaust histories that can or should be written, the methodological approaches demanded by that testimony, and the role of the sensory witness in that process.

Extreme experiences call for an extreme interpretive approach. David Boder tried to place the content of DPs' interviews in a traumatic inventory, but he struggled with containment of the surfeit, and the extraction of the unsaid. His was the first project to engage with Holocaust railway shock in its extreme, unrelenting impact, and he developed an innovative, interdisciplinary methodology that took him beyond historical cognition. Boder recognized that with testimonies of deportation, survivors revealed a pain and "larger truth" than the facts of history could provide.¹²⁶

Notes

1. Michael Jackson, "The Prose of Suffering and the Practice of Silence," *Spiritus* 4, no. 1 (2004): 54.
2. Jackson, "Prose of Suffering," 54.
3. *Ibid.*, 55.
4. Santanu Das discusses "slimescapes" in the trenches as a theme in World War I literature. See Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
5. Todd Presner, *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 29. For a study of travel in Germany as cultural memory, see Nils Roemer, "The City of Worms in Modern Jewish Traveling Cultures of Remembrance," *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 3 (2005): 67–91. In a wider context, Jacob Borut has examined the continuity thesis about anti-Semitism in German history through his study of segregationist tourist facilities against Jews during the Weimar period. See Jacob Borut, "Antisemitism in Tourist Facilities in Weimar Germany," *Yad Vashem Studies*, XXX (2002): 1–42. On tourism in the Third Reich, see Shelley Baranowski, *Strength through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
6. On literary representability, see recent works including Garbarini, *Numbered Days* and Zoë Vania Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). On eras of witnessing, see Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, trans. Jared Stark (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), and Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith, *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004).
7. Levi, *If This Is a Man/The Truce*, and Levi, *Drowned and the Saved*.
8. Froma I. Zeitlin, "The Vicarious Witness: Belated Memory and Authorial Presence in Recent Holocaust Literature," *History & Memory* 10, no. 2 (1998): 5–42.
9. Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
10. Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999).
11. *Ibid.*, 17.
12. *Ibid.*
13. See Dominick LaCapra, "Approaching Limits Events: Siting Agamben," in *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the Holocaust*, ed. Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 283. See also J.M. Bernstein, "Bare Life, Bearing Witness: Auschwitz and the Pornography of Horror," *Parallax* 10, no. 1 (2004): 2–16, and Nicholas Chare, "The Gap in Context: Giorgio Agamben's Remnants of Auschwitz," *Cultural Critique* 64 (Fall 2006): 40–68.
14. Jelica Sumic-Riha, "Testimony and the Real: Testimony between the Impossibility and Obligation," *Parallax* 10 no. 1 (2004): 19.
15. *Ibid.*, 17.
16. Geoffrey Hartman, *Scars of the Spirit: The Struggle Against Inauthenticity* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 92. Hartman also wrote about ethics, response and address in "Learning from Survivors: The Yale Testimony Project," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 9, no. 2 (1995): 192–207.
17. Anne Cubilić, *Women Witnessing Terror: Testimony and the Cultural Politics of Human Rights* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 3.
18. James Hatley, *Suffering Witness: The Quandary of Responsibility after the Irreparable* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 3. On the ethics of witnessing

- testimony, see Claudia Eppert, "Remembering Obligation: Witnessing Testimonies of Historical Trauma" in *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning and Ethics*, ed. Roger I. Simon (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 50–64. For a selective reading of contemporary responses to trauma, or an apparent lack of them, see Carolyn J. Dean, *The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004). An insightful reading on spectatorship, empathy, and suffering is Luc Boltanski, *Distastful Suffering: Media, Morality and Politics*, trans. Graham Burchell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
19. Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer, *Between Witness and Testimony: The Holocaust and the Limits of Representation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 52.
 20. Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982), 58.
 21. Cinema was one of the socially acceptable arts, yet scholars have mainly given attention to the visual rather than auditory dimensions of its experience. In his study of classical music in the New German cinema of the 1970s and 1980s, Roger Hillman has made a plea for acoustic regimes to balance the cultural specificity of scopic regimes. See Hillman, *Unsettling Scores: German Film, Music, and Ideology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).
 22. Anthony Synnott, *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self and Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 208.
 23. Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 543.
 24. Synnott, *Body Social*, 219.
 25. *Ibid.*, 132.
 26. David Howes, "Introduction," in *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, ed. David Howes (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005), 7.
 27. Ernst van Alphen, *Art in Mind: How Contemporary Images Shape Thought* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 164. See also his "Caught by Images: Visual Imprints in Holocaust Testimonies," *Journal of Visual Culture* 1, no. 2 (2002): 205–21.
 28. Van Alphen, *Art in Mind*, 165.
 29. *Ibid.*, 168.
 30. *Ibid.*, 169.
 31. *Ibid.*, 176.
 32. Charlotte Delbo, *Days and Memory*, trans. R. Lamont (Marlboro, VT: Marlboro Press, 2001), 1.
 33. *Ibid.*
 34. *Ibid.*, 3.
 35. *Ibid.*
 36. *Ibid.*
 37. Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 3.
 38. Rose Yalow Kamel, "Written on the Body: Narrative Re-Presentation in Charlotte Delbo's *Auschwitz and After*," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 14, no. 1 (2000): 65–82.
 39. Roberta Culbertson, "Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Recounting Trauma, Re-Establishing the Self," *New Literary History* 26, no. 1 (2005): 169.
 40. *Ibid.*, 170.
 41. *Ibid.*, 178.
 42. Presner, *Mobile Modernity*, 3.

43. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. A. Hollo (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 27.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*, 25.
46. *Ibid.*, 44.
47. *Ibid.*, *Railway Journey*, 58. On cultural approaches to writing railway history, see Michael Freeman, "The Railway as Cultural Metaphor 'What Kind of Railway History?' Revisited," *Journal of Transport History* 20, no. 2 (1999): 160–67.
48. Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 66.
49. *Ibid.*, 43.
50. Jonathan Boyarin, "Space, Time and the Politics of Memory," in *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Timespace*, ed. Jonathan Boyarin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 13.
51. Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 13.
52. *Ibid.*, 120.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Max Nordau, quoted in Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 124.
55. For a reading of railway shock in Germany, see Andreas Killen, *Berlin Electropolis: Shock, Nerves, and German Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). See particularly chapter three, "Railway Accidents, Social Insurance, and the Pathogenesis of Mass Nervousness, 1889–1914."
56. Perceptual paradigms have been explored in reference to trains and cinema as icons of modernity in the nineteenth century. For a companion to Schivelbusch, see Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997). For an analysis of pre-nineteenth-century transit, see Tzvetan Todorov, "The Journey and Its Narratives," in *Transports: Travel, Pleasure, and Imaginative Geography, 1600–1830*, ed. Chloe Chard and Helen Langdon (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 287–98.
57. Robert Jütte, *A History of the Senses: From Antiquity to Cyberspace*, trans. James Lynn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 183.
58. Alain Corbin, *The Foul & the Fragrant: Odour and the Social Imagination* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 21.
59. De Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 111.
60. *Ibid.*
61. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, 130. Zygmunt Bauman has discussed the process of Jewish assimilation into Western European societies in the early nineteenth century as one of exit visas and entry tickets. Conversion to Christianity—as in the case of Jewish writer Heinrich Heine—was for Bauman, Heine's entry ticket to the modern world. Zygmunt Bauman, "Exit Visas and Entry Tickets: Paradoxes of Jewish Assimilation," *Telos* 77 (Fall 1988): 45–78.
62. For an insightful reading of transit in Freud's "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" and "Moses and Monotheism," see Cathy Caruth's "Traumatic Departures: Survival and History in Freud," in *Trauma and Self*, ed. Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996). She contends that these two works, when read together, "represent Freud's formulation of trauma as a theory of the peculiar incomprehensibility of human survival" (30). On Freud and travel, see Dennis Porter, *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), and "Trauma and Trains: The Testing Ground of Masculinity," in Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*.

63. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, 125.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*, 126.
67. *Ibid.*, 127.
68. John Murray Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity* (New York: Delta, 1974), 40.
69. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, 127.
70. On responses to transit in Hebrew, see Ezrahi, *Booking Passage*.
71. See Leah Garrett, *Journeys Beyond the Pale: Yiddish Travel Writing in the Modern World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), and Garrett, "Trains and Train Travel in Modern Yiddish Literature," *Jewish Social Studies* 7 no. 2 (2001): 67–88.
72. Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 13.
73. These interviews are available at "Voices of the Holocaust" at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) Web site, <http://voices.iit.edu>. I provide individual references when each interview is introduced.
74. On a related theme to my study of transit, Andrea Reiter addresses the restrictions that genre place on the representation of extreme experiences in *Narrating the Holocaust* (London and New York: Continuum, 2000).
75. *Topical Autobiographies* was the first published book of oral documentation of Holocaust testimony in English. Donald Niewyk also published edited excerpts of thirty-six interviews in *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival*. For a contextualization of Holocaust testimony in the immediate postwar years, of which Boder's project was ultimately a part, see Henry Greenspan, for example, "The Awakening of Memory: Survivor Testimony in the First Years after the Holocaust, and Today," Occasional Paper, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001; "An Immediate and Violent Impulse: Holocaust Survivor Testimony in the First Years after the Liberation," in *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, vol. III, ed. John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 108–116, and "Imagining Survivors: Testimony and the Rise of Consciousness," in *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, ed. Hilene Flanzbaum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 45–67.
76. Boder wanted to remedy what he perceived as an emerging disparity between the abundance of visual material collected on war and liberation and the meagerness of first-hand auditory material on the subject. See "Addenda," *Topical Autobiographies*, vol. 26, 2-3161.
77. Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, xiv. Donald Niewyk did not preserve their original imperfections. See Niewyk, ed., *Fresh Wounds*, 6.
78. Rosen, *Sounds of Defiance*, 32.
79. Boder, "Addenda," *Topical Autobiographies*, vol. 26, 2-3161.
80. Boder interview with Hadassah Marcus, 13 September 1946. She was in hiding in a ghetto bunker, discovered just before the beginning of the April 1943 uprising, and deported to Majdanek. She told Boder that thirty-nine people suffocated during her journey, which possibly motivated her to jump from the moving train: "People were fighting to get out, to get out not for the sake of living, but at least to perish in the air." Available at "Voices of the Holocaust" http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=marcu&text=_t.html.
81. Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, xvii.
82. Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, xix. Boder makes an early claim on "deculturation" during deportations as a method of genocide when read through Article 2 of the Genocide

- Convention, particularly items (b): Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; and (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group. Boder's concept of "deculturation" also anticipates sociologist Orlando Patterson's coining of the phrase "social death" to describe a person's initiation into slavery. Patterson says that a person is violently uprooted from their milieu and desocialized and depersonalized in a process of negation. See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 38. Marion Kaplan applied the paradigm of "social death" to Jews in Germany during the 1930s in *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). See also Claudia Card, "Genocide and Social Death," *Hypatia* 18, no. 1 (2003): 63–79.
83. David P. Boder, *Traumatic Inventory for the Assessment and Evaluation of Interviews with Displaced Persons: A Contribution to the Methodology of Content Analysis and Psycho-Sociological Appraisal of Distress Situations*. This laboratory manual was a supplement to David P. Boder, "The Impact of Catastrophe: I: Assessment and Evaluation," *Journal of Psychology* 38, no. 1 (1954): 3–50. See the accompanying explanatory note in *Topical Autobiographies*, vol. 10, 3151.
 84. Of note here is Boder's interview with Jack Matzner from 26 September 1946. In this interview Boder appears more confident in clarifying what he has learned about the journeys from deportees. He questions Matzner's certainty about the number of people in his carriage (eighty-one) and how that figure was arrived at considering most other deportees provide estimates of what it felt like to have seventy to one hundred deportees. He also questions the type of freight car used, as "cattle car," "freight car," or the "French forty and eight cars." In attempting to correct the emerging image of transport, Boder writes in parentheses: "What the D.P.'s called cattle cars were in fact freight cars, closed box cars, also used for the transport of cattle." See Boder's interview with Jack Matzner, available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=matzn&ext=_t.html. Boder also tries to clarify the difference between "normal" and "abnormal" cattle cars in his interview with Helene Tichauer, who claimed that "abnormal" cattle cars were those without roofs. Tichauer was transported in an all-female transport of single women aged up to forty-five to Auschwitz from Slovakia, in an action that promised relocation for work in the fields of North Slovakia. She conveyed to Boder a sense of the direction (Poland), but not of the destination. See Boder's interview with Helene Tichauer, available at "Voices of the Holocaust," http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=tisch&ext=_t.html.
 85. Boder, *Traumatic Inventory*, i-3141.
 86. *Ibid.*, 1-3142, Item 1.
 87. *Ibid.*
 88. *Ibid.*, 2-3143, Item 4.
 89. *Ibid.*, 3-3144, Item 9.
 90. *Ibid.*, 3-3144, Item 10.
 91. *Ibid.*, 4-3145, Item 11.
 92. *Ibid.*, 1-3145, Item 11.
 93. *Ibid.*, 8-3149, Item 34.
 94. *Ibid.*, 9-3150 (Item 42); 10-3151 (Item 43); 10-3151 (Item 44).
 95. *Ibid.*, 10-3151, Item 44.
 96. Boder interview with Alexander Gertner, Spools 77, 78, and 79, Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August 1946, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=gertn&ext=_t.html.

97. On the disposal of excrement through the carriage windows or openings, see also Boder's interview with Yola (Jetta) Gross, 3 August 1946. Gross was not a forthcoming witness. She endured a three-day journey from Czechoslovakia to Auschwitz from 15 to 18 May 1944, but the exchange about the disposal of excrement does not appear to be emphasized by Boder in comparison to his interviews with Gertner and Heisler. Available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=gross&text=_t.html.
98. Boder interview with Adolph Heisler, 27 August 1946, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=heisl&text=_t.html.
99. In Boder's interviews, the abbreviation "rr-cars" refers to "railroad cars."
100. For another example of the episodic approach, see Boder's interview with Bernard Warsager conducted on 1 September 1946, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=warsa&text=_t.html.
101. I am thankful for Alan Rosen's insight on this point.
102. Boder complains in one testimony that "the tone of the story sounds in places somewhat pathetic. He possibly has told it before, at least in parts. He may have rehearsed it by himself, since after I stayed in a place for a day the people knew that they would be interviewed and some of them may have done some 'self-rehearsing.'" See interview with Ludwig Hamburger, 26 August 1946, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=hambu&text=_t.html.
103. Boder interview with Jacob Schwarzfitter, 31 August 1946, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=schwa&text=_t.html.
104. The reference to "forty and eight" carriages originated with the French military during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–1871 and the capacity of train boxcars to transport forty human beings or eight horses. The designation persisted in descriptions of the suffocating transport of not only Jews during wartime, but also prisoners of war.
105. Boder interview with Nechamah Epstein, 31 August 31 1945, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=epste&text=_t.html.
106. On the theme of entanglement, see Boder's interview with Hadassah Marcus, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=marcu&text=_t.html.
107. Boder interview with Benjamin Piskorz, 1 September 1946, available at http://voices.iit.edu/frames.asp?path=Interviews/&page=pisko&text=_t.html.
108. Constance Classen, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 172.
109. *Ibid.*, 5.
110. Alain Corbin, "Charting the Cultural History of the Senses," in *Empire of the Senses*, ed. Howes, 136.
111. Classen, Howes and Synnott, *Aroma*, 1.
112. Corbin, *The Foul & the Fragrant*, 231.
113. Synnott, *Body Social*, 185.
114. Hilberg, "German Railroads/Jewish Souls," 530.
115. Berel Lang, "Oskar Rosenfeld and the Realism of Holocaust-History: On Sex, Shit and Status," *History and Theory* 43, no. 2 (2004): 285.
116. Lang, "Oskar Rosenfeld and the Realism of Holocaust-History," 286.
117. Synnott, *Body Social*, 183. See also Annick Le Guérec, *Scent: The Essential and Mysterious Powers of Smell* (New York: Kodansha America, 1994).
118. See Immanuel Kant, "On the Different Races of Men," in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997): 38–48.
119. *Ibid.*, 41.
120. Joseph L. Graves, Jr., *The Emperor's New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 39, 44.

121. On the topic of the scopie regime and racialized, enslaved voices of African-Americans in the nineteenth century, see Jeannine DeLombard, "Eye-Witness to the Cruelty: Southern Violence and Northern Testimony in Frederick Douglass's 1845 Narrative," *American Literature* 73, no. 2 (2001): 245–75.
122. Sander L. Gilman, *The Jews' Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991) is a good introduction to the construction of otherness.
123. Klüger, *Still Alive*, 92
124. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 176.
125. Dan Stone, "Holocaust Testimony and the Challenge to the Philosophy of History," *Social Theory after the Holocaust*, ed. Robert Fine and Charles Turner (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 223.
126. Michael Jackson makes reference to the "larger truth" of personal pain that James Baldwin raised in a seven-hour conversation with anthropologist Margaret Mead. See Jackson, "Prose of Suffering," 54.