

This volume brings together research theses produced by alumni of the Weiss Livnat International MA Program in Holocaust Studies at the University of Haifa. The collection of theses reflects the full breadth of the field, from intimate microhistories of camps and ghettos to sweeping questions of memory, identity, and commemoration; from acts of rescue and resistance to the experiences of perpetrators, bystanders, and specialized communities. Together, they stand as a testament to the enduring importance of Holocaust research and the scholars committed to carrying it forward.

התכנית הבינלאומית ע"ש ויס לבנת לתואר שני בלימודי שואה
The Weiss Livnat International MA
Program in Holocaust Studies
برنامج فايس-לבנת لدراسات الهولوكوست الدولية
אוניברסיטת חיפה UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA



Weiss Livnat International MA Program in Holocaust Studies ● THESES COLLECTION

THE WEISS LIVNAT
INTERNATIONAL MA PROGRAM
IN HOLOCAUST STUDIES

THESES COLLECTION



The Weiss Livnat International MA Program in Holocaust Studies

Theses Collection

The Weiss Livnat International MA Program in Holocaust Studies

University of Haifa

Theses Collection

Editor: Yoav Yaron

Language Editor: Sharon Singer

Design: Pardes Publishing House

Cover image: Henryk Beck, no title, June 28, 1941, mixed technique on paper, 9,6 x 13,3 cm, GBL-S-1094, collection of the Stanistaw Konopka Central Medical Library. Courtesy of the Stanistaw Konopka Central Medical Library.

Printed by the University of Haifa Press

August 2026

התכנית הבינלאומית ע"ש ויס לבנת לתואר שני בלימודי שואה
The Weiss Livnat International MA
Program in Holocaust Studies
برنامج فايس-לבנת لدراسات الهولوكوست الدولية
אוניברסיטת חיפה UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA



Table of Contents

.....

INTRODUCTION.	7
-----------------------	---

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	9
----------------------------	---

CAMPS & GHETTOS.	11
--------------------------	----

1. Aline Pennewaard.	13
2. Ronnen Harran.	17
3. Devra Katz	21
4. Rotem Taitler	23
5. Coos Wever.	25
6. Rivka Baum	27
7. Ricki (Birnbaum) Prince	29
8. Eli Mikulinser	31

MEMORY & COMMEMORATION	33
----------------------------------	----

9. Shelby E. Weltz	35
10. Gabriel Mayer	37
11. Lisa Krebs	39
12. Amira Mintz-Morgenthau.	41
13. Naomi Schuster	43
14. Margarita Pedchenko	45
15. Jason Hall	47
16. Miriam E. Frenkel.	49

RESCUE & RESISTANCE 51

- 17. Noa Gidron 53
- 18. Nurit Grossman 55
- 19. Indra Wussow 57

CULTURAL & ARTISTIC EXPRESSION 59

- 20. Leah Hansen 61
- 21. Hannah Wilson 63
- 22. Anat Leviteh Weiner. 65
- 23. Diana Schuemann. 67
- 24. Ella Falldorf 69
- 25. Meredith Scott 71
- 26. Klara Jackl. 73

DOCUMENTATION & TESTIMONIES 75

- 27. Simon Goldberg. 77
- 28. Natali Beige 79
- 29. Lani Lederer Berman 81
- 30. Noam Rachmilevitch 85
- 31. Lisa Anne Storer. 89
- 32. Eleftheria Koukoura 91

ANTISEMITISM & PERSECUTION 93

- 33. Monika Hübscher 95
- 34. Dany Melkonowicki. 97
- 35. Shannon E. Quigley. 99
- 36. Inxhi Brisku 101

IDENTITY & SURVIVAL 103

37. Ariella Esterson	105
38. Nannie Beekman-Braunstein	107
39. Tovit Schultz Granoff	111
40. Noah Krassman	113

BYSTANDERS & PERPETRATORS 115

41. Audrie Chomsky	117
42. Joanna Kopacka	119
43. Ronit Roth-Hanania	121
44. Sam ter Welle	123

SPECIALIZED GROUPS & COMMUNITIES 125

45. Mallory Needleman	127
46. Jovana Cvetićanin	129
47. Pam Taylor	131
48. Shulamit Rosinsky.	133

Introduction

.....

This volume presents a collection of research theses submitted by alumni of the Weiss Livnat International MA Program in Holocaust Studies at the University of Haifa. The program offers a multidisciplinary curriculum that draws on history, anthropology, psychology, education, the arts, and more.

The theses were authored by graduate students from across the globe and supervised by scholars from Israel and abroad. They span a wide range of topics, methodologies, and geographic contexts – from the camps and ghettos of occupied Europe to questions of memory, identity, testimony, and commemoration that continue to shape the field today. In their breadth and diversity, these works reflect the program's core conviction that the Holocaust must be studied from multiple perspectives and across disciplinary boundaries.

For each thesis, we have included the abstract and a QR code linking to the full text, available digitally through the University of Haifa Library (unless otherwise noted, all theses were submitted in English and are accessible with open access, with the authors' permission). The year of submission and the name(s) of the supervisor(s) also accompany each entry.

The collection is organized into nine thematic categories: Camps and Ghettos, Memory and Commemoration, Rescue and Resistance, Cultural and Artistic Expression, Documentation and Testimonies, Antisemitism and Persecution, Identity and Survival, Bystanders and Perpetrators, and Specialized Groups and Communities. Some theses could reasonably appear in more than one category; where there was ambiguity, we sought

to identify the primary focus of each work – a process aided in part by AI tools.

Taken together, these theses constitute a significant contribution to Holocaust research and to the ongoing effort to preserve and transmit its memory to future generations.

Prof. Arie Kochavi

Founder & Head of the Program

Anat Weiner

Program Director

Yoav Yaron

Volume Editor, Managing Editor of the Journal of Holocaust Research

Acknowledgements

.....

We would like to express our appreciation to Prof. Hagit Lavsky, Prof. Dan Michman and Prof. Stefan Ihrig who devoted careful attention to reading and evaluating every submission.

We owe much gratitude to Doron Livnat, Honorary Doctor of the University of Haifa and Mrs. Marianne Livnat, whose generosity, unwavering commitment, and longstanding support have made this program possible and enabled the publication of this collection of theses.

Camps & Ghettos

.....

1. Aline Pennewaard

Behind the Lists: A Close Analysis of Three Transports from the Netherlands to 'the East', 1942-1943

2014



In this MA thesis, three transport lists from the Netherlands are analyzed in order to determine a pattern in which the Nazis deported the Dutch Jews: the first transport on July 15, 1942; the first transport to Sobibór on March 2, 1943, and the last transport of that year, on November 16, 1943. We knew approximately in what general order the Nazis deported the Jews: starting with the poor ones and ending with the richer ones who could afford to buy themselves protection to prevent their deportation earlier on with the proletariat. We have reconstructed a lot already, but the little day-to-day facts that are also important when one wants to make a reconstruction, are becoming much more visible by looking at the individual transport lists, one by one.

Throughout the years, some works have been written on a few of the 102 transports that left Holland between July 1942 and September 1944, like the booklets the Red Cross published after the war about the people in the transports and their fate. Jules Schelvis, a Holocaust survivor himself, wrote an immense reference work about Sobibór in the 1990s.

The transport lists were used for the book *In memoriam l'zecher* (1995), which contains all the names of the 104,000 Dutch Jews who didn't return from the concentration camps. But after that, the lists weren't subject to any kind of research anymore, until Guus Luijters started with the research

for his book *In memoriam* (2012) in 2009, for which I was responsible for the image collecting and editing. In this book, Luijters memorialized all the Jewish, Roma and Sinti children that were murdered during the *Shoah*.

Besides almost 3,000 photos of children in the book, he gives some details about the 102 transports: how many people were on the train, how many of them were children, how many survivors did a certain transport have? Luijters also found sources from survivors: biographies and testimonies. Some of them I used in this thesis as well.

Besides this, the 102 transport lists have never been studied together as a whole. Due to the limited volume requested for an MA thesis, I was forced to make a selection, and I chose to analyze three transports. On top of that, I also wanted to examine what had happened to the transports after they left Westerbork: What was it like on the train? What happened after the arrival of a certain transport at its destination? Were there any survivors at the end of the war? How did they manage to survive?

After analysis, it turned out that the number of deportees for each transport was different than previously assumed. Some people were mentioned twice on the list. Others were taken off the list last minute, but their names were never removed. Also, the number of survivors turned out to be higher than assumed until now. From the first transport, ten people returned instead of eight, and from the last transport, 18 people returned instead of 16. This means, that indiscriminately repeating numbers off of lists – thinking authorities and organizations are always correct – is not accurate: the differences may be marginal, they are however important, especially because in many cases, mainly in Eastern Europe, we have to guess about the number of victims. Therefore, it is important that we establish the correct data wherever it is possible.

It also turned out that Jews were still living in Amsterdam after the big round-up of September 29, 1943. It was always assumed that with this final round-up, Jewish life outside camps and prisons in Holland

ended. This turned out to be incorrect: since a relatively high number of Jewish Council employees were brought into Westerbork on October 28, 1943 and the beginning of November, it's safe to conclude that certain departments of the Jewish Council apparently continued to be operative after September 29, 1943. This interesting conclusion is certainly well worth the effort to further research.

Supervisors:

Prof. Dan Michman

Prof. Arie Kochavi

2. Ronnen Harran

The Role of the Jewish Women in the 1944 Sonderkommando Uprising in Birkenau

2015



Thesis submitted in Hebrew

On January 5, 1945, four Jewish women prisoners were executed by hanging in Auschwitz. They were charged with stealing gunpowder from the “Union” munitions factory, where they were force-labored, and smuggling it to the prisoners of the Sonderkommando at the nearby camp of Birkenau, who mutinied three months earlier, on October 7, 1944, in an attempt to escape from the camp.

The uprising of the Sonderkommando may be likened to the tip of an iceberg, where much is obscured under water. This research attempts to delve into the details below the surface, both during the time leading up to the uprising and the period following it. On the one hand it traces the preceding events: the establishment and execution of the gunpowder smuggling activity and reevaluates them, and on the other hand it delineates the German investigation that followed the uprising, which led to the imprisonment of the four Jewish women and to their execution – all while evaluating multiple testimonies and documents, some of which have not yet been subjected to research.

This research yields several main results. First, contrary to common knowledge, according to which, the four women who alone were involved in the smuggling were apprehended and executed, it turns out that no less than thirty Jewish women prisoners participated in the gunpowder

smuggling, which was an extensive operation, carried out in secrecy during a period of about seven months.

Regarding the uprising itself, this research refutes the common knowledge that the smuggled gunpowder was used to blow up one of the four crematoria. Rather, it turns out that the crematorium was indeed set on fire and burnt down, however, the hand-grenades that were made out of the smuggled gunpowder were never used, and therefore their potential did not materialize. Thus, the great effort, risk, and courage associated with the smuggling – were all in vain.

Regarding the investigation that followed the uprising, this research reexamines two distinct narratives concerning the circumstances that led to the arrest of the four women. It determines that both are valid, do not contradict each other, rather, they complement one another: the betrayal of one of the smugglers by a Jewish prisoner attempting to avoid punishment, prompted the activation of a secret agent against this smuggler, thereby leading to her incrimination.

Perhaps the most important finding is the uncovering of the reason for which the four women were accused of smuggling gunpowder and the determination of the goal behind their execution by hanging in publicly held ceremonies. Contrary to common wisdom, this was not due to the fact that a crematorium was blown up – allegedly with gunpowder that was smuggled by these women. It turns out that camp authorities chose to regard the proven smuggling from the factory as an act of sabotage that damaged the production process. These women therefore paid with their lives for the widespread acts of sabotage that were commonplace at the “Union” factory, and which had a detrimental effect on both the rate of production and its quality – acts of sabotage that camp authorities have failed to uncover and prevent. Therefore, the four women were hanged in order to terrorize the laborers at the “Union”, so as to prevent any further acts of sabotage in the factory, and at the same time, to demonstrate to the

higher echelons of the SS and the army that they are determined to put an end to sabotage once and for all.

Supervisor:

Prof. Sara Bender

3. Devra Katz

Emotions in Stutthof: The Social Function of Emotions in a Prisoner Society

2018



In 1941, Lucien Febvre, a French historian, penned his famous essay “Sensibility and History: How to Reconstitute the Emotional Life of the Past.”¹ Set against the background of fascism and the horrors of the Nazi regime, it became clear to Febvre, who believed emotions to be irrational, that politics, and other aspects of intellectual life, were not immune to the influence of emotions. In response, he called for an examination of emotions in historiography to better understand why some societies were more adept than others at managing their feelings, and to “explain fascism and reveal the principles on which a more rational order could be constructed.”² Though much has changed since 1941 surrounding the understanding of emotions, Febvre’s call paved the way for the development of emotions history into the discipline it is today.

This thesis applies emotions history methodology to the study of the Holocaust. Through an examination of three emotionally motivated social behaviors – giving and exchange, finding meaning and comfort, and helping behavior – this paper reveals patterns and tendencies of emotional expression among female and male prisoners inside the Stutthof concentration camp system. In doing so, it highlights how certain modes of emotional expression affected behavior and social life and subsequently promoted survival. The analysis demonstrates how emotions history is a

useful methodology that illuminates previously underappreciated aspects of Holocaust historiography; challenges the notion that concentration camp prisoners completely succumbed to the emotional standards imposed on them by their perpetrators and lived in an emotionally void state; seeks to contribute to the greater understanding of concentration camp life using the Stutthof camp system as a case study; and sheds light on the more intimate and subterranean elements of victims' experiences. The analysis is anchored in victims' postwar written testimonies, and is supported by theories from the social sciences, mainly social psychology.

Supervisor:

Prof. Amos Goldberg

4. Rotem Taitler

The Instinct of Life in Nazi Death Camps: The Case of Auschwitz

2018



The death camps established by the Nazi regime were a unique phenomenon that challenged the human spirit in every possible manner. In the decades that passed since World War II ended, scholars have been focused on understanding every aspect of life and death in these distinctive facilities. Still, one of the most interesting questions that remain unanswered regards human behavior during catastrophe. As existing research mostly focuses on understanding the methods prisoners of the Nazi regime practiced in order to survive, the question of what motivated these prisoners to strive and want to survive is mostly overlooked.

Auschwitz was chosen to be the case study of this research as it has been widely examined across various scholarly fields, constituting a stable foundation for further scholarship in the field of social history.

The population of prisoners at Auschwitz was diverse and included an inner hierarchy. Some prisoners managed to obtain positions that allowed them extraordinary privileges such as extra food or better hygiene, while the vast majority of prisoners, who were usually employed in one of the slave labor work details, struggled to receive the minimum provided by the camp's authority.

This study focuses on those who were at the bottom of the scale. Prisoners who were employed in one of the slave labor work details and were not entitled to any sort of privileges. By understanding the delicate

dynamics and interactions of the various groups of population throughout the camp, an observation of what motivated prisoners to struggle in order to survive may be presented.

The main premise of this research is that prisoners survived the death camp simply because they managed to form personal and reliable social connections. In that sense, the reason behind the motivation to survive is directly tied with the technical methods of survival. However, while not everyone who had meaningful human connections managed to survive, those who did, necessarily obtained human connections.

By understanding the motivation to survive in a place such as Auschwitz, we can learn a great deal about human nature and the individual's ability to withstand catastrophe. Moreover, we will be able to uncover and understand a significant part of the Holocaust.

Supervisor:

Prof. Hagit Lavsky

5. Coos Weaver

The Journey of the Last Evacuation Transport from Bergen-Belsen to Tröbitz, April 9-23, 1945

2020



In April 1943, the SS established the “Bergen-Belsen Exchange Camp”. From July 1943 onwards, groups of Jews from all over Europe were brought to this camp. The German intention regarding these Jews was to exchange them for Reich citizens who had been arrested and interned by the Allies.

From spring 1944, Bergen-Belsen transformed from an Exchange Camp to a concentration camp. In the final stages of WWII, between December 1944 and mid-April 1945, at least 85,000 men, women, and children were deported to Bergen-Belsen from other concentration camps. There was neither room nor facilities for these numbers of prisoners in the camp. As a result, tens of thousands of prisoners died in Bergen-Belsen in the first months of 1945.

In order to make space for regular prisoners in Bergen-Belsen, at one point in spring 1945 it was decided to evacuate the Exchange Camp. Three evacuation transports, with 6,700 exchange prisoners, left Bergen-Belsen, all with Theresienstadt as their destination.

The first transport left the ramp of Bergen station on April 8 and was liberated on April 13 in Farsleben by American troops. The second transport left on April 9 and reached Theresienstadt on April 20, 1945.

The third transport left around midnight between April 10 and 11. The train wandered for almost two weeks between the different fronts and was finally liberated on April 23 by Soviet troops near the village of Tröbitz. Because for a long period nothing was known about the fate of this third evacuation transport, also after its liberation, it became known as the “Lost Train.”

The aim of this thesis is to give a comprehensive and chronological account of the journey of the “Lost Train”, from the moment the prisoners started leaving Bergen-Belsen to the ramp outside of the camp on April 9, its departure around midnight between April 10 and 11, and its journey until the liberation on April 23, 1945. The conditions faced by the prisoners on the “Lost Train” and their attempts to survive on their two-week journey are described. 133 prisoners would not survive the journey. The bodies of the dead were buried in several locations or left alongside the railroad tracks if burial was impossible. A “death list” of the deceased was administered during the journey.

The thesis places the journey of the “Lost Train” in the historical context of Bergen-Belsen’s transformation from an Exchange Camp into a concentration camp and adds to our knowledge on the final stages of Nazi Germany.

Supervisor:

Prof. Dan Michman

6. Rivka Baum

Young and Innocent?: The Story of Eight Dutch Women Who Became Camp Guards in KZ Herzogenbusch [Vught] and KZ Auschwitz-Birkenau

2021



Contemporary research and public discourse have recently drawn attention to the different perspectives of men and women on their social, political, and cultural environment. However, when it comes to the topic of the identity and behavior of perpetrators in concentration and extermination camps, this perspective has not yet been fully implemented in research on genocide in general and the Holocaust in particular. This paper takes this perspective and fills the gaps in knowledge that still exist with regard to the significance of gender, age, and nationality as factors influencing behavior. By analyzing the social profile of eight young Dutch women who volunteered as camp guards in Vught and later in Auschwitz-Birkenau, their reasons for participating in systematic genocide will be explained. This micro-history uses models and theories from the field of social history to analyze the impact and the women's experience of their employment through, until now, mostly neglected archival material, trial records and ego-documents. This analysis will show that ideology was not the most important factor in their decision-making process. Instead, external factors such as romantic relationships with Dutch SS members or German soldiers, the desire to escape from social relationships perceived as disadvantageous, and the wish to gain (financial) independence carried far

more weight than antisemitic or pro-National-Socialist views. With this analysis, a more complete picture of Dutch female perpetrators emerges and offers perspectives for future research focusing on the relation of gender and genocides.

Supervisor:

Prof. Dan Michman

7. Ricki (Birnbaum) Prince

The Pionki Forced Labor Camp for Jews: Through the Eyes of Survivors

2021



This thesis examines the conditions and characteristics of the Pionki forced labor camp for Jews in the Radom District of Nazi occupied Poland during World War II. It examines the prisoners' views and reactions to the conditions. The inmates, along with Polish civilians, worked in gunpowder production. The findings indicate that Pionki fits into the narrative of survival through labor as the workers were necessary for the Nazi war effort. This being the case, imprisonment in Pionki helped, though did not guarantee, survival.

The research reveals that despite the difficult conditions, including dangerous labor, survivors often viewed Pionki as a "good" camp, in comparison to other camps that they experienced. This is not to belittle the horrific experiences of the survivors. Characteristics of a good camp, based on Pionki, include working alongside Polish civilians with whom prisoners could barter and in turn receive extra food. Alcohol was used in the gunpowder production process and thus prisoners had relatively easy access to alcohol for consumption and bartering purposes. Additionally, relative to its population, which was about 3,000 at its height, Pionki had many survivors.

This is the first study conducted about Pionki, which functioned as a camp from 1942 to 1944. The research is largely based on oral and written survivor accounts from various archives, as well as personal interviews.

Pursuing research based on survivor testimony allows readers to gain insight into the feelings and reactions of survivors. The survivor voices thus humanize and add depth to the story of the camp, which the research would otherwise not possess.

Supervisors:

Dr. Idit Gil

Prof. Wolf Gruner

8. Eli Mikulinser

The Most Tightly Sealed Ghetto in Europe: A Study of Isolation in the Lodz Ghetto and How it was Experienced by the Ghetto Population, 1940-1944

2022



In this thesis the topic of isolation and the Lodz Ghetto will be addressed. The isolation of the Lodz Ghetto contained features that in their extremity make the case of Lodz unique. While the notion that the ghetto in Lodz was isolated has been well-recorded, research about the exact meanings and consequences that such a major characteristic had on its population has so far been lacking in scholarly literature. Accordingly, by turning to diaries, memoirs, testimonies, and other forms of egodocuments, this thesis aims at finally addressing the question: How did the Jewish population in the Lodz ghetto experience their isolation? This will be achieved by first discussing the extent of the isolation and investigating continued connections between the ghetto and the outside world. Then, the portrayals that the ghetto population expressed regarding their isolation will be in focus, by looking for articulations dealing with the state of being more or less cut off from the rest of the world. Finally, this thesis will also research the consequences of isolation by taking a closer look at how isolation affected how the ghetto inhabitants viewed their

future and their ability to imagine themselves beyond the limits of the barbed ghetto wires.

Supervisors:

Prof. Dr. Andrea Löw

Prof. Gordon J. Horwitz

Memory & Commemoration

.....

9. Shelby E. Weltz

Contextualizing Transformation: A Case Study of Pilgrimage to Poland

2016



In this paper, I qualitatively investigate the effect of the Poland pilgrimage on a sample of Modern Orthodox American Jewish females, a population less represented in present day Poland pilgrimage scholarship. I begin this paper by exploring the conceptual framework of the Poland voyage as pilgrimage. I then offer a purview of the history of educational youth trips to Poland as well as provide a glimpse into the educational philosophy of Heritage Seminars, the program under present investigation. Original research in the form of semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with recent and veteran Heritage Seminars participants is then presented. Thematic analysis was used to address which themes surfaced when recent and veteran participants spoke of their trips to Poland, with particular emphasis placed on how participants felt they were impacted and/or transformed by the journey. By exploring how six participants engaged with, interpreted, and synthesized their experiences of Heritage Seminars, I draw conclusions about the impact of the Poland pilgrimage on a sample of Modern Orthodox American Jewish females.

Supervisor:

Prof. Carol Kidron

10. Gabriel Mayer

Holocaust Museums and Artifacts: Linking History and Culture

2016



This thesis entails an examination of three prominent Holocaust museums: Yad Vashem and Ghetto Fighters' House Museum (GFH) in Israel and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC. They were chosen because of a combination of prominence as regards their early inception – the two Israeli museums – and the extent of influence on Holocaust historiography, scholarship, and related cultural ramifications. Utilizing a methodology drawn from the discipline of material culture, much of the work was focused through the lens of artifact collections. Part of the objective was to relate cultural and political influences to museum ethos, and in turn, take notice of the impact of museum development on the culture without. An indirect but unavoidable relationship was noted in the evolution of Holocaust historiography. The methodology consisted of an examination of specifically chosen artifacts from each museum, conducting an in-depth examination of the circumstances related to their acquisition and collection, along with detailed historical analysis of background information of involved individuals, families, communities, and as it turned out toward the end of the exercise, the involvement of the curating staff. The research work included a number of interviews with individuals closely linked and involved during the developmental stages of each museum, along with examination of internal documents, whenever available. An overall

viewpoint emerged regarding each museum individually and as relates to Holocaust narrativization in combination. As the work progressed it also became clear, that wholly separate from institutional influence, the artifacts related information (history) accrued from individualized narratives, which remained unaffected by these external forces. Thus the artifacts collections appear to render a “populist” message of witnessing, very much in keeping with personalized memory transmission. The museums were seen as representing an ethos, mostly shared as regards Holocaust narrativization, while the artifacts – individually and as items of acquisition and collections – addressed ethnos, relayed individual agency, and represented personalized narrativization.

Supervisors:

Dr. David Silberklang

Dr. Stephanie Rotem

Prof. Hagit Lavsky

11. Lisa Krebs

Representations of the Haredi Communities in Holocaust Museums in Israel

2016



Museums display their materials and subjects with unique perspectives, often influenced by the museum's vision. Holocaust Museums in Israel are no exception, and whilst the museums all explore the topic of Holocaust, they each present a different narrative. In turn, groups from different parts of society that endured the Holocaust will have had different experiences. This study explores four different Holocaust museums in Israel (Ghetto Fighters' House Museum, Yad Vashem, Testimony House (*Beit Edut*), and Chamber of the Holocaust (*Martef haShoah*)) and how they display and exhibit the experience of the Haredi communities during the Holocaust. This examination will delve into the various ways that museums utilize artifacts, photographs, and the written narrative, and to what extent these represent Haredi communities. The thesis first introduces the theoretical underpinning of the study, including definitions of Haredim and discussion of museums and Holocaust museums in particular. The first, second, and third chapters then explore how artifacts, photographs, and written narrative are used to represent the Haredi communities in these museums' displays, respectively. The thesis shows that mission statements of museums and the communities that commissioned and established them heavily influence the exhibitions,

which in turn influences the way and extent that Haredi communities are discussed and displayed.

Supervisors:

Prof. Maoz Azaryahu

Dr. Shosh Rotem

12. Amira Mintz-Morgenthau

The Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism in Berlin: From Institutionalized Memorial to Counter-Monument

2017



It was not until the late 1980s that serious scholarship on the Holocaust and its memorial culture began to take shape. It was not until that same decade that the very existence of the Roma genocide was recognized. It is therefore little wonder that the study of the genocide and its commemoration did not emerge until much later. The inauguration of the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism in 2012 in Berlin is a critical event in this process. It represents the culmination of a complex set of political, scholarly, and aesthetic forces that have shaped awareness of the genocide. The choices embodied in the Sinti and Roma Memorial become clearer when it is compared with two other Roma genocide memorials in Poland and Berlin. National context, aesthetic sensibility, educational approach, and community engagement are all key variables. Since its opening, the Memorial has witnessed many public as well as more personal and private engagements, which can be categorized as “anti-memorial” and/or “dialogical counter-monuments.” Although its primary purpose is to memorialize the Sinti and Roma victims of the genocide, the Memorial has become a symbol of many things, including recognition, respect, and dignity. The Sinti and Roma Memorial, in the end, is a static, physical installation whose symbolic themes are abstract and atmospheric. Since its inauguration it has been fascinating to observe

its “afterlife.” The Memorial has become a site for the performance of identity and for the enactment of communal ritual of commemoration, some planned and officially sponsored and many spontaneous and unsanctioned.

Supervisors:

Dr. Rachel Perry

Prof. James E. Young

13. Naomi Schuster

The *Masa* to Poland and Kibbutz Narratives of Holocaust Memory: A Case Study of Kibbutz Yagur

2016



This thesis presents a unique case study of students from Kibbutz Yagur who have participated in the *masaot* to Poland in recent years. This study examines national Holocaust commemorative narratives and practices, with particular attention to their transmission to and interpretation by the present generation of kibbutz youth. The study begins with a brief outline of the history of the *masa* to Poland from the Carmel Zvulun Regional High School located on Kibbutz Yagur. It then continues to explore the possible ways in which kibbutz ideological principles and Zionist values have been transmitted to the current generation of *kibbutznikim* who choose to participate in the journey. The study shifts to an examination of materials and methods used to facilitate pre-trip learning and discussion. The goal of this section is to discover if any underlying connections can be drawn between those materials and methods to the kibbutz ideology at large. The next section of the thesis focuses on understanding the impact the *masa* has on the kibbutz students' sense of identity as individuals, but also as students born and raised on the kibbutz as compared to non-kibbutz participants from the regional high school. The objective is to understand to what extent in-group "*gibush*" (bonding) that may or may not already be present amongst kibbutz participants who were born and raised in an insulated environment, has

impacted their unique experience as “*kibbutznikim*” on the trip itself. The concluding chapter examines the patterns of Holocaust commemoration throughout Israel’s history and presents potential causes of friction within the discourse of *Shoah* memory narratives. It further seeks to understand if and how kibbutz specific interpretations of the *Shoah* narrative are affecting the current generation of kibbutz youth.

Supervisor:

Prof. Carol Kidron

14. Margarita Pedchenko

Reframing the Ineffable: Postmemory Experiences in Contemporary Israeli Graphic Novels

2022



This thesis examines postmemory experiences in the Israeli graphic novels *Second Generation: Things I Did Not Tell My Father* (2012) by Michel Kichka, *The Property* (2013) by Rutu Modan, and *The Quiet Beach* (2009) by Michal Tamir. Following Marianne Hirsch, postmemory is defined as a type of memory that the children of the survivors of trauma inherit from their parents not through the empirical connection to the event itself, but rather through stories, imagery, and iconic symbols of trauma. This transmission proves to be so strong that it creates a “memory” of its own right, rooted in imaginative investment, projection, and creative process. Operating in the framework of postmemory theory, this work applies its basic principles to the multimodal medium of graphic novels and identifies the unique artistic strategies employed by the authors, such as the use of imagery, symbolism, mirroring, colors, shading techniques, perspective, and incorporation of familial and iconic pictures into the narrative.

Through this analysis, the study reveals that the works in focus share common narrative themes: silence, loss, loneliness, traumatic reenactment, and struggle for personal autonomy manifested through similar memory nodes, like food, bodies, objects, and imagery. The interplay of visual and textual devices facilitates the expression of the authors’ relationship with

the trauma of their parents, allowing them to depict the elusive and often ineffable shadow of the traumatic past.

This study expands the corpus of existing works on postmemory in the visual medium through offering a comparative viewpoint of the graphic novels and gives scholarly attention to works that have not been researched so far, such as the graphic novel *The Quiet Beach* by Michal Tamir. While this thesis focuses on Israeli graphic novels, it also presents opportunities for future research, including the analysis of works by Western authors.

Supervisor:

Dr. Tsafi Sebba-Elran

15. Jason Hall

Politics of Memory: Holocaust Distortion in Relation to the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States and Britain, 2020-2022

2023



The purpose of this thesis is to analyze how politicians and different types of traditional media used Holocaust analogies during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, this thesis will examine the countries of the United States and Britain during the years 2020-2022. I argue the use of Holocaust analogies that took place during the COVID-19 pandemic is the result of how collective memory was processed by American and British societies after World War II. I also show how the Holocaust has become a symbol for Nazi evil and Jewish suffering, which certain collectives applied to their situation during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the decades after WWII have passed, the memory of the Holocaust has been used by political actors to accomplish political objectives. The recent events of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a high usage of Holocaust terminology by political actors that compared COVID-19 restrictions with Jews that were persecuted during the Holocaust. The end result of politicians and politically motivated groups making these analogies was an increase in antisemitism and trivialization of the actual events that took place during the Holocaust. One of the most common places where Holocaust analogies occurred was on social media. Several politicians used social media platforms to voice their displeasure with COVID-19 restrictions and then compared these restrictions with those implemented by the

Nazis during World War II. I will analyze how and when politicians and traditional media used Holocaust analogies throughout the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. I will also analyze how analogies contributed to Holocaust distortion during the COVID-19 pandemic. By looking at this information significant light will be shed on how collective memory played a role in the use of analogies by political actors and traditional media in America and Britain throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and what types of Holocaust distortion took place.

Supervisor:

Prof. Eliyana Adler

16. Miriam E. Frenkel

"Listen...Treblinka": The Vernacular Use of Holocaust-Related Terms in Contemporary Hebrew

2016



This study examines the use of Holocaust-related keywords in colloquial Hebrew conversation. It inquires about the emotional involvement of young Israelis with the Holocaust and its memory as gleaned through their linguistic choice to invoke the Holocaust in discussing mundane, everyday topics. In Israel today, words such as “*Shoah*” and “Nazi” have become commonplace in the vernacular Hebrew lexicon of the young generation as descriptors applicable to nearly any subject. This study looks at the social connotations of these words, the way they are employed and perceived, and their potential significance for Holocaust-related emotions and remembrance. It proposes that the use of Holocaust terms to describe mundane scenarios is a reaction of young Israelis to the burden of official, State-established Holocaust education and commemoration. Methodologically, the study is comprised of a combination of participant observation and interviews. Observations included not only unmediated conversational contexts but also textual analysis of social media exchanges from within Israel, such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. The findings were divided into the major themes of understanding, emotion, identity, and memory. They support the previous research of scholars such as Dan Porat and Dalia Ofer, which points to the successful attempt of the Israeli governing bodies to establish the Holocaust as central to the

identity of future generations of Israeli students through education and commemoration. However, this study suggests that the frequent and often casual use of Holocaust-related terms in everyday conversations among young Israeli adults has added a layer of connotational meanings to these terms. Functioning figuratively as hyperbolic intensifiers, the use of these terms allows speakers to distance themselves emotionally from the subject of the Holocaust. Through the use of this discursively marked self-distancing strategy speakers rebel against the expected behavioral norm that surrounds the official, solemn Holocaust commemoration in Israel. The use of these colloquialisms can be said to be a form of alternative commemoration casually generated by the third generation in Israel today, creating a new generational shared identity marked by patterns of daily interaction rather than high-profile ceremonial occasions.

Supervisor:

Prof. Tamar Katriel

Rescue & Resistance

.....

17. Noa Gidron

Jews Saving Jews: Individual Initiatives During the Holocaust, 1939-1945

2014



The focal point of this paper is Jews acting on their own initiative to save lives while trapped in the Nazi regime during the war years 1939-1945. By analogy to the Righteous Among the Nations, the Jews who tried to save other Jews are defined in this paper as those whose actions were targeted at saving Jews with no direct family kinship, while putting themselves at risk for no personal benefit. In cases where rescuers belonged to organizational rescue machinery, but went beyond their original task by personal risk, and/or did not opt to rescue themselves, they are included in the category of individual rescuers. Because rescuers are those who stand at the center of this paper, and not the survivors, there is no distinction between successful rescue operations and failed rescue attempts.

The theme of individual Jews acting to save other Jews hardly drew attention as a stand-alone topic. The compiled data unravels a phenomenon surprising in scope which points to a vast array of intentional and systematic initiatives. This is the basis of the initial presumption that these events should be treated as a phenomenon and not as a random collection of local incidents. This phenomenon deserves to be researched independently alongside other forms of Jewish reaction during the Holocaust such as armed resistance, mutiny, or organized actions of rescue.

The paper presents a complete picture of this phenomenon by reviewing and classifying separate events of rescue initiatives by individual Jews: Educators and care givers who tried to save children; Functionaries in the camps who used their positions to save others; Rescue initiatives of medical crews; Private initiatives to rescue through smuggling and immigration; Rescuing in family camps based in forests, and the rescue activities of individual prisoners targeted at fellow prisoners. Among these groups, the paper focuses on the group of doctors by examining their actions in two facets. A wide-ranging facet which examines the doctors' actions in the various conditions prevailing under the Nazi occupation: in the ghettos, the concentration camps, the partisans in the forests, and prisons. The second facet is an in-depth examination of two Jewish doctors in the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Unlike other rescue initiators, the Jewish doctors were forced into making fateful decisions and take part in actions that risked their lives vis-à-vis not only the Germans but also their colleagues. Hence, their professional future was at times at risk after the war as well. The Jewish doctors treated all prisoners, regardless of religion, and here lies their distinction. *Prima facie*, it was their commitment as doctors. Since not all doctors fulfilled that, those who did stand out even more by risking their lives and future beyond necessary in order to remedy and save whenever possible. This is how Doctor Perl described it: "The Hippocratic Oath for me was the holiest of things, my conscience's decree and every word of the oath was engraved deep in my heart." Despite being an observant woman faithful to her people, this statement expresses precedence of the Hippocratic Oath over Jewish solidarity. The statement points to the fact that the terms rescue and Jewish solidarity are not identical, though often misused interchangeably. It is time to name this phenomenon of rescue initiatives by Jews properly and research it further.

Supervisor:

Prof. Hagit Lavsky

18. Nurit Grossman

The Emergence of the *Kindertransport* in Prague 1938-1939: A Humanitarian Response to a Refugee Crisis

2017



Thesis submitted in Hebrew

Kindertransport is the accepted term for the large-scale scheme responsible for sending about 10,000 unaccompanied mostly Jewish children out of Nazi occupied countries to safety in Britain, between December 1938 and the outbreak of the World War II. According to the “official” numbers published, this figure included 9,354 children reported to have arrived from Germany and Austria, and 669 were to have been sent out of Prague.

Given that the children’s transports from Prague have been commonly presented as part of the centrally organized large-scale *Kindertransport* from Nazi occupied territory to Britain, this thesis proves that the Prague scheme originated from a different wide-scale response to the refugee crisis of unprecedented magnitude. It offers a comprehensive approach to the emergence of the *Kindertransport* in Prague, focusing on its unique features as a humanitarian effort involving a platform of activists from different niches of life.

A comprehensive historical overview is provided to contextualize the distinctiveness of the Czech *Kindertransport* within the broader refugee crisis. This is followed by a comparison of the Prague transports with those from Berlin and Vienna and a discussion of the British policy and the Anglo-Jewry, identifying the organizational problematic issues in London

and in Prague. The research further illuminates the different groups and individuals instrumental in arranging the departure of the children from Prague, focusing on the interaction and collaboration among them. Finally, a case study is presented to illustrate the unique situation in Prague.

The concluding chapter rounds off this thesis. The Czech Kindertransport was an initiative that emerged against the backdrop of the refugee crisis in Prague and against the urgent necessity to bring Jewish children to safety in Britain, independently of the transports organized from Berlin and Vienna. This research clearly proves that the Prague transports appeared to be unique in terms of their circumstances, scope, and key actors.

Supervisor:

Prof. Hagit Lavsky

19. Indra Wussow

Black Napkins on Our Hearts: Baltic German Accomplices in the Expropriation and Murder of Jewish and Polish Citizens by the Nazi State in Litzmannstadt

2025



This study examines the role of Baltic German settlers in Litzmannstadt as both beneficiaries and enforcers of Nazi expropriation policies, focusing on five case studies. By analyzing official files, letters, diaries, and memoirs, it reconstructs five cases' personal trajectories within Nazi administrative and economic structures, exploring how they (un)consciously contributed to the Final Solution – a fact they later evaded acknowledging.

In an interdisciplinary approach bridging history and psychology, this research integrates micro-historical analysis to uncover silences, omissions, and selective remembering in postwar narratives. Rational Choice Theory provides insight into the settlers' pragmatic calculations under Nazi rule, while memory studies expose strategies of self-exoneration, reframing complicity through displacement and victimhood. The findings challenge the perception of Baltic Germans as passive actors, revealing their active participation in racial expropriation and genocide, even when framed as a bureaucratic or economic necessity.

By combining historical and psychological perspectives, this study contributes to debates on collaboration, bureaucratic complicity, and the legacy of Nazi occupation. It underscores the fragility of moral boundaries

under totalitarian rule and highlights the mechanisms through which individuals became complicit in state crimes. The practical implications serve as a reminder that administrative structures and ideological conditioning can facilitate atrocities – a warning that remains relevant today.

Supervisor:

Prof. Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg

Cultural & Artistic Expression

.....

20. Leah Hansen

The *Jüdischer Kulturbund Filmbühne* and the Jewish-German Community in the Third Reich, 1938-1941

2015



This thesis presents the first in-depth study of the impact the *Filmbühne* (film stage) had in the lives of German Jews living under the systematic oppression of the Nazi regime. The *Filmbühne* was an extension of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund*, a Jewish organization which offered cultural activities exclusively for Jews in the Third Reich between 1933 and 1941. The *Filmbühne* opened in December 1938 and provided Jews in Berlin an opportunity to view films, an activity which had been forbidden to them in the previous month. This thesis first reconstructs the *Filmbühne* itself, including who attended the film screenings, what was shown, the cinema's function within the larger *Kulturbund* organization, and why the Nazi authorities allowed it to exist. The following chapter analyzes diaries, essays, and letters of personal correspondence in order to determine how individual German Jews interacted with the cinema and the different ways the organization affected their daily lives. The closing chapter is devoted to the ways in which films were presented to the Jewish community in Germany through film reviews in the *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt*, the only surviving Jewish newspaper at the time. This study illustrates how these film reviews resisted the prevailing ideology of the Nazi regime, reflected both in the films' plots and their reviews in non-Jewish newspapers in the Third Reich, and articulated a particularly Jewish cultural perspective.

Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates how the Jewish reviews of the *Filmbühne* screenings were used as a pretext to circumvent strict Nazi censorship in order to send messages to the Jewish communities across the German Reich, having a much greater impact than merely affecting the individuals who actually attended the film screenings. Ultimately this study discusses the variety of ways that the *Filmbühne* affected the lives of German Jews, most notably by increasing quality of life and serving as a valuable communication tool that subverted Nazi ideology and opposed the Nazi regime's policy of cultural segregation and sent messages of validation and encouragement to the Jewish community.

Supervisors:

Dr. Kobi Kabalek

Prof. Ofer Ashkenazi

21. Hannah Wilson

Life, Creativity, Action, and Construction: The *Exile in Cyprus* Album 1947-48

2017



Between 1947-48, an album of linocut prints was hand crafted within the confines of a British Mandate Internment Camp in Cyprus, one of a number which were established as a temporary measure designed to prevent illegal immigration into Palestine after World War II. Vocational training and creative practices were encouraged by relief agencies, both in the European DP camps and in Cyprus. In 1947, the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee worked in coordination with the educational organization Beit Rutenberg to establish a series of workshops in the camps in Cyprus, to which Jewish-Palestinian teachers who specialized in fine arts, sciences, and humanities were sent. Under the tutelage of the artist Naftali Bezem, twenty-five survivors who had struggled through the destruction of European Jewry only to find themselves imprisoned once more, took part in the making of the album, entitled *Exile in Cyprus*. This thesis covers several areas of focus: the style and content of the prints themselves, the political and ideological context of the workshops and the impact of the experience on the emotional recovery and subsequent lifestyle of some of those involved. Issues relating to the involvement of institutions are also raised, in this case the Bezalel Art Academy in Jerusalem. An analysis of the album, which was intended to be read as a collective body of work, reveals many themes and subject matters reflecting

the nature of camp life, including the heat, the lack of sanitary conditions, and gender imagery. The discussion also considers the extent to which the content of the album overlaps with concentration camp iconography, and the potential relationship between their status as refugees and as survivors of the Holocaust. Little is known in terms of the impact that the creative process had on the lives and rehabilitation of the students of the workshop and their long-term futures, including whether they continued to produce art after arriving at their ultimate destination, Palestine. In the context of rebuilding the new Jewish state, art was not highly prioritized or encouraged as a profession. *Exile in Cyprus* was mostly forgotten and hidden away in archives or personal collections.

Supervisors:

Dr. Rachel Perry

Dr. Eva Frojmovic

22. Anat Leviteh Weiner

Drawing as a Gift of a Lifetime: The Girls of Room 28 in the Terezin Ghetto and Their Artwork 1942-1944

2018



At the end of World War II, two suitcases containing some 4,500 children's drawings were found in Terezin ghetto. Of the drawings, about 500 were created by teenage girls who were incarcerated in the Girls Home L410, room 28 between July 1942 to October 1944. This artwork represents the prolific outcome of the mentoring of these children by Friedl Dicker Brandeis, a professional artist who volunteered her artistic skills to the children of Terezin. Dicker Brandeis encouraged freedom of imagination and creativity, enabling her students to connect with their own selves, feelings, hopes, fears, and fantasies during the unusually cruel circumstances of the Holocaust. The artwork provides a unique perspective in understanding the lives of the youth in the ghetto.

The aim of this research is to explore the artwork and the creative process of the girls of room 28 individually and examine how this preserved their sense of individuality and creative freedom, thereby helping them to cope with their harsh reality.

In order to understand the context in which the creative process took place, this thesis is comprised of two sections. The first segment provides historical background and the essence of daily life for adolescents in Terezin. It explains the complexity and value of art in Terezin, the role and impact of Friedl Dicker Brandeis, and explores the life of the girls of room 28. The

second section analyzes selected artwork created by the girls of room 28, accompanied by testimonies of five survivors from the room, excerpts from diaries, and essays written by some of the girls who perished, as another powerful way to document history from the perspective of teenagers.

In conclusion, this artwork is the most valid, elucidating, and illuminating evidence of what these girls witnessed and felt. Despite the hardships and challenges, the girls were able to free their spirits, imagine, immerse themselves in creativity, and express their utmost inner feelings and thoughts. This gift enabled them to preserve their sense of individuality, affirm their existence, and allowed them to document their lives. The methods used to analyze the artwork give a new perspective in documenting the lives of youth in Terezin and stands as both an archive augmenting the mounting literature of the Holocaust and a memorial to the 45 girls who perished, leaving behind their drawings as traces of their existence.

Supervisors:

Prof. Hagit Lavsky

Dr. Rachel Perry

23. Diana Schuemann

Dance as an Educational Tool for Teaching About the Holocaust in Israeli High Schools

2018



This research draws on students', teachers', and choreographers' current understandings of Holocaust Education, to explore the use of dance for teaching about the Holocaust in secular high schools.

Depictions of the Holocaust have emerged in various forms of Contemporary and Modern Art. These are derived from different narratives of the Holocaust, created by survivors, their children, and the following generations. The Visual arts and performing arts, specifically dance, can offer a way to express, to reflect upon, to protest against or to resist individual and collective trauma related to the Holocaust. As the arts are increasingly being utilized to express experiences and thoughts about the Holocaust, questions can now be raised regarding the specific use of dance in Holocaust Education.

A handful of choreographers from Israel and beyond have dealt with the topic of the Holocaust in their stage-based and non stage-based works, which draw on both theatrical and social dance. Yet, a paucity of research exists on the specific role of dance in Holocaust Education. This thesis will investigate the use of dance for teaching about the Holocaust, as a medium that not only utilizes historical facts and judgements about victims, perpetrators, bystanders, or resisters, but that also enables students to reflect on the Holocaust on a personal and emotional level. It will achieve

this through the analysis of interviews with students and teachers who do not have prior experience in the field of dance, and with choreographers who have explored the Holocaust in their work. Ultimately, the aim is to explore how dance acts as an embodied teaching tool, which allows students, teachers, and choreographers alike to viscerally encounter collective memory and to explore an individual understanding on the topic, which may not be achieved by learning from historical facts alone.

Supervisors:

Prof. Arie Kizel

Dr. Henia Rottenberg

24. Ella Falldorf

Ambivalent Continuities: Forced Labor in Artworks of Political Prisoners in the Buchenwald Concentration Camp

2019



Full thesis available for University
of Haifa users only

The scholarly discussion of artworks created by inmates of Nazi concentration camps has viewed them either as evidence for spiritual resistance or as documentary historical illustrations, thus only rarely examining them using the methods of art history. In contrast, this study approaches them as artworks, which exceed documentation and cannot be reduced to narratives of resistance. They are analyzed as subjective interpretations of the camp experiences. The focus on one topic – forced labor – at one place – the Buchenwald concentration camp – permits me to closely examine a great number of artworks. In Buchenwald, most artworks were produced by political prisoners with a socialist background as well as a rather privileged position in the inmates' hierarchy. Thus, one might expect them to pre-empt the anti-fascist postwar iconography. But even though they used socialist artistic traditions, a closer analysis reveals a striking diversity and ambivalence.

The first part of this study asks how the ideology of prisoner artists influenced their depictions of individual forced laborers. I show that the degree to which forced labor is appropriated within familiar frameworks of work depends on the purposes of these artworks. They often oscillate between idealization and documentation, similar to works of early Realism. Yet, while all the analyzed artworks somehow adhered to ideals of

socialist imagery, their multifaceted character rejects any one-dimensional classification. The second part raises the question, how the specific kind of forced labor depicted influenced the artistic interpretation. I therefore compare depictions of inmates pulling wagons in the quarry and inmates carrying corpses to the crematorium. This reveals how the political prisoners' encounters with the horrors of the Holocaust challenged previous patterns of interpretation. The corpse carriers were no longer characterized as resistant or heroic. Instead, the emphasis shifted to the relationship between workers and corpses as well as, the inmates surrounding them, who are at the verge of death.

Supervisors:

Prof. Verena Krieger

Dr. Kobi Kabalek

25. Meredith Scott

The Jewish Circus and the Holocaust: A Case Study on the Lorch Family Circus

2019



At the turn of the 20th century, a late Industrial Revolution led to a Golden Age in the German entertainment business, during this time the German Circus gained a reputation as the leader in the industry. There were three dominant Jewish families that factored into Germany's success in the field, they were: the Blumenfeld, Strassburger, and Lorch families. These circuses saw their apex in the inter-war years. The Blumenfeld, and Lorch Circuses filed for bankruptcy at the onset of the economic downturn, as did the vast majority of German circuses. However, in the case of these Jewish circuses, the question of the effect of German antisemitism must be examined. The Strassburgers were forced to sell their circus to their competitor Ring Mistress Paula Busch, in order to Aryanize their business in accordance with the Nazi Government in 1935. The coming years destroyed the Jewish circus in Germany. Only a few survived the atrocity of the Holocaust, but the Jewish circus failed to continue.

This thesis focuses on the Lorch family and their experience in the Holocaust while contextualizing their story in the history of Circus Lorch, from conception, through the Great Depression and the rise of Nazism, to their ultimate destruction.

Two Lorch brothers were arrested and transported to French internment camps, they wrote letters to their older siblings in hiding in Belgium. The

bulk of primary resources for this project is based on these letters, which unfold the Lorch family experience in the Holocaust. Their experiences are typical of a German Jewish family, for example, some of the siblings stayed in their hometown, some fled, some hid, and still most perished in the Holocaust. But their circus network made the Lorch experience unique. The circus culture and network into which the Lorchs integrated themselves changed their experience in the Holocaust. Some of the siblings even hid within the circus, performing throughout the war, while others, like the brothers in the French camps, received food, money, and other goods from the European network of circus people. The measure of success was not survival, rather it was the willingness of the circus community to help despite the danger presented by rising tides of Nazism. The Lorch experience in the Holocaust was singular, each family's story leads to a better understanding of the history of the Holocaust.

Supervisors:

Prof. Hagit Lavsky

Prof. Michael Brenner

26. Klara Jackl

"The Nightmarish Time": The Wartime Life and Art of Dr. Henryk Beck

2022



Dr. Henryk Beck, a gynecologist of Jewish origin and a distinguished figure of the 1930s Polish medical world, survived the World War II and the Holocaust in Lviv and Warsaw. In 1946, at the age of 50, he died suddenly, leaving behind a pictorial diary: nearly 1,700 small-scale artworks from the years 1937-1946 where he depicted his daily life and the historical events he lived through. Despite the existence of this rich and remarkable material, Beck's life and art, specifically from the wartime, have so far been recognized only broadly or fragmentarily.

This study aims to reconstruct Beck's biography between September 1939 and January 1945 on the basis of written sources (archives, memoirs, and press), and his art from that time. The research conducted proves the sources' bilateral convergence and complementarity and bring new information to light, such as details of Beck's military service, imprisonment, and time in hiding. The reconstruction is presented against historical events, and it outlines key determinators of Beck's actions and positioning as a Polish-assimilated, upper-class representative, pointing to the diverse conduct of his social environment and of individuals towards him as a victim of the anti-Jewish oppression. The protective role and underground activities of his wife, Jadwiga Beck, are highlighted.

Through the analysis of selected artworks, my study offers an interpretation of how Beck captured his experience of the war and

Holocaust artistically. I demonstrate that his progressive social degradation and maneuvering through the realities of Soviet and Nazi persecution are reflected in his style, as well as motifs and means of expression used. Beck's artistic language, which I define as synonymous with his social status, indicative of his visual competence and immersion in contemporary graphic and artistic trends, undergoes a profound development *in extremis*, while hiding in the ruins of Warsaw in late 1944. I argue that "The Bunker" series of Beck's drawings can be regarded as the pinnacle of his creativity as an artist and should be considered in the context of his earlier works. Reviewing the author's wartime art against the background of his legacy and biography as a whole, I argue that making art served him at the time as a way to reduce social degradation and exclusion from the strata and culture to which he belonged.

Supervisors:

Prof. Barbara Engelking

Dr. Rachel Perry

Documentation & Testimonies

.....

27. Simon Goldberg

Written in Transport: Deportee Letters and the Influence of an Iconic Poem

2015



This thesis explores letters and postcards that Holocaust victims wrote on trains to concentration and death camps. Looking at transport through both a historical and a literary lens, it examines deportee texts alongside Dan Pagis' iconic Hebrew poem, "Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway Car." What is the relationship between a letter that someone threw from a train car and this poem by Dan Pagis? If, for instance, Pagis disrupts the flow of time in "Written in Pencil," do archival testimonies of transport convey similar disruption? My primary intention is to probe how a fusion of historical and literary lenses can enrich present understanding of Holocaust victims' deportation experiences.

In Holocaust historiography, the subject of deportation has mostly centered on the logistics involved in coordinating train departures and arrivals. As such, it has largely sidelined victims' perspectives. While Simone Gigliotti's groundbreaking study, *The Train Journey*, sheds much light on physical and psychological trauma inside the train car, her scholarship draws heavily on postwar survivor testimony. By contrast, this thesis investigates victims' changing sensibilities in transport by foregrounding real-time testimonies of witnessing: postcards, notes, and letters victims wrote on (and later threw from) deportation trains.

The tightly compressed, disorienting language Dan Pagis employs in “Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway Car” engenders strong emotional responses. Despite (or perhaps as a result of) its creative license, the poem has come to dominate popular representation of transport during the Holocaust to a degree overshadowing its historical context. Yet this study does not aim to reverse the trend by simply dismissing “Written in Pencil.” The fact that the poem has attained iconic status internationally reflects its capacity to provoke the reader into contemplating victim train journeys. As a point of departure, I contend that “Written in Pencil” offers a deeper vocabulary with which to approach letters written in transport. I therefore juxtapose my readings of the poem with an analysis of deportee texts. The letters examined in this thesis evoke themes in a rich dialogue with those in Pagis’ poem.

My analysis resulted in several findings. While Pagis suggests that Eve’s train exists in collapsed time, actual letters negate such a reading by attesting to victims’ tenacious grasp of time on the train. Concurrently, the letters propose an alternate collapse that expresses itself in emotional disorientation rather than in a loss of physical cognition. However, deportee texts also suggest that human agency could be accessed through language, recovering elements of powerlessness in the face of mounting despair. Deportee letters studied demonstrate that, to a noteworthy degree of consistency, victims’ expressions of tumult mostly reflected their knowledge (or their lack of knowledge) of the transport’s true destination. Yet, regardless of deportees’ awareness, processes of familial disintegration, typically associated with arrival scenes at the death camps, already commenced on the transport, exacerbating the earlier trauma of separation. Mothers, fathers, children, and siblings mirrored Pagis’ Eve in mourning what was already lost as a result of deportation, before they knew with any certainty what awaited them.

Supervisors:

Dr. Alan Rosen

Prof. Dan Michman

28. Natali Beige

Chronicle of Destruction: The Jews of Raseiniai County During World War II and the Holocaust

2016



Thesis submitted in Hebrew

Although an extensive historiography of the Holocaust in Lithuania exists, very little has been written about the history of the Jewish communities in provincial Lithuania. Most research addresses the history and fate of Lithuania's largest communities, Vilnius and Kaunas. However, the provincial towns in Lithuania are crucial to understanding the Holocaust as well as the development and implementation of the Final Solution in the area. Within the last decade, studies have raised new issues and questions regarding the Holocaust and have placed greater emphasis on developments that took place in the rural areas and provinces of Lithuania, but the subject still remains insufficiently studied.

According to the Jäger Report, Raseiniai County was one of the first places where the murder of women and children took place as early as mid-July 1941. Therefore, a thorough examination of Raseiniai County and its Jewish communities raises important issues and questions and can contribute to scholarship about the rapid and brutal elimination of Jewish towns and villages in provincial Lithuania, and the transition to total annihilation.

This study examines the fate of small Jewish towns (*Shtetlekh*) in Raseiniai County through an integration of a variety of sources. Creating a synthesis of documents and literature identifies the stages of persecution and extermination, the relationship between the Germans and the

Lithuanians, the connection between bureaucracy and ideology, and the various groups of perpetrators involved in the extermination of the Jews in Raseiniai County. In addition, this study can also shed light on the Holocaust in Lithuania in general in light of the fact that more than 50% of Lithuanian Jewry lived in rural areas and provinces. Furthermore, it raises questions that can be relevant to the destruction of Jewish communities in other rural Eastern European areas when considering factors such as the participation of the local population in the murders, their motivations, and how regional dynamics influenced the development of the Final Solution in those areas.

Supervisors:

Dr. David Silberklang

Prof. Hagit Lavsky

29. Lani Lederer Berman

Synthesizing Rabbinic Literature and Personal Diaries for a Comprehensive Picture of Orthodox Women's Lives During the Holocaust

2017



This thesis delves into rabbinic literature that deals with issues arising during the Holocaust in an effort to demonstrate that it is a critical primary source to understanding the daily lives of religious Jews, and specifically religious women. As women's and gender studies have received growing attention in Holocaust scholarship since the 1980s, the experiences of religious women are noticeably lacking. Rabbinic literature is largely understudied within the canon of Holocaust sources, as well. Thus, in discovering that rabbinic literature may, in fact, be used to deepen how we view the ritual practices and more private aspects of religious women's lives under Nazi rule, I sought to utilize this lesser reviewed corpus of literature to explore the under-represented experiences of religious women during the Holocaust.

While personal diaries and memoirs written by women are valuable firsthand accounts of the trauma, they do not necessarily reveal the entirety of the picture of women's more intimate experiences. Through researching secondary scholarship on Holocaust diaries, I discovered that there are gaps in these personal accounts. Victims often focused on documenting external occurrences rather than recording their personal emotions in their writing. Furthermore, as Jewish diarists internalized the scope of the Final

Solution, they understood that their writing would serve as a historical text and thus read by a future audience. This realization may have deterred an individual, especially a religious woman, from writing more intimate details.

Rabbinic literature, while an imperfect autobiographical and historical source on its own, is quite effective when synthesized with diaries, memoirs, and personal testimonies. Although they are texts written by men, the issues the sources cover reflect some of the more difficult challenges faced by religious women. With a strong tradition of rabbinic responsa dating back to the 3rd century CE, women could not only rely on the age-old practice of “asking the rabbi,” but were also afforded the comfort of anonymity in doing so.

I have demonstrated in this thesis the benefits of incorporating rabbinic literature into the greater corpus of Holocaust scholarship. I explored the intimate topics of the *mikveh* (ritual bath), sexual relations, both voluntary and coerced, birth control, and abortion in rabbinic sources as well as diaries, memoirs, postwar testimonies, and secondary literature. I analyzed which of these sources delve into these topics, discovering that the *mikveh* rarely appears in autobiographical accounts. Yet, there are rabbinic texts that discuss quandaries surrounding its usage and laws related to the *mikveh*. The topic of sexual relations has gained traction in Holocaust scholarship more recently; the rabbinic sources that address questions on this topic enrich our perspective of the challenging decisions women in hiding and in ghettos faced in this realm. I discovered that birth control appears in rabbinic literature spanning various countries during the war. I thus presented this topic with geographic sensitivity, as the Jewish communities in which birth control-related questions appeared confronted diverse realities. Finally, the topic of abortion likewise appears in various countries, most prominently in the ghettos in which the Nazis enforced compulsory abortion (such as Theresienstadt and the Lithuanian ghettos)

as well as among women in hiding. Rabbinic literature on this topic is less preponderant, yet it remains an essential source in that it reveals how religious Jews approached these painful realities.

Rabbinic texts offer substantial insight to the challenges that women faced because, based on the content, religious women did discuss personal aspects of Jewish observance with a trusted rabbi, rather than record such a quandary in a personal diary. Studying the documents written by the rabbinic leadership alongside diaries, memoirs, and postwar testimonies deepens our insight into the lives of religious women during the Holocaust and reveals a bit more of the struggles with which they grappled.

Supervisor:

Prof. Eliyana Adler

30. Noam Rachmilevitch

The Everyday Lives of Jews on the Aryan Side of Warsaw, Based on Letters to the Council for Aid to Jews and the Jewish National Committee, Held in the “Berman Collection”

2017



Thesis submitted in Hebrew

Even after the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto on May 16, 1943, some 20,000 Jews remained in the city. Some of them were living under an assumed identity (“above the surface”) while the majority lived in hideouts, in complete isolation from the outside world (“underground”). The purpose of this study is to examine the problems faced by Jews from these two categories in their struggle to survive in Warsaw and the measures they took to confront them. This study focuses on the period between the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the Polish Uprising, that is, May 1943 to July 1944.

The main source is a collection of requests for help sent by many of those Jews to the Jewish National Committee (*Żydowski Komitet Narodowy*, or *ŻKN*) and the Council for Aid to Jews (*Żegota*), a Jewish underground and a Polish one, respectively, both working alongside the Bund in helping Jews on the Aryan side. These letters reveal the hardships faced by the senders. These letters were kept during the war in the *ŻKN* archive and were later brought to the Ghetto Fighters’ House Archives by Adolf Berman. By analyzing and contextualizing hundreds of letters and other documents from this collection, I have examined the existential challenges faced by the Jews on the Aryan side and the responses they were given.

The study shows that the Jews initially tried to get by on their own; they utilized the means at their disposal (money, clothing, valuables, etc.), which they had entrusted to Polish acquaintances; they obtained forged papers and tried to make a living from jobs, homemade products, the black market, and other initiatives. However, the reality on the Aryan side was harsh, and their situation soon deteriorated: entrusted property was not returned; landlords maltreated them; poor clothing, hunger, and health problems aggravated their physical condition, especially in hiding; Jews were arrested, blackmailed, and robbed, often not only losing their clothes, money, papers, and possessions, but thrown out of their homes as well. Many were in physical and mental distress, and many were destitute.

Only once they had exhausted their resources and had nowhere else to turn to did they ask the underground aid organizations for help. Some ten to twelve thousand Jews received regular financial support, in addition to help in coping with concrete stringencies, and had a safety net of sorts. The biggest help was in the finance of the rent (even partially), which allowed them to stay hidden; the aid helped its recipients in other areas, such as hiding, obtaining papers, food, health, clothing, and sustenance, and provided a morale boost.

The research leads to several other conclusions: First, the Jews who lived in hiding and the ones who lived with an assumed identity had a different hierarchy of needs because their predicaments called for different solutions. Second, it appears that the sheltering of Jews for money was much more commonplace than doing so from conscientious reasons. Third, receiving aid made it easier for Jews to move from one pattern of existence to the other – from hiding to an assumed identity and vice versa. Fourth, the crisis points that impelled the hiders to seek help had similar biographical characteristics. Finally, the perspective of the Jews fighting to survive on the Aryan side shrank to the immediate future. The study of the Berman collection, which documents the underground relief actions for

Jews in post-ghetto Warsaw, can thus contribute to our understanding of various aspects of the Jewish existence there.

Supervisors:

Prof. Havi Dreifuss

Prof. Arie Kochavi

31. Lisa Anne Storer

Kovno Ghetto Jewish Policemen: A Collective Biography: Hidden Histories of Four Jewish Lithuanian Men: 1918-1945

2023



On August 4, 1941, eleven days before the sealing of the Kovno ghetto on August 15, Moisei Kopelman/Moze Kopelmanas (1895-1945), the director of the largest Lithuanian insurance company, was persuaded to accept the position of chief of the *Jüdische Ghetto Polizei*/Žydų Ghetto Policija (Jewish Ghetto Police). Tanchum Aronstam/Tanchumas Aronstamas (1907-?), a manager in a textile factory, submitted an application to join the ghetto police with his interest noted on August 14, 1941. On August 17, 1941, Yehuda Zupovitz/Julius Zupavicius (1914-1944), a construction engineer who had worked for “Pieno Centras,” the largest Lithuanian dairy association, was mobilized to join the force because of his military knowledge as a reserve officer in the Lithuanian army. Thirteen days later, on August 30, 1941, Misha Hofmekler/Michelis Hofmekleris (1898-1965), a violinist and conductor, was placed in the police force by the *Ältestenrat* (Elder Council) to protect his life. Each of the four men became ghetto policemen for different reasons, yet in the literature Jewish ghetto policemen are most often described in monolithic terms resulting in a common perception that those who were members abused their power and profited as privileged ghetto functionaries. This impression exposes the understudied area in the historiography as to how and why individual men became ghetto policemen. Utilizing the framework of Krista

Cowman's interpretation of the methodology of collective biography, this study examines the individual lives that Kopelman, Aronstam, Zupovitz, and Hofmekler built and rebuilt. To do so, it will include relevant governmental policies related to Jewish life during Tsarist Russia (1804-1917), independent Lithuania (1918-1940), Soviet annexation (1940-1941), and German occupation (1941-1944). Moreover, it will address the following questions: What lives did Kopelman, Aronstam, Zupovitz, and Hofmekler build from 1918 to 1940, in an independent Lithuania, in relationship to family, education, religion, language proficiency, career, political affiliation, and military service? Which aspects did they or did they not adjust during Soviet annexation and then German occupation? Which prior knowledge and skills appeared or did not appear in their work as ghetto policemen? The purpose of the above questions is to dissolve the collective label of "Jewish ghetto policemen" to understand the individual lives that the men built and rebuilt, as linked by their shared status as Jewish ghetto policemen, to understand what they faced and how they reacted imprisoned in the Kovno ghetto.

Supervisor:

Prof. Eliyana Adler

32. Eleftheria Koukoura

The Significance of Titular Choices: The Paratext as a Pillar of Autobiographical Discourse in Greek Jewish Holocaust Egodocuments

2024



By focusing on several egodocuments from Greek Jewish Holocaust survivors from Thessaloniki, this thesis argues that hitherto titular and autobiographical conventions do not apply to Holocaust egodocuments. The unprecedented experience of the genocidal persecution of Jews has inevitably established new norms of life writing that have not yet been the subject of a thorough study. Paratext and titular choices in relation to the circulation of the egodocuments in question are inextricably intertwined with the emergence and institutionalization of Holocaust memory in each micro-society and it calls upon theoretical re-evaluation. It's a new approach to the "autobiographical pact" given the spatiotemporal conditions that favored or hindered the circulation of these narratives for a while, and how the paratext and the critical threshold of the title in particular, are shaping authorial and reading expectations in an ever-evolving dialogical relationship over time. Drawing my remarks from literary theory and autobiographical discourse conventions, it becomes evident that Holocaust egodocuments challenge and exceed handed-down literary standards whilst constituting a substantial corpus of autobiographical narratives of distinctive significance that calls upon a theoretical reassessment. The latter will not only provide new insights into Holocaust-related autobiographical discourse writing in

conjunction with its spatiotemporal context, but will also pave a new way for the interpretation and the didactic utilization of this corpus.

Supervisor:

Prof. Shmuel Refael

Antisemitism & Persecution

.....

33. Monika Hübscher

The AfD's Attitude Towards National Socialism, the Holocaust and Antisemitism: A Facebook Analysis

2017



The Alternative für Deutschland's (AfD) entry into the German *Bundestag* in September 2017 marks a break with German political tradition after 1945 and the social acceptance of a party from the far right-wing spectrum. During the election campaign, the AfD relied heavily on social media, mostly by using Facebook to spread its agenda. This research on the AfD's attitude toward National Socialism, the Holocaust and antisemitism on Facebook has shown the party utilizes antisemitic stereotypes to defame political opponents. Further, the AfD instrumentalizes events from the Third Reich to elevate perceived positive aspects, such as resistance against the Nazi regime, and strives to rehabilitate aspects of National Socialism. Symptomatic for the AfD is the concealment of the Holocaust, or its opportunistic use to depict the Germans as victims. Moreover, the interpretation of comments made under the Facebook posts suggest that they have an inciting effect. In the analysis of AfD Facebook posts, it has been found that the attitudes expressed by the AfD conflict with Germany's self-image as a country that takes responsibility for the Holocaust and that Facebook is becoming an increasingly important tool of shaping the cultural memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust.

Supervisor:

Prof. Moshe Zimmermann

34. Dany Melkonowicki

Visual Antisemitic Propaganda in the Ukrainian Language: Analysis of German and OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) Propaganda in Eastern Galicia and Volhynia, 1941-1944

2017



The triangular coexistence of Ukrainians, Jews, and Poles in Eastern Galicia and Volhynia had experienced centuries-long tensions that eventually culminated in Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in summer 1941. Targeted by German propaganda on the one hand, and by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists' (OUN) propaganda on the other, the Jews of those regions were held accountable for the calamities that befell the Ukrainians, especially by the promulgation of the "Jewish Bolshevism" stereotype. Through a visual analysis of propaganda forms such as leaflets, posters, and newspaper cartoons, this thesis provides the first scholarly work to encompass both German and OUN visual antisemitic propaganda in the Ukrainian language. The analysis will examine the antisemitic themes and motifs that were employed by the German and the Ukrainian nationalist propagandists, to determine why certain themes were repeatedly chosen, what role or significance they played, and what can be inferred about OUN's shifting attitudes towards the "Jewish question". This study hypothesizes that besides the "Jewish Bolshevism" stereotype, the visuals of both German and OUN propaganda contain references which are unique to the Western Ukrainian experience, thus distinguishing it from other German propaganda campaigns to different

Soviet populations, and sheds light on the Ukrainian anti-Jewish imagery, traditional and modern alike.

Supervisor:

Prof. Per Anders Rudling

35. Shannon E. Quigley

Abandoning the Jewish Jesus and Abandoning the Jews: The Anti-Jewish Polemic, Christian Dejudaization Efforts and *Die Botschaft Gottes* in the Nazi Era

2018



The Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life (*Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des Jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben*) was an academic Institute opened in May of 1939. It was composed of German theologians seeking to meld National Socialism and German Christianity together in the Nazi era. Among their numerous publications was their rewritten and dejudalized version of the New Testament text, *Die Botschaft Gottes* (The Message of God). This work was a critical venture for the future of German Christianity in the eyes of these theologians. It will serve as a central focus of my research into the thought and theology of this particular group of Nazi-era Protestant theologians and leaders as it related to their Christianity, and the persecution of the Jewish community and the Holocaust.

The Institute theologians believed they would do away with what they saw as the corrupting Jewish influences on Christianity and the Christian Bible. Despite the respect generally upheld by Christian theologians in their treatment of what the historical Church considered to be divinely-inspired Scriptures, the theologians of the Institute evaded even the most basic appreciation of how to treat the scriptural texts in order to deal with

the problem they considered most critical: the Jewish problem. In the minds of these men, their ideological impulse related to the degenerate Jew was primary, removing them from the honor and reverence generally afforded to the Scriptures and to human life in Christian tradition.

This study aims to reveal and connect the longstanding hatred of Jews within Christian theological thought and the dejudaization efforts of Church leadership from the 2nd century on to the efforts of these Nazi-era theologians who chose to rewrite the New Testament text according to this longstanding hatred and polemic. The early efforts to separate and divide Jesus from his Jewish context and Gentile followers from the Jewish Jesus in effect brought about a divorce of sorts, which would affect the mindset of Christian theologians throughout Christendom up until, and including the theologians who led or served as part of the Institute.

The thesis compares and contrasts *Die Botschaft Gottes* with reputable translations of the New Testament text and to the original Greek text, noting how it relates to orthodox Christian theology and how it is different. It also assesses and compares the words and ideas found in the writings and sermons of the early Church fathers, as well as later Christian theologians such as Luther, who formed Christian thought and theology about the Jewish people, with writings of Institute leaders to find commonality of thought as well as distinctiveness. This analysis attempts to illuminate the way the New Testament text itself was read, used, and interpreted by a group of German Christian theologians in agreement with racial Nazi ideology. The culmination of Christian dejudaization efforts was reached in the Nazi era, with the efforts of the Institute (among others) supporting the Nazi regime's genocidal mandate against European Jewry.

Supervisors:

Prof. Hagit Lavsky

Dr. David Silberklang

36. Inxhi Brisku

The Persecution of Jews in the Albanian Territories During the Italian Occupation, 1939-1943

2023



This thesis examines the Italian occupiers' actions towards Jews in Albania during the tumultuous years of 1939-1943, under Fascist rule. It delves into the implementation of Racial Laws in Albania by Fascist Italy, exploring their impact on the local Jewish community and refugees seeking sanctuary. The study analyzes the Italian authorities' treatment of different Jewish groups, categorizing their experiences based on origin and arrival time.

Distinctive treatment emerges between long-standing residents and newcomers, with varying degrees of surveillance, curtailed rights, internment, and deportation. The Italian occupation of Kosovo and annexed territories post-1941 introduced further complexities, intensifying persecution, and collaboration dynamics.

Crucially, this research dissects the nuances of collaboration between local administrations, populations, and the Italian authorities, exploring motivations shaped by nationalism, anti-communism, and propagandized myths. It challenges prevailing narratives by shedding light on the Italian occupiers' role in Jewish persecution and the local collaborators, enriching the understanding of Holocaust history in Albania.

The central research question scrutinizes the Italian authorities' attitude towards Jews in occupied Albania, investigating disparities in treatment

among various Jewish groups and role played by local government and population. Methodologically, this study relies on Albanian archival sources, trying to reconstruct historical events and critically analyzing primary documents.

By contributing a nuanced understanding of the Italian occupation's impact on the Jewish community and challenging historical narratives, this thesis offers a comprehensive exploration of a lesser-explored facet of Holocaust history in Albania and tries to challenge the mainstream historical narrative in the country.

Supervisor:

Prof. Stefan Ihrig

Identity & Survival

.....

37. Ariella Esterson

A Question of Faith: Children of the Kindertransporte and Their Search for Jewish Identity

2015



For many children growing up in Europe during the Third Reich, a period from 1933-1939 filled with increased persecution of Jews in Germany and annexed Austria prior to the full-scale Holocaust, the Kindertransporte was their only hope of survival. Once arriving in England, the children and youth, ages 18 and under, had very different experiences. There were a variety of factors which influenced how they adapted to their new surroundings. Specifically, each of the children were accustomed to a certain degree of Jewish observance in their homes. Whether they had been assimilated into German culture or came from religiously observant homes, where the children were placed in England, be it in Jewish homes, private Christian homes, hostels, or schools, the degree of religious observance and level of faith varied. This analysis focuses on the different experiences that the Kindertransporte children had as it pertains to how they preserved the Jewish identity developed in their homes in Germany and explains how their primordial home experiences shaped their future Jewish identities and levels of faith as adults.

Supervisor:

Prof. Joanna B. Michlic

38. Nannie Beekman-Braunstein

"Anything but Mauthausen": The Fear of Mauthausen Among Dutch Jews During the Nazi Occupation – Dimensions and Impact

2017



The death toll of Dutch Jews during the Nazi occupation is by far the highest among the Western European countries. Of the 140,000 “*Volljuden*”, as per Nazi criteria, only 27 percent survived the occupation, whereas in Belgium, 60 percent of the approximately 66,000 Jews, and in France, 75 percent of the approximately 320,000 Jews escaped death at the hands of the Nazis.

The question as to why such a high percentage of Dutch Jews perished, in a country where the majority of the Jews were Dutch citizens for generations, has been and still is a central theme among researchers, Dutch and others. Were there any factors specific to the Netherlands which contributed to this phenomenon? Some have been identified and debated in the literature over the last decades, such as the nature of the Nazi civil and military regime in the Netherlands, a servile and considerably obedient Dutch bureaucracy and police force, a lack of geographical places to which to escape, the late emergence of Dutch organized resistance organizations, a tradition of heeding authority by Jew and non-Jew alike, and lack of knowledge about the destination(s) of the deportations. In addition, little pre-war antisemitism, and the deep belief by Dutch Jews in being well-integrated into Dutch society, would have lessened their guard. Yet, one component has so far received only minor attention within the analysis

of the low survival rate – the role played by the fear of Dutch Jews of punishment by deportation to Mauthausen which they had learned to mean certain death early on; a fear which was then manipulated by the Nazi authorities. By tracing expressions of such fear in primary sources, such as war-time diaries, and war time documentation, discussions of the Jewish Council with and without German authorities, I examine perceptions and interpretations of Dutch Jews under quickly changing circumstances and threats, seen through their own prism. This perspective or approach of *histoire de mentalités* has not received much attention.

My thesis argues that fear of punishment with Mauthausen became a “magical concept” to be avoided, impacting behavior of Dutch Jews. Until the deportations in the summer of 1942, under the guise of “work in the East”, compliance with each anti-Jewish decree had “livable” consequences within the Netherlands, and for the most part at home. Non-compliance on the other hand, was interpreted as Mauthausen and thus death. By means of increasing intimidation with Mauthausen, the German regime conditioned the Jews of the Netherlands into a high level of compliance up until the very moment of deportation: Jews were registered, deprived of financial means, segregated from general civil society, an easy prey for the stage of deportation. At that point even the final spelling out of the name Mauthausen as punishment no longer had the expected full and immediate compliance result. The earlier equation of death with Mauthausen versus a “somehow livable life at home” changed to death in Mauthausen versus a “harsh fate” in the unknown East, where war was raging. The latter was often considered as possibly also resulting in death. Especially when the occupation regime turned to violent measures to reach its deportation quota quickly, the threat of Mauthausen lost much of its deterrence. By that late point in time, Mauthausen had firmly tightened the web around the Jewish community, from which there was little escape.

Until such sudden change in their reality, the search for a way out, such as by seeking a hiding place, had not been perceived necessary and thus many had not taken any action to this effect. It is in this sense, therefore, that Mauthausen is an important factor to be included in any analysis of the high death toll among Dutch Jews.

Supervisors:

Prof. Dan Michman

Dr. Kobi Kabalek

39. Tovit Schultz Granoff

Influences on Rehabilitation in Deggendorf Displaced Persons Camp

2020



At the end of World War II the Allies were left to deal with a continent in chaos. Millions of displaced persons (DPs) were scattered throughout Europe and Russia. Jewish survivors made up a very small percentage of the overall numbers of DPs. In the years following the Holocaust, about 250,000 Jewish survivors were temporarily resettled in DP camps in the American zone.

Immediately following their liberation, the Jewish survivors on a whole were in poor health and were faced with dreadful living conditions in the DP camps as they waited for the world to open immigration to Palestine and other countries. Months passed until the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) took over operation of the DP camps and political pressure forced the United States government to improve conditions and supplies in the DP camps, and create special DP camps for Jewish survivors.

While some of the larger Jewish DP camps have been the subjects of in-depth research, little research has been done on the Jewish survivors in Deggendorf DP camp in Bavaria. This camp was known to the researcher as her grandparents lived in the Deggendorf DP camp following their liberation in Poland. Research on the process of rehabilitation in Deggendorf DP camp reveals that this DP camp had a number of unique factors that influenced a rapid rehabilitation process. The factors include

a large and somewhat cohesive group of Jewish survivors that arrived in Deggendorf DP camp from the concentration camp in Theresienstadt and a dynamic, experienced, and empathic UNRRA director who worked cooperatively with the Jewish DPs.

Following the path of recovery in the first year after surviving a genocide, this paper examines the self-agency of the Jewish survivors that was instrumental in their establishing a functional community of their own in Deggendorf DP camp and in their rehabilitation. In this age of worldwide dislocation, it is worthwhile to look backward at previous episodes of displacement to reveal factors that either by chance or by intention, helped facilitate a relatively rapid transition from genocide survivors to DPs reliant on external organizations to immigrants establishing new, independent lives in other countries.

Supervisor:

Prof. Keith (Kalman) Weiser

40. Noah Krassman

Longing for Despair: Judeopessimism and Jewish Identity Formation in the 21st Century

2024



Judeopessimism can be defined as that which describes an affective, ontological, and political theory or attitude of resignation toward the longevity of anti-Jewishness through the evolution of interacting cultures over thousands of years, arguably culminating in the Holocaust – otherwise known by some as the end, or “fracturing” of modernity itself. Judeopessimism thus offers a dynamic intellectual framework which reflects the contemporary struggle to find meaning in diasporic Jewishness in the 21st century, considering the decades of institutional Holocaust memory and its hegemony in the academy and Jewish identity. This terminology outlines a powerful and provocative concept which captures the mood and mindset of many Jews in the postmodern era and reflects the historical and existential challenges that Jews face in a world that is often hostile and indifferent to their suffering. It also reflects the philosophical and ethical challenges posed to Jewish communities by Jews and the world around them by questioning the meaning and value of Jewish existence, being, and identity; it is therefore not a final or fatalistic verdict, but a critical and constructive voice which invites Jews and scholars alike to engage with their past, present, and future critically and creatively.

Supervisors:

Prof. Shaul Magid

Dr. Shmuel Lederman

Bystanders & Perpetrators

.....

41. Audrie Chomsky

A Comparative Analysis of the Discourse on the “Bystander” in the United States and Israel

2015



Full thesis available for University
of Haifa users only

A large focus of Holocaust Studies has been dedicated to spreading awareness of the Holocaust in hopes that this awareness will help to prevent more genocide. At the root of this issue is the “bystander” -- the onlooker, witness, collaborator etc. This thesis asks how the term “bystander” is used in Holocaust discourse to reflect larger, national aspects of Israeli and American narratives of the Holocaust by closely analyzing the two national Holocaust museums from these countries, Yad Vashem, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. It explores how the term “bystander” became popular in relation to the Holocaust by examining its development in social psychology, historiography of the Holocaust, and practical applications in international law policy. By examining the main exhibit, museum book and website of both Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum this thesis shows how these two institutions’ use, or omission, of the “bystander” in their most popular materials reflects national ideas about the Holocaust in their respective countries. This thesis argues the idea of the “bystander” is in fact presented differently in Israel and the United States, and that neither narrative

presents an understanding of the term that can help encourage its museum visitors to engage with the topic in a meaningful way.

Supervisors:

Prof. Tamar Katriel

Dr. David Silberklang

42. Joanna Kopacka

Regarding the Pain of Others? Bystanders as Photographers of the Majdanek Death Camp in 1944

2017



Liberation photography has been for a long time recognized as an important part of the visual record of the Holocaust, but its scholarly analysis was limited to pictures taken by the allied armies' photographers or photojournalists. This thesis introduces a new material into the debate: photographs taken in 1944 at the Majdanek death camp by local inhabitants of the Lublin area and eyewitnesses to the Holocaust at the same time. Three collections of such photographs will be the subject of visual analysis, the key assumption being that they mediate distinctive experience of Polish bystanders and can thus provide new information about their perception of both the liberation and the *Shoah* itself. Firstly, the thesis discusses historical-cultural context in which the photographers operated and addresses the problems of: Polish-Jewish relations during and after the war; emerging memory narratives in the Soviet-controlled state; and visual experience of the local people as well as imagery to which they were exposed at the time. In the second part of the thesis, selected photographs are analyzed as unique documents of rarely ever captured scenes or distinctive means of documentation. Focusing on different representational strategies of the authors, the thesis presents bystanders as active agents who developed autonomous positions *vis-à-vis* the Holocaust,

rather than passively adapted to the externally imposed reality. A closer look at respective collections will be a basis for broader conclusions on elision of Jewish victimhood, lack of discursive frame for the interpretation of the Holocaust and the ways in which the genocide might have been inscribed into individual and collective narratives of the liberation in postwar Poland.

Supervisor:

Prof. Roma Sendyka

43. Ronit Roth-Hanania

Concern for Others in Nazi Germany: Searching for Markers of Empathy in Germans' Emotional Responses to the Persecution of the Jews, 1933-1945

2017



The persecution of the Jews under the National Socialist regime began in 1933 and ended with the destruction of European Jewry in 1945. During the years of Hitler's rule, Jews were excluded, segregated, haunted, and finally, annihilated. Such happened at first in Germany and later in the occupied territories all over Europe. This study focused on three historical periods in search of markers of empathy in the emotional responses of "ordinary Germans" to the persecution of the Jews. At the time, the Nazi administration had under its control, a network of 30,000 agents and informants that reported on the opinions, reactions, and mood of the German public with regard to the administration's actions in general and its anti-Jewish measures in particular. Historians' analyses of the reactions of Germans as they were portrayed in the "secret" reports were the foundation for the overall agreement between Holocaust scholars, that the German public at large was indifferent to the fate of the Jews in Germany. The indifferent apathetic population was seen therefore, not merely as innocent bystanders to the ongoing persecution, but rather as passive partners to the active Nazi mass murder of the Jews. Empathy is an inborn, vicarious socio-emotional response that is evoked in an observer when seeing another in distress. The empathic response is composed of

three major components: an emotional component which is expressed through feelings of concern, the feeling for the other person, sympathy or compassion; a cognitive component that includes all attempts to inquire and/or better understand the other's situation and state; and a behavioral component which is usually expressed through pro-social helping behavior, assisting, rescuing, or exhibiting altruism. In the present study, personal accounts of a hundred "ordinary Germans," including letters, memoirs, diaries, interviews, testimonies, and surveys were reviewed and analyzed in search of markers of empathy. These primary sources were compared and contrasted with the Nazi secret reports, in order to uncover discrepancies, if exist, between what the official documents suggest was the overall response of the German public and what individuals felt and experienced in response to the Jews' maltreatment. In all three periods, comparison of the sources suggested that while the secret reports portrayed a picture of an indifferent public, in fact, "ordinary Germans" expressed concern and sympathy towards the Jews' situation and have also inquired and searched for information on their whereabouts. This study proposes therefore, that ordinary individuals in Germany between 1933 and 1945 felt empathy towards the Jews. These emotions were kept secret, were expressed in private writings, or discussed only in close and secure circles of friends and families. Since no overt pro-social actions were taken nor was protest expressed in the open, the German population was perceived and tagged by historians as indifferent participants in the genocide of the Jews.

Supervisors:

Dr. Laura Jockusch

Prof. Eli Somer

44. Sam ter Welle

The Dutch Reformed Church and Its Stance on the Holocaust

2024



This thesis examines the Dutch Reformed Church (NHK) during World War II and its response to Jewish persecution, the Holocaust, in the Netherlands between 1940-1945. The thesis focuses entirely on the actions and words of NHK leadership: the General Synod and the General Synodal Commission. This research is divided into three chapters: the NHK's reaction to anti-Jewish measures, its involvement in the persecution of the Jews affiliated with a Christian church, and NHK's resistance, adaptation, or cooperation. Each of these sections is presented in chronological order, providing a historical context before delving into the reaction of the NHK. This research is based on archival material and involves secondary literature dealing with a related topic. After the two chapters it is being asked what the differences are between the reaction of the NHK towards the anti-Jewish measures and their involvement with the Christian-Jewish persecution, which concludes that the NHK prioritized avoiding persecution of Christian-Jews over the Jewish population in general. The third chapter questions the research of early postwar historians who claimed that the NHK was a resistance church and examines which actions, in relation to the Holocaust, would categorize them as adapting to new circumstances, resisting the occupier, or working with the occupier. The chapter concludes that the NHK was not a strong resistance church, but neither was it a church that collaborated with the

occupier. The declaration of the Dutch Protestant church about their part in the Holocaust, introduced in the introduction, comes back in the conclusion where it is connected to the findings of this thesis.

Supervisor:

Prof. Bart Wallet

Specialized Groups & Communities

.....

45. Mallory Needleman

American Intelligence, Lithuanian Collaboration, and Holocaust Atrocities in Lithuania: The Case of John F. Mazionis and Stasys Žakevičius

2018



Between the months of June and December 1941, the population of Lithuania's Jewry dropped by an estimated eighty percent, a striking plunge fundamentally due to mass murder perpetrated by Nazis and their local collaborators. This dramatic loss of life underscores the actions of those who are responsible for the deaths of thousands despite having never brandished a weapon. This is particularly true for Stasys Žakevičius, the *Vilniaus miesto komiteto pirmininkas* (Vilnius City and Region Citizens' Committee Chairman). Research shows that, in this capacity, he called for violence against the Jews and issued a variety of anti-Jewish decrees that contributed to the persecution of local Jewry in 1941. Despite such morally questionable activity, he remained acquaintances (if not friends) with John F. Mazionis, who, as a British-Lithuanian, had been working for the US Department of State at the American Legation in Lithuania since the mid-1920s. This thesis analyzes the two men and their ties, thereby illuminating the under-researched areas of the Lithuanian-American bond during and after the Holocaust. Findings indicate that their ties lasted through the Cold War, when Žakevičius and Mazionis worked for the CIA and US Department of State to thwart the Soviet authority in Lithuania. The research presents how Žakevičius was never punished for

his part in the persecution of Vilna Jewry; rather, on the contrary, he was rewarded for his postwar efforts regarding threat intelligence and anti-Soviet subversive organizations. In fact, by 1966, he and his wife were naturalized American citizens, living in the United States, due in part to a 1955 recommendation written by Mazionis on their behalf. The aim of this thesis, then, is to offer the most comprehensive presentation of John F. Mazionis and Stasys Žakevičius and, by extension, the problematic nuances of American foreign relations. The conclusion of such research affirms broader polemics: The US as a refuge for Nazi collaborators, protecting them from proper adjudication for their Holocaust-related crimes in exchange for their postwar anti-Communist intelligence.

Supervisors:

Dr. David Silberklang

Prof. Hagit Lavsky

46. Jovana Cvetićanin

Yugoslavia and the Eichmann Trial

2020



This study investigates the role played by the Yugoslav state and its media in the Eichmann trial, an aspect that has not been dealt with before. Yugoslavia had a unique position in the Communist world, being at the crossroads between East and West. It was the only country in the Communist circle that had diplomatic ties with Israel and cooperated with the Jerusalem Court.

By unfolding the role of one unique state – Yugoslavia – the study adds a new dimension to the Eichmann trial. Consequently, in the realm of virtually uninvestigated field of research of the roles played by different European countries in shaping the trial, the study fills the gap in the historical narrative of the trial.

Based heavily on uninvestigated archival records and newspaper articles mainly from Serbia, the study explores in detail the Yugoslav-Israeli cooperation in the process of the trial preparation and the specific requirement of the Yugoslav government to include the crimes of Andrija Artuković in the trial. It then examines the “result” of this cooperation. Fully focused on the German occupation zone – much of the modern-day Serbia – and on the Independent State of Croatia, the study investigates the case of Yugoslavia in the Jerusalem courtroom and concurrently addresses the narrative of the Holocaust in the above-mentioned parts of Yugoslavia as it emerged during the trial. The research further explores the attitude of

the Yugoslav establishment towards the Eichmann's affair, and the trial in Israel through the Yugoslav state-controlled media coverage.

Yugoslav authorities, unlike many other countries in the Communist bloc provided an active and eager assistance in the process of material collection, which resulted in one-third of the evidence being used in the trial. Simultaneously, Yugoslavia aimed to "secure" new evidence for Andrija Artuković's extradition from US and required his incorporation in the trial. Analysis of the results of Yugoslav-Israeli cooperation indicates that the focus given to Artuković and Eichmann in the courtroom blurred the Croatia's collaboration with the Nazis, as well as the other historical facts significant for comprehensive understanding of the Holocaust in Yugoslavia. Finally, the Yugoslav government sent five observers and five journalists to follow the trial and report on it. Full public support of Eichmann's abduction and the trial in Israel was expressed in an exhaustive Yugoslav media coverage of the trial, highlighting the Jewish victims from the very beginning of the reporting. Thus, the study clearly proves that the Yugoslav state and media were actively involved in the Eichmann trial, and that the trial itself was of great significance to the Yugoslav state.

Further research of Yugoslav media in the period of the Eichmann trial is needed for the complete comprehension of the specific Yugoslav position towards the Holocaust within the context of the Communist world in the period of the Eichmann trial. Also, the investigation of the impact the media coverage and the post-trial writings of Yugoslav reporters had on the whole Yugoslav Holocaust narrative needs to be explored.

Supervisor:

Prof. Hanna Yablonka

47. Pam Taylor

German-Speaking Jewish Refugee Pediatricians in the UK Between 1933-1948: Their Life Experiences and Influences on Modern Medicine in Britain

2021



The aim of this descriptive study was to introduce a new research methodology, that could be integrated into the existing historiography of medical refugees in Britain from 1933-1948. The research, qualitative and comparative in nature used a phenomenological method to explore in more depth the lives, careers, and migration paths of German-speaking pediatricians into Britain, in order to provide insight into the complexities of their lived experiences.

The use of a group biography approach illustrates the variety of the nature of human reaction and inter-reaction, and the development of professional identity in the face of severe life challenges. The group consisted of a homogenous, purposeful sample of twenty-four Jewish German-speaking pediatricians, qualified and working in the field of pediatrics before 1933, who left Nazi Europe between 1933-1941, and arrived in Britain, defined as medical refugees.

The data was obtained from both primary and secondary sources, including letters, documents, questionnaires, newspapers, journals, and books. Using Colaizzi's method of data analysis, seventeen theme clusters emerged from the findings, which fell into five main chronological categories, reflecting the transnational and biographical nature of the data

covering a period of several years. These were: “Pre-Nazi Rule; Persecution; A New Start; The War Years; and Post-War: Life in Britain”. The theme clusters encapsulated the variety of life experiences from achievement, status, and pioneering work to expulsion, loss, violence, flight, and non-recognition, and finally to renewed recognition and new opportunities in war service and medical work.

The study concluded that there were many varied experiences, both positive and negative, particularly in the years before and during the war; that gender and age did not necessarily adversely affect the opportunities that came during the war and afterwards, except in a few cases only. Finally, twelve of the group of twenty-four, did continue in various aspects of child healthcare in the new National Health Service following the war. Limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research were also discussed.

Supervisor:

Prof. Paul Weindling

48. Shulamit Rosinsky

The Sound of Silence: The Jewish Deaf in Germany and Poland on the Eve of, During, and After the Holocaust

2022



Thesis submitted in Hebrew

This study will present the history of the deaf-Jewish communities in Germany and Poland before, during, and after World War II. The study reviews the scientific and cultural background of the general deaf population from the end of the 18th century until World War II. Through implementation of Eugenics, the Nazis marked part of the deaf population as “undesirable”, and some 17,000 deaf German citizens underwent forced sterilization as part of the Nazi racial laws. The Jewish Deaf in Germany and Poland were two of the most influential communities of Jewish Deaf before the outbreak of World War II. In Berlin, a boarding school was established, which was considered the premier institution for the education of deaf Jews and drew students from all over Germany, Europe, and even from the Land of Israel. The Jewish Deaf Community in Poland was arranged by local organizations and an umbrella organization of all deaf Jews in Poland. These organizations maintained an archive that for the first time was researched for this study.

At the outbreak of the war there were about 600 deaf Jews in Germany and about 4,000 deaf Jews in Poland. Most of them perished in the Holocaust. Testimonies of survivors demonstrate special characteristics in a variety of areas: their early childhood, immigration, deafness as a factor that impairs the chances of survival, deafness as a cause of uncertainty

and disconnection from the environment, deaf brotherhood, and others. After the war, deaf survivors had to deal with the consequences of the war, immigration, the establishment of their families, and the trauma of the war as reflected in the second generation.

The importance of the research is the systematic presentation of the deaf in the Holocaust, starting with eugenics and non-Jewish deaf people, through the deaf communities on the eve of the war, and finally, the Jewish deaf in the Holocaust. This study is one of the first to examine this population that has not yet been extensively researched. This study will be used to build educational programs for both the deaf population and the hearing. In addition, this study can serve as a model for future Holocaust studies on sub-populations, especially populations of Jews with disabilities.

Supervisor:

Dr. Miriam Ofer