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## Double Victims: Fictional Representatives of Women in the Holocaust

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**DOUBLE VICTIMS:  
FICTIONAL REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN  
IN THE HOLOCAUST**

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**Abstract:**

*Traditional Holocaust studies have largely overlooked women's unique voices, instead treating the eloquent and moving narratives of such renowned authors as Elie Wiesel and Tadeusz Borowski as definitive sources on "the" Holocaust experience. Recently, scholars have addressed the absence of women's voices in Holocaust studies, arguing that women's experiences, and their reactions to those experiences, were in fact very different from those of men. This topic is a controversial one, and some scholars argue that women's suffering should not be focused upon in the context of an event that sentenced all Jews to death.*

*With such controversy surrounding this issue, the thesis of this paper is that works of imaginative literature and film offer a way to test whether women's experiences should truly be held as distinct from those of men and, if so, what these differences were and whether they caused a profoundly different effect on women survivors. In short, were women "double victims" because of their gender?*

*Following the premise that women authors and directors might prove to be more likely to portray women's unique experiences, this paper compares works of Holocaust literature and film by female authors and directors with a like number of distinctly male voices. This study pays particular attention to portrayals of what could be termed as women's "double victimization," such as the separation between mother and child, the mother's frequent inability to save her child, and sexual humiliation and rape. Because of the sensitive nature of the types of victimization many women endured, this study determines whether each author or director has portrayed women's double victimization sensitively, or whether it seems that women victims have been exploited for prurient interest.*

*While it seems that women authors and directors might have proven to be more perceptive of women's double victimization, this paper reveals that some male authors and directors have proven remarkably adept at depicting women's experiences effectively, yet sensitively. However, previously*

*overlooked female authors like Charlotte Delbo and Cynthia Ozick can contribute greatly to a better understanding of women's double victimization, often revealing new insight into Holocaust experiences that have been so widely documented by men.*

*This paper's conclusion supports the arguments of scholars who claim that women's unique experiences during the Holocaust are deserving of more study, while proving that the traditional canon of Holocaust literature and film cannot provide a complete understanding of the complex phenomena of victimization that occurred during the Holocaust. This study will become increasingly important as the literature and film of the Holocaust move farther into the domain of popular culture, challenging audiences and artists alike to develop an understanding of and sensitivity to the double victimization of women.*

**Chapter One: Introduction: Double Victimization**

Although Anne Frank, clearly the best-known author of the Holocaust, was a young woman, the fact is that most of those who have influenced our perception of the Holocaust have been men. Despite the many women who have contributed to the growing body of fiction, memoirs, poems, plays, and films about this period, the moving and eloquent testimonies of such men as Elie Wiesel and Tadeusz Borowski have come to be regarded as encompassing what all victims suffered during the Holocaust, and most studies have treated their narratives as definitive sources on "the" Holocaust experience. This very influence, however, has tended to mute the less strident voices of women authors such as Charlotte Delbo and Nelly Sachs.

Recently scholars have begun to address the absence of women's voices in Holocaust studies, arguing that women's experiences, and their reactions to those experiences, were in fact very different from those of men. Joy Miller is one scholar who believes that overlooking such distinctly feminine issues is to negate these women's unique experiences. She writes that, "The thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of women in Auschwitz reveal distinctions unique only to females" (Miller 185). Myrna Goldenberg concurs with this statement, explaining that we must

closely examine the memoirs of women as well as men in order to represent the Holocaust more fully (327).

The subject of gendered differences in the Holocaust is a controversial one. Lawrence Langer is one Holocaust scholar who disputes the importance of gender during the Holocaust: "It seems to me that nothing could be crueler or more callous than the attempt to dredge up from this landscape of universal destruction a mythology of comparative endurance that awards favor to one group of individuals over another" (Preempting 58). The aim of scholars such as Miller, however, is not to award favor to women at the expense of men, but rather to include the often-overlooked experiences of women in Holocaust studies that have overwhelmingly focused on men.

There is no doubt that every victim of the Holocaust — man, woman, Jew, or gentile — was subjected to dehumanizing physical and mental torture. Women survivors, however, have depicted very different experiences from men in their autobiographical testimonies. In the case of Jewish victims, Joy Miller attributes these differences to the fact that women faced a "double jeopardy" of being not only Jewish, but Jewish women, the child bearers who alone had the ability to carry on the Jewish "race." Daniel Patterson is another scholar who holds this opinion; he writes that one unique aspect of the Holocaust was "the murder not only of human beings but of the very origin of human life and of human sanctity" — the murder of the Jewish mother and child (7-8). Indeed, it has been argued that the Nazis' "final solution" was one of the first such events in history that "did not treat the female population primarily as spoils of war but instead explicitly sentenced women and children to death" (Ringelheim, "The Split" 344).

To accomplish this end, women with children were generally selected for death upon arrival in concentration camps, while others were separated from their children or forced to make what Miller calls "choiceless choices" by selecting one child over another in an effort to save at least one from impending death (xxi). It was made a capital offense for women to become pregnant or bear children in the camps; women were often forced to kill their own infants, as well as other women's infants, in order to survive (Karay 298, Goldenberg 329).

The violation of the sanctity of the relationship between mother and child was not the only defilement of women during this extraordinary period. Some scholars cite experiences of women that are unique due to their biological sex as reasons to study the importance of gender in the Holocaust. Myrna Goldenberg highlights the vulnerability of young women as objects of potential sexual assault and humiliation (335). Indeed, many women were forced to prostitute themselves, faced sterilization and mandated abortions, and were subjected to degrading acts of sexual perversion. Miller writes that, although both men and women faced sexual and physical abuse, "women were subjected to atrocities that men rarely experienced or reported" (185).

While the sexual exploitation of women and the problems mothers faced concerning their children and child-bearing seem to be important reasons to acknowledge gendered differences during the Holocaust, some scholars argue that it is also important not to marginalize women further by focusing strictly on their uniquely feminine experiences. As Sara Horowitz writes, "Limiting our discussion in this way would - ironically - serve to reinscribe male experience as normative for the development of a master narrative, and would relegate women to the category of the mother, or the victim of sexual abuse" ("Women" 375). Indeed, many proponents of gendered studies of the Holocaust emphasize that gender is only one component of survivors' experiences, and that studying differences between the genders should provide better understanding of the victimization that occurred during the Holocaust (Ringelheim, "The Split" 349-350; Horowitz, "Women" 366-371). Horowitz continues this reasoning for a gendered approach to Holocaust studies by writing, "Their [women's] writing expands our cognitive and psychological understanding of the Holocaust, using narratives of victimization and survival to meditate on the problematics of memory, testimony, and trauma" ("Women" 374).

Joan Ringelheim explores these "problematics" by relating the story of "Pauline," who had been sexually molested by male relatives of the people who were hiding her during the Holocaust. Pauline was unsure whether her molestation was important within the context of the Holocaust. Ringelheim explains Pauline's insecurity about the importance of her own victimization by stating, "Her memory was split between traditional versions of Holocaust history and her own experience. [ . . . ] A line divides what is considered peculiar or specific to women from what has been designated as the proper collective memory of, or narrative about, the Holocaust" ("The Split" 344). Therefore, women victims like Pauline have been unsure whether their own testimonies of suffering belong with other "normative" experiences recounted from the Holocaust. With its absence, the missing voice of these women has greatly shaped our perspective of the Holocaust. For, as Ringelheim argues, though Pauline's story might not be typical, "If Anne Frank's diary remains the paradigm of hiding, we will never know, because it will be assumed that danger lurked only when Germans located those in hiding" (345).

The search for a better understanding of the complex phenomenon of victimization during the Holocaust is a common theme in arguments advocating the importance of studying women's unique experiences during that time. Scholars such as Lawrence Langer, however, are concerned that there is a danger in "overstating the importance of a biologically unique experience," arguing that the "ultimate sense of loss unites former victims in a violated world beyond gender" (Preempting 56-57). Langer is not the only dissenting voice from the host of scholars advocating gender studies of the Holocaust. His opinion is echoed by one Holocaust survivor, Ruth Bondy, who expresses

her own misgivings by writing, "Cyklon B did not differentiate between men and women; the same death swept them all away. [ . . . ] Why should I focus on women? Any division of the Holocaust and its sufferers according to gender seem[s] offensive to me" (310). However, Bondy continues by stating that she did not want the story of the women of Theresienstadt, where she herself was imprisoned, to be "left out" of our knowledge about the Holocaust. Bondy tells the story of mothers of young children who had the opportunity either to present themselves for selection to work, or to go directly to the gas with their children: "Only two of about six hundred mothers of young children appeared for selection; all the others decided to stay with their children to the end" (324). Although the wish to remember the selfless actions of these women is reminiscent of arguments validating gendered studies of the Holocaust, Bondy reemphasizes her point of contention by writing that "Most of the prisoners[ . . . ], both men and women, tried to stay humane to the end, united as human beings" (325).

Joan Ringelheim notes that some could argue that rape, abortion, sexual exploitation, and pregnancy are always a potential part of women's lives, and that the ubiquitous nature of these experiences causes them to be irrelevant within the context of such a cataclysmic event ("The Split" 345). This view is implicitly upheld by Cynthia Ozick, the author of a short story titled "The Shawl" (to be discussed later in this paper), which seems to deal with the "gendered" issue of motherhood and the trauma of losing a child. Ozick believes that, by emphasizing the importance of gender in the Holocaust, we are attempting to identify the Holocaust as something that did not happen to "just Jews," but to women: their being Jewish becomes a mere detail. She writes, "It is not a detail. It is everything, the whole story. [ . . . ] The Holocaust happened to victims who were not seen as men, women, or children, but as Jews" (qtd. in Ringelheim, "The Split" 348-349).

Lawrence Langer seems to concur with this statement; he believes that, as victims, the men, women, and children who were murdered or who survived the Holocaust were not agents of their own fate and were thus unable to fulfill their traditionally gendered roles. Langer argues that women's efforts to create for themselves a gendered role during the Holocaust were futile and that these efforts were in fact "mocked" by events beyond any victim's control. Because Langer believes that gendered roles were impossible to maintain during the Holocaust, he concludes that the issue of gender cannot be considered important in the aftermath of the Holocaust (Preempting 49).

Joan Ringelheim, however, argues that women were indeed able to fulfill their traditionally gendered roles within the camps. Evidence gathered from her oral interviews with survivors indicates that women combated the pain of starvation by sharing recipes, that they altered the rags they were given to wear into more adequate clothing, and that they turned mutual isolation into relationships or surrogate families. Whereas many of the

men in the camps concentrated on their own individual survival, many women fought desperately to save other women prisoners with whom they had formed an emotional bond; as one survivor said, "Women's friendship is different than men's friendship you see ... we have these motherly instincts, friend instincts more ... But that's what was holding the women together because everybody had to have someone to lean on, to depend on. The men, no ... the men didn't do that" (qtd. in Ringelheim, "Women" 250-251). Ringelheim concludes that women transformed their habits of raising children or their experience of nurturing into the care of their new, camp families - they became mutually supportive of each other, helping them to survive the dehumanization and hopelessness of the camps (248).

At times, however, it is apparent that women were not able to fulfill their traditional role as mothers or nurturers during the Holocaust, such as when some women attempted to save the lives of mothers by killing their infants at the time of birth. While this fact might seem to uphold Langer's argument that, ultimately, women were unable to be "mothers" in the camps, it does remain important to question whether we should not, therefore, recognize the horror and trauma created by the Nazis in stripping away this inherent maternal role. Gisella Perl, a woman who served as a doctor in Auschwitz, was forced to kill many newborn babies, who, if discovered, would have served as death sentences for their mothers. As a mother herself, she felt extreme anguish with the death of each infant and her own inability to perform her traditional role as a caregiver: "I loved those newborn babies not as a doctor but as a mother and it was again and again ni own child whom I killed to save the life of a woman" (qtd. in Patterson 17).

Despite controversy, it seems that progress has been made in recognizing and studying women's unique experiences during the Holocaust. Cynthia Crane is one scholar who has delved into this controversial area; her recent book, *Divided Lives*, demonstrates the previously overlooked suffering of those Jewish women who escaped internment in the camps by being married to, or the daughter of, an "Aryan." These women, who were called *Mischlinge* by Hitler to denote them as "half-breeds" or "hybrids," faced a duality of identity - that of Christian and Jew, German and Jew - though many were not practicing Jews, but had actually been baptized as Christians (Crane 24-26). These women suffered through the deaths of many of their Jewish family members at the hands of the Nazis, yet they themselves were spared. The emotional pain and guilt that these women suffered cannot be ignored, for as one survivor states: "We shared the fears of those who failed to survive persecution, but we also had to endure the shame of having fared better than our fathers, our relations, our friends. We did not emerge unscathed" (qtd. in Crane 33).

The arguments of scholars such as Joan Ringelheim, Joy Miller, and Cynthia Crane have sparked new studies that consider women's unique issues during the Holocaust. S. Lillian Kremer

completed a recent study of women's diverse experiences during this time as represented in imaginative literature, focusing upon American writings by and about women and comparing their stories with eyewitness testimonies. In her study, Kremer concluded that there were, in fact, apparent gendered differences in the suffering and response of women. She did not argue that one gender had suffered more than the other, or that the suffering of one gender was more tragic, but that women had been vastly under-represented in studies of Holocaust literature.

It is not only in studies of Holocaust literature that women seem to have been continually under-represented. Joan Ringelheim draws attention to the fact that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Permanent Exhibition contains no conceptualization of women during the Holocaust, although it does contain segments dedicated to the victimization of Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and political prisoners. It is not that she believes a separate section dedicated solely to women is necessary, because "the lives and deaths of women are too integrated into the entire picture to segregate their experiences" (Ringelheim, "The Split" 347-348). She does believe, however, that within the Permanent Exhibition it should be recognized and indicated, where appropriate, that women were victimized in particular ways.

Because women's experiences have continually been marginalized, much of the public's understanding of the Holocaust could be distorted or incomplete. For instance, one of possibly the most influential genres of Holocaust narratives, film, often represents women victims of the Holocaust as undiminished icons of physical beauty.

With the hitherto modest consideration given to women's experiences during the Holocaust, as well as the large controversy surrounding the topic, the thesis of this study is that works of imaginative literature and cinema offer a way to test whether women's experiences should truly be held as distinct from those of men, and if so, what these differences were and whether they caused a profoundly different effect on women survivors. In short, were women "double victims" because of their gender?

In the chapters that follow, unique works of prose and poetry by women authors and survivors are compared with a like number of distinctly male voices. This study is then extended to a number of popular European and American films. While the focus in each case is on women as victims, the broader view inherent in this study reveals interesting and in some cases surprising twists on the position of Ringelheim and Miller. Without assuming to end all controversy, the conclusion argues the importance of exploring beyond the traditional canon of Holocaust literature to approach a more complete understanding of the complex phenomena of victimization that occurred during the Holocaust.

#### Editor's note:

The length of Ms. Copeland's thesis precludes publication in its entirety in this journal. We have chosen to publish Chapters One and Five. Chapter Two: Imaginative Literature Written by Male Authors, Chapter Three: Imaginative Literature Written by Female Authors, and Chapter Four: Imaginative Holocaust Films Directed by Men and Women can be found on the Inquiry website.

#### Chapter Five: Conclusion: New Perspectives on Double Victimization

Joan Ringelheim and Joy Miller are two proponents of gendered studies of the Holocaust who argue that women were subjected to different victimization than were men, thus necessitating an acknowledgement of and more studies about women's unique experiences. However, Holocaust scholar Lawrence Langer and author Cynthia Ozick both argue against focusing upon the suffering of women in the context of an event that sentenced all Jews to death, whether man, woman, or child. With such controversy surrounding this issue, the purpose of this paper has been to examine the body of imaginative literature and film rising from the Holocaust in an attempt to discover evidence supporting or contradicting the argument that women's experiences should be held as distinct from those of men.

Studying fictional representations of women in imaginative literature and cinema has proven to be an effective way to test whether recent arguments for gendered studies of the Holocaust are well founded. Given the array of works by male and female authors and directors reviewed here, it seems that both men and women address in some way the gender issues discussed by Ringelheim and Miller, often supporting the thesis that women were doubly victimized by not only being Jews (or, for the non-Jewish victims, simply prisoners), but women. The previous chapters having demonstrated that imaginative literature in fact reflects women's double victimization, this chapter will further investigate how male and female authors and directors have dealt with these unique experiences, with the ultimate goal of expanding upon the standard perspective of Holocaust experience offered by such renowned authors as Elie Wiesel, Tadeusz Borowski, and even Anne Frank. An important issue to be discussed in this chapter, then, will be how male and female authors and directors have treated women's experiences: whether women have been depicted in ways sympathetic to their plight, or whether their victimization is exploited for prurient interests or commercial exploitation. Because male authors have established the paradigm for Holocaust experience, this chapter will also consider whether or not there is a profound difference between the portrayals of double victimization given us by male authors and directors and those given by female authors and directors.

Of those studied, the male authors Borowski, Wallant, Styron, and Ka-Tzemik, the female authors Delbo, Sachs, and Ozick, and the film directors Spielberg, Pakula, Lumet, and Cavani all portray different degrees and perceptions of what could be termed women's double victimization. For the purposes

of this paper, the types of double victimization studied were the violation of the maternal bond between mother and child and the sexual exploitation of women through rape and sexual humiliation.

While Elie Wiesel largely ignores the issues surrounding women in the Holocaust, his novel *Night* can form a foundation of men's experiences from which we can measure that of women. For instance, whereas Wiesel describes the competitive and often ruthless nature of the men's camp, where even fathers could not always count on their sons, Charlotte Delbo's play "Who Will Carry the Word?" demonstrates the solidarity and support of women in non-relative groups such as those discussed by Ringelheim. Indeed, while a more in-depth comparison between these two works is not possible here, further meaningful contrasts can be found, portraying very different reactions of men and women to such universal forces within the camps as starvation, abuse, and disease.

In contrast to Wiesel's *Night*, Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* forms a comparison between the men's and women's camps. His narrator, Tadek, bluntly describes the worse conditions of the women's camp, dispassionately relating the necessity of women to use sex as a commodity in order to obtain essentials like food and clothing. Tadek also deals with issues concerning the women in the experimental block, pregnancy, childbirth, interrupted motherhood and "the Puff." In the short story, "Auschwitz, Our Home (A Letter)," Tadek implores his own loved one interned in the women's camp to "try to grasp the essence of this pattern of daily events, discarding your sense of horror and loathing and contempt, and find for it all a philosophic formula. For the gas chambers and the gold stolen from the victims, for the roll-call and for the Puff, for the frightened civilians and for the 'old numbers'."

Tadek's instructions, however, to discard horror and loathing and contempt, belie Borowski's true wish that he might be able to "give an account of the fraud and mockery to the living - to speak up for the dead" (116). Indeed, Borowski seems to be successful in relating that awful fraud and mockery of humanity that was the Holocaust, depicting not only his own experiences as a somewhat privileged political prisoner through the narration of Tadek, but also an extent of women's double victimization. However, while Borowski is often effective in imparting the horror of women's experiences, he does not explore the traumatic effects of their victimization, nor does his narrator offer a woman's perspective, but rather he demonstrates women's victimization as merely a way of life in Auschwitz. In this way, Borowski does not supply his women victims with a voice; though he describes women's experiences, he does not engender sympathy for their particularly unique plight.

American writers Edward Lewis Wallant and William Styron focus more upon the implications of double victimization than does Tadeusz Borowski, each approaching the Holocaust in

a similar way with their respective novels, *The Pawnbroker* and *Sophie's Choice*. Both novels reflect upon Holocaust experience years after the fact, portraying the lastingly traumatic effects of experiencing such horrors of the Holocaust as a parent's impotence in the face of his or her children's deaths. Wallant, however, further dramatizes the issues confronting his protagonist, Sol, by depicting Sol's wife's sexual humiliation, and later, death. While Ruth is depicted as a beautiful woman in Sol's flashbacks to happier times, the brief portrayal of her victimization in the brothel effectively eschews eroticism, emphasizing instead her hopeless state.

The two authors diverge in their depictions of the survivors, however, for Sol is a nondescript, paunchy man, who wears old-fashioned glasses and seems older than his age. Sophie, on the other hand, returns to being the object of intense sexual desire that she had been prior to her Holocaust experience. She is an iconic, beautiful heroine, one who is still abused even in post-Holocaust Flatbush by her lover. By making Sophie so absolutely erotic in her post-Holocaust victimization, author William Styron detracts from the tale she recounts to Stingo, coloring her experience with Stingo's overwhelming erotic fascination with her. This is unfortunate, for Sophie's dilemma of having to choose to save one of her children's lives is a profoundly moving example of Joy Miller's argument for women's double victimization.

The director Alan J. Pakula remains faithful to Styron's present-day depiction of Sophie as an incredibly attractive woman in his (1982) film version of *Sophie's Choice*, although he is careful to de-emphasize her sexuality during flashback scenes of the Holocaust. Likewise, in the (1965) film version of *The Pawnbroker*, director Sidney Lumet closely follows Wallant's formula, which successfully demonstrates double victimization as well as the resulting traumatic effects upon both victim and survivor. These two films represent a departure from what seems to be a tendency of film directors to depict beautiful women as arguably erotic in their victimization. Interestingly, a woman directs the film most notable for this transgression: Liliana Cavani's (1973) *The Night Porter*.

*The Night Porter* is effective in that it straightforwardly depicts women's unique vulnerability within the camp to rape and sexual humiliation, as well as the long lasting effects of such victimization. However, this film can be criticized for engendering voyeuristic interest in Lucia, a victim who is portrayed as undoubtedly erotic and even complicit in her own victimization. Lucia enchants the audience with her beauty, and the perversely fascinating relationship between Lucia and Max ultimately undermines the power of her terrible victimization.

Steven Spielberg has been similarly criticized for a latent eroticism in his depiction of women's victimization; however, his portrayal of their victimization seems less voyeuristic than emphatic, in the controversial shower scene as well as the

erotically charged scene between Amon Goeth and his Jewish housemaid, Helen Hirsch. Indeed, Spielberg's intent for the scene between Goeth and Helen seems to have stemmed from a desire to illustrate the irrationality of Goeth's belief in the Jewish temptress, for it is obvious that Goeth's advances are frightening and repulsive to Helen, whose life, of course, depends upon Goeth's continued fascination with her. It is important to note, however, that Jewish men are depicted very differently from Jewish women in *Schindler's List* and can neither be described as attractive nor sexual creatures; indeed, there has been no criticism as to the exploitation of men in *Schindler's List*, although they too are shown unclothed in camp selection scenes. This fact lends an ambiguous note to Spielberg's true intentions for depicting what could be thought of as a disproportionate number of attractive women in *Schindler's List*, although the emotional impact and sympathy engendered for the victims during these most criticized scenes often seem to outweigh what has been called voyeuristic in this film.

To return to literature, Holocaust survivor Ka-Tzetnik's *House of Dolls* also occupies an ambiguous position between portraying women's experiences perceptively and forthrightly, and portraying their experiences voyeuristically. While this novel effectively imparts the horror of forced prostitution in a camp brothel, it risks attracting prurient interest for what is possibly the inherently voyeuristic nature of such a direct narrative about rape, mutilation, and sexual humiliation. Nevertheless, Daniella's wish for her experiences to be remembered forms a litany throughout the novel; though the nature of her experiences might attract voyeuristic interest, the author's motive for relating Daniella's experiences seems to stem from a desire to inform others about such experiences that are today, and were then, incomprehensible.

Although Cynthia Ozick is not herself a Holocaust survivor, her two short stories, collectively titled *The Shawl*, are perceptive and sensitive in depicting women's double victimization, intuitively realizing the disintegration of a mother's sanity along with the death of her child. With *The Shawl*, Ozick deftly addresses women's unique issues of violated motherhood and rape within the camp, illustrating the dilemma of a mother who has gone to great lengths to keep her child alive, only to become unable to help her at the most critical moment, in which the powers of the camp force this mother to repress the maternal urge to save her child from death. Seeing her screaming daughter being carried across the camp to be thrown against the electric wire, Rosa knows that any effort she might make to save her child would be futile and could only result in her own death, as well. In witnessing Magda's murder, however, Rosa is forever changed. She is rendered unable to live with the reality of her daughter's death, so she must fabricate her own reality in order to reconcile the fact she lived, while her daughter died.

While Ozick is powerful in her illumination of women's experiences, Rosa's victimization through rape is merely implied;

Magda's true parentage is revealed to the reader only through innuendo and supposition. Rosa struggles, at times unsuccessfully, to suppress the horror of her memories of this victimization, although she finally admits, "I was forced by a German, it's true, and more than once" (43). Ozick was, however, the only female author in this study to address the issue of sexual exploitation - Nelly Sachs' two poems studied here focus entirely upon the destruction of the maternal bond, while Charlotte Delbo's play focuses more upon the supportive relationships between women and the degrading effects of de-feminization in the camp. In fact, Liliana Cavani, director of *The Night Porter*, was the only woman studied who straightforwardly confronted this important factor of double victimization, although her film seems to emphasize the voyeuristic interest that can occur when dealing with this particular type of victimization.

Conversely, several of the male authors and directors, such as Ka-Tzetnik, Wallant, Spielberg, and, to a lesser extent, Borowski, straightforwardly explore the issues of prostitution, rape, and sexual humiliation, often very effectively demonstrating the horror of this victimization upon women. While one can only speculate as to the reason why the male authors in this study seem to be more willing to delve into this type of victimization, the inherent shame and degradation of such a traumatic event could affect the ability of women to expose it so openly. However, one can question whether it is indeed necessary to portray this victimization so explicitly, for works like Ozick's *The Shawl* and Lumet's film *The Pawnbroker*, both of which merely imply women's sexual victimization, seem to be just as effective in imparting the very real trauma of such events as rape and sexual humiliation. Ka-Tzetnik and Cavani, however, choose to portray women's victimization more graphically, raising the issue of whether their intent is to increase our understanding of the complex victimization that occurred during the Holocaust, or whether there is an underlying, prurient interest driving these depictions of attractive female victims in such an arguably exploitative way. Perhaps the extremely sensitive nature of this victimization automatically renders any attempt at realistic portrayal voyeuristic and even, at times, pornographic - an issue that is not easily solved. Despite this dilemma, the fictional representation of the Holocaust in poetry, drama, fiction and film continues with no apparent slackening of either audience interest or the readiness of artists to tackle this extraordinarily complex and freighted subject.

The extent to which male authors and directors dominated this literature is giving way slowly to a richer mix of men's and women's voices, especially in the memoir. Whether this new balance will produce works more sensitive to the double victimization of women is as yet unclear. The evidence of this study is that, while some male authors and directors have proven remarkably sensitive in this regard, previously overlooked female authors can contribute greatly to a better understanding of this victimization, revealing new insight and interesting comparisons



to Holocaust experiences that have been so widely documented by men. Indeed, it is clearly evident that Elie Wiesel's *Night* and even Anne Frank's *Diary* can no longer remain the major narratives influencing our understanding of the Holocaust. While both of these works form important perspectives, they are only two pieces of the puzzle that makes up this incomprehensible period in history. However, as the literature of the Holocaust moves increasingly into the domain of popular culture, the challenge for audiences and artists alike will be to develop sensitivity to the double victimization of women without slipping into a kind of pornographic exploitation of female vulnerability. When that happens, the obscenity that was the Holocaust is compounded.

#### End notes:

<sup>5</sup>See page 112 for reference. The "old numbers" were those camp inmates who had been imprisoned the longest, which often gained them seniority in the prisoners' camp hierarchy. The numbers tattooed on their arms were much lower than newer arrivals' numbers, and Borowski describes these older numbers as a source of pride for inmates because they had survived for so long within the camp.

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#### Faculty comment:

Ms. Copeland's mentor, Professor Mark Cory, believes that her work is truly extraordinary. In his letter of nomination he wrote:

One of the deep satisfactions for me in teaching comes from the occasional crystallizing moment when a gifted but rudderless student discovers a way to focus a cluster of interests into a coherent pattern, which then becomes richly suggestive in terms of research and career. Almost two years ago, after working at a superb level in my course on literary reflections of the Holocaust and having visited the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in DC, Shauna found such a pattern. The thesis she defended at the close of the fall semester represents the culmination of two years of continued reading, a successful SILO grant proposal, and presentations at two conferences. Shauna will be recognized this spring as an honors graduate summa cum laude for the totality of her work; this last piece



is one of the most exciting cooperative projects I have participated in at this institution.

As an English major, Shauna has acquired excellent analytical and writing skills, which she combines with a more general interest in gender theory and its application to popular culture. Her dilemma coming into her final year was that she became rather more intrigued about the problems associated with the literature of the Holocaust than about the subjects typically chosen by English majors for their honors theses. Knowing then that we would be bringing three noted feminist scholars of the Holocaust to campus during the fall semester of 2001, I suggested she read the recent books by Cynthia Crane and Joy Miller to see whether an application of their provocative thesis to fictional women in Holocaust literature might be of interest. This was the genesis for what seems to me to be an absolutely cutting-edge topic. The controversy stirred by Crane and Miller, respectively, is whether women victims of the Holocaust suffered in a qualitatively different way than men. Noted scholars such as Lawrence Langer have been loud in their dismissal of this idea, almost strident. The most famous spokesperson for Jewish victims in this country, Elie Wiesel, himself a prolific author of Holocaust literature, is less dismissive, but has stopped short of subscribing to the thesis. Not surprisingly, Wiesel's fiction depicts the plight of male protagonists; women, to the extent they figure at all, serve merely to acknowledge and call attention to the male protagonists as objects of feminine desire. What had yet to be done, and what Shauna undertakes with her thesis, is to test the Crane and Miller

arguments against some of the best-known female characters in the canon of Holocaust literature to see whether in fact authors have recognized and incorporated a qualitatively different kind of suffering in their depiction of women victims, and if so, whether there is yet additional difference in the way male and female authors articulate this different suffering.

In that fall I was able to introduce Shauna to Cynthia Crane, Joy Miller and Elaine Martin (Univ. of Alabama), and to invite her to the 2001 conference and workshop for educators held annually in Northwest Arkansas. The topic of that conference was perfect: "Women in the Holocaust." By April of 2003, Shauna shared preliminary results of her study at the undergraduate research conference in Arkadelphia. She then won a Sturgis study abroad grant to travel to Europe and visit sites related to the Holocaust in Vienna, Berlin and Prague in order to gauge the extent to which women's voices are being featured in exhibits and memorials, if at all. This past fall she was a featured presenter at the 2002 conference and workshop for educators, reading a paper extracted from the thesis.

I see Shauna's work as marvelous preparation for graduate study, with the potential for exciting teaching and scholarship in her future. At the annual meeting of the German Studies Association in Washington, D.C., last fall, papers related to this controversy attracted more attention than any other. Her honors thesis committee found her work mature enough for publication, a judgment already anticipated by her two conference presentations.

DOUBLE VICTIMS:  
FICTIONAL REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN THE HOLOCAUST

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**Abstract:**

*Traditional Holocaust studies have largely overlooked women's unique voices, instead treating the eloquent and moving narratives of such renowned authors as Elie Wiesel and Tadeusz Borowski as definitive sources on "the" Holocaust experience. Recently, scholars have addressed the absence of women's voices in Holocaust studies, arguing that women's experiences, and their reactions to those experiences, were in fact very different from those of men. This topic is a controversial one, and some scholars argue that women's suffering should not be focused upon in the context of an event that sentenced all Jews to death.*

*With such controversy surrounding this issue, the thesis of this paper is that works of imaginative literature and film offer a way to test whether women's experiences should truly be held as distinct from those of men and, if so, what these differences were and whether they caused a profoundly different effect on women survivors. In short, were women "double victims" because of their gender?*

*Following the premise that women authors and directors might prove to be more likely to portray women's unique experiences, this paper compares works of Holocaust literature and film by female authors and directors with a like number of distinctly male voices. This study pays particular attention to portrayals of what could be termed as women's "double victimization," such as the separation between mother and child, the mother's frequent inability to save her child, and sexual humiliation and rape. Because of the sensitive nature of the types of victimization many women endured, this study determines whether each author or director has portrayed women's double victimization sensitively, or whether it seems that women victims have been exploited for prurient interest.*

*While it seems that women authors and directors might have proven to be more perceptive of women's double victimization, this paper reveals that some male authors and directors have proven remarkably adept at depicting women's experiences effectively, yet sensitively. However, previously overlooked female authors like Charlotte Delbo and Cynthia Ozick can contribute greatly to a better understanding of women's double victimization, often revealing new insight into Holocaust experiences that have been so widely documented by men.*

*This paper's conclusion supports the arguments of scholars who claim that women's unique experiences during the Holocaust are deserving of more study, while proving that the traditional canon of Holocaust literature and film cannot provide a complete understanding of the complex phenomena of victimization that occurred during the Holocaust. This study will become increasingly important as the literature and film of the Holocaust move farther into the domain of popular culture, challenging audiences and artists alike to develop an understanding of and sensitivity to the double victimization of women.*

**Chapter One: Introduction: Double Victimization**

Although Anne Frank, clearly the best-known author of the Holocaust, was a young woman, the fact is that most of those who have influenced our perception of the Holocaust have been men. Despite the many women who

have contributed to the growing body of fiction, memoirs, poems, plays, and films about this period, the moving and eloquent testimonies of such men as Elie Wiesel and Tadeusz Borowski have come to be regarded as encompassing what all victims suffered during the Holocaust, and most studies have treated their narratives as definitive sources on "the" Holocaust experience. This very influence, however, has tended to mute the less strident voices of women authors such as Charlotte Delbo and Nelly Sachs.

Recently scholars have begun to address the absence of women's voices in Holocaust studies, arguing that women's experiences, and their reactions to those experiences, were in fact very different from those of men. Joy Miller is one scholar who believes that overlooking such distinctly feminine issues is to negate these women's unique experiences. She writes that, "The thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of women in Auschwitz reveal distinctions unique only to females" (Miller 185). Myrna Goldenberg concurs with this statement, explaining that we must closely examine the memoirs of women as well as men in order to represent the Holocaust more fully (327).

The subject of gendered differences in the Holocaust is a controversial one. Lawrence Langer is one Holocaust scholar who disputes the importance of gender during the Holocaust: "It seems to me that nothing could be crueler or more callous than the attempt to dredge up from this landscape of universal destruction a mythology of comparative endurance that awards favor to one group of individuals over another" (Preempting 58). The aim of scholars such as Miller, however, is not to award favor to women at the expense of men, but rather to include the often-overlooked experiences of women in Holocaust studies that have overwhelmingly focused on men.

There is no doubt that every victim of the Holocaust -- man, woman, Jew, or gentile -- was subjected to dehumanizing physical and mental torture. Women survivors, however, have depicted very different experiences from men in their autobiographical testimonies. In the case of Jewish victims, Joy Miller attributes these differences to the fact that women faced a "double jeopardy" of being not only Jewish, but Jewish women, the child bearers who alone had the ability to carry on the Jewish "race." Daniel Patterson is another scholar who holds this opinion; he writes that one unique aspect of the Holocaust was "the murder not only of human beings but of the very origin of human life and of human sanctity" -- the murder of the Jewish mother and child (7-8). Indeed, it has been argued that the Nazis' "final solution" was one of the first such events in history that "did not treat the female population primarily as spoils of war but instead explicitly sentenced women and children to death" (Ringelheim, "The Split" 344).

To accomplish this end, women with children were generally selected for death upon arrival in concentration camps, while others were separated from their children or forced to make what Miller calls "choiceless choices" by selecting one child over another in an effort to save at least one from impending death (xxi). It was made a capital offense for women to become pregnant or bear children in the camps; women were often forced to kill their own infants, as well as other women's infants, in order to survive (Karay 298, Goldenberg 329). The violation of the sanctity of the relationship between mother and child was not the only defilement of women during this extraordinary period. Some scholars cite experiences of women that are unique due to their biological sex as reasons to study the importance of gender in the Holocaust. Myrna Goldenberg highlights the vulnerability of young women as objects of potential sexual assault and humiliation (335). Indeed, many women were forced to prostitute themselves, faced sterilization and mandated abortions, and were subjected to degrading acts of sexual perversion. Miller writes that, although both men and women faced sexual and physical abuse, "women were subjected to atrocities that men rarely experienced or reported" (185).

While the sexual exploitation of women and the problems mothers faced concerning their children and child-bearing seem to be important reasons to acknowledge gendered differences during the Holocaust, some scholars argue that it is also important not to marginalize women further by focusing strictly on their uniquely

feminine experiences. As Sara Horowitz writes, "Limiting our discussion in this way would - ironically - serve to reinscribe male experience as normative for the development of a master narrative, and would relegate women to the category of the mother, or the victim of sexual abuse" ("Women" 375). Indeed, many proponents of gendered studies of the Holocaust emphasize that gender is only one component of survivors' experiences, and that studying differences between the genders should provide better understanding of the victimization that occurred during the Holocaust (Ringelheim, "The Split" 349-350; Horowitz, "Women" 366-371). Horowitz continues this reasoning for a gendered approach to Holocaust studies by writing, "Their [women's] writing expands our cognitive and psychological understanding of the Holocaust, using narratives of victimization and survival to meditate on the problematics of memory, testimony, and trauma" ("Women" 374).

Joan Ringelheim explores these "problematics" by relating the story of "Pauline," who had been sexually molested by male relatives of the people who were hiding her during the Holocaust. Pauline was unsure whether her molestation was important within the context of the Holocaust. Ringelheim explains Pauline's insecurity about the importance of her own victimization by stating, "Her memory was split between traditional versions of Holocaust history and her own experience. [ . . . ] A line divides what is considered peculiar or specific to women from what has been designated as the proper collective memory of, or narrative about, the Holocaust" ("The Split" 344). Therefore, women victims like Pauline have been unsure whether their own testimonies of suffering belong with other "normative" experiences recounted from the Holocaust. With its absence, the missing voice of these women has greatly shaped our perspective of the Holocaust. For, as Ringelheim argues, though Pauline's story might not be typical, "If Anne Frank's diary remains the paradigm of hiding, we will never know, because it will be assumed that danger lurked only when Germans located those in hiding" (345).

The search for a better understanding of the complex phenomenon of victimization during the Holocaust is a common theme in arguments advocating the importance of studying women's unique experiences during that time. Scholars such as Lawrence Langer, however, are concerned that there is a danger in "overstating the importance of a biologically unique experience," arguing that the "ultimate sense of loss unites former victims in a violated world beyond gender" (Preempting 56-57). Langer is not the only dissenting voice from the host of scholars advocating gender studies of the Holocaust. His opinion is echoed by one Holocaust survivor, Ruth Bondy, who expresses her own misgivings by writing, "Cyklon B did not differentiate between men and women; the same death swept them all away. [ . . . ] Why should I focus on women? Any division of the Holocaust and its sufferers according to gender seem[s] offensive to me" (310). However, Bondy continues by stating that she did not want the story of the women of Theresienstadt, where she herself was imprisoned, to be "left out" of our knowledge about the Holocaust. Bondy tells the story of mothers of young children who had the opportunity either to present themselves for selection to work, or to go directly to the gas with their children: "Only two of about six hundred mothers of young children appeared for selection; all the others decided to stay with their children to the end" (324). Although the wish to remember the selfless actions of these women is reminiscent of arguments validating gendered studies of the Holocaust, Bondy reemphasizes her point of contention by writing that "Most of the prisoners [ . . . ], both men and women, tried to stay humane to the end, united as human beings" (325).

Joan Ringelheim notes that some could argue that rape, abortion, sexual exploitation, and pregnancy are always a potential part of women's lives, and that the ubiquitous nature of these experiences causes them to be irrelevant within the context of such a cataclysmic event ("The Split" 345). This view is implicitly upheld by Cynthia Ozick, the author of a short story titled "The Shawl" (to be discussed later in this paper), which seems to deal with the "gendered" issue of motherhood and the trauma of losing a child. Ozick believes that, by emphasizing the importance of gender in the Holocaust, we are attempting to identify the Holocaust as something that did not happen to "just Jews," but to women: their being Jewish becomes a mere detail. She writes, "It is not a detail. It is everything, the whole story. [ . . . ] The Holocaust happened to victims who were not seen as men, women, or children, but as Jews" (qtd. in Ringelheim, "The Split" 348-349).

Lawrence Langer seems to concur with this statement; he believes that, as victims, the men, women, and children who were murdered or who survived the Holocaust were not agents of their own fate and were thus unable to fulfill their traditionally gendered roles. Langer argues that women's efforts to create for themselves a gendered role during the Holocaust were futile and that these efforts were in fact "mocked" by events beyond any victim's control. Because Langer believes that gendered roles were impossible to maintain during the Holocaust, he concludes that the issue of gender cannot be considered important in the aftermath of the Holocaust (Preempting 49).

Joan Ringelheim, however, argues that women were indeed able to fulfill their traditionally gendered roles within the camps. Evidence gathered from her oral interviews with survivors indicates that women combated the pain of starvation by sharing recipes, that they altered the rags they were given to wear into more adequate clothing, and that they turned mutual isolation into relationships or surrogate families. Whereas many of the men in the camps concentrated on their own individual survival, many women fought desperately to save other women prisoners with whom they had formed an emotional bond; as one survivor said, "Women's friendship is different than men's friendship you see ... we have these motherly instincts, friend instincts more ... But that's what was holding the women together because everybody had to have someone to lean on, to depend on. The men, no ... the men didn't do that" (qtd. in Ringelheim, "Women" 250-251). Ringelheim concludes that women transformed their habits of raising children or their experience of nurturing into the care of their new, camp families - they became mutually supportive of each other, helping them to survive the dehumanization and hopelessness of the camps (248).

At times, however, it is apparent that women were not able to fulfill their traditional role as mothers or nurturers during the Holocaust, such as when some women attempted to save the lives of mothers by killing their infants at the time of birth. While this fact might seem to uphold Langer's argument that, ultimately, women were unable to be "mothers" in the camps, it does remain important to question whether we should not, therefore, recognize the horror and trauma created by the Nazis in stripping away this inherent maternal role. Gisella Perl, a woman who served as a doctor in Auschwitz, was forced to kill many newborn babies, who, if discovered, would have served as death sentences for their mothers. As a mother herself, she felt extreme anguish with the death of each infant and her own inability to perform her traditional role as a caregiver: "I loved those newborn babies not as a doctor but as a mother and it was again and again ni) own child whom I killed to save the life of a woman" (qtd. in Patterson 17).

Despite controversy, it seems that progress has been made in recognizing and studying women's unique experiences during the Holocaust. Cynthia Crane is one scholar who has delved into this controversial area; her recent book, *Divided Lives*, demonstrates the previously overlooked suffering of those Jewish women who escaped internment in the camps by being married to, or the daughter of, an "Aryan." These women, who were called *Mischlinge* by Hitler to denote them as "half-breeds" or "hybrids," faced a duality of identity - that of Christian and Jew, German and Jew - though many were not practicing Jews, but had actually been baptized as Christians (Crane 24-26). These women suffered through the deaths of many of their Jewish family members at the hands of the Nazis, yet they themselves were spared. The emotional pain and guilt that these women suffered cannot be ignored, for as one survivor states: "We shared the fears of those who failed to survive persecution, but we also had to endure the shame of having fared better than our fathers, our relations, our friends. We did not emerge unscathed" (qtd. in Crane 33).

The arguments of scholars such as Joan Ringelheim, Joy Miller, and Cynthia Crane have sparked new studies that consider women's unique issues during the Holocaust. S. Lillian Kremer completed a recent study of women's diverse experiences during this time as represented in imaginative literature, focusing upon American writings by and about women and comparing their stories with eyewitness testimonies. In her study, Kremer

concluded that there were, in fact, apparent gendered differences in the suffering and response of women. She did not argue that one gender had suffered more than the other, or that the suffering of one gender was more tragic, but that women had been vastly under-represented in studies of Holocaust literature.

It is not only in studies of Holocaust literature that women seem to have been continually under-represented. Joan Ringelheim draws attention to the fact that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Permanent Exhibition contains no conceptualization of women during the Holocaust, although it does contain segments dedicated to the victimization of Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and political prisoners. It is not that she believes a separate section dedicated solely to women is necessary, because "the lives and deaths of women are too integrated into the entire picture to segregate their experiences" (Ringelheim, "The Split" 347-348). She does believe, however, that within the Permanent Exhibition it should be recognized and indicated, where appropriate, that women were victimized in particular ways.

Because women's experiences have continually been marginalized, much of the public's understanding of the Holocaust could be distorted or incomplete. For instance, one of possibly the most influential genres of Holocaust narratives, film, often represents women victims of the Holocaust as undiminished icons of physical beauty.

With the hitherto modest consideration given to women's experiences during the Holocaust, as well as the large controversy surrounding the topic, the thesis of this study is that works of imaginative literature and cinema offer a way to test whether women's experiences should truly be held as distinct from those of men, and if so, what these differences were and whether they caused a profoundly different effect on women survivors. In short, were women "double victims" because of their gender?

In the chapters that follow, unique works of prose and poetry by women authors and survivors are compared with a like number of distinctly male voices. This study is then extended to a number of popular European and American films. While the focus in each case is on women as victims, the broader view inherent in this study reveals interesting and in some cases surprising twists on the position of Ringelheim and Miller. Without assuming to end all controversy, the conclusion argues the importance of exploring beyond the traditional canon of Holocaust literature to approach a more complete understanding of the complex phenomena of victimization that occurred during the Holocaust.

## **Chapter Two: Imaginative Literature Written by Male Authors**

This chapter will examine a few works by male authors who have been influential in shaping our perception of the Holocaust, focusing upon the different ways in which men have represented women in prose fiction.

Arguably the most influential Holocaust narrative is Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel's *Night*. Lawrence Langer claims that *Night* is the seminal work of Holocaust literature, important to the conclusion of any study of the Holocaust no matter what that study's premise: *Night* "is the *terminus a quo* for any investigation of the implication of the Holocaust, no matter what the *terminus ad quem*" (The Holocaust 75-76). More recently, Langer has described *Night* as "one of the most concisely powerful narratives of Auschwitz experience" (*Admitting* 98). With such acclaim, it is not surprising that this novel has made such an indelible mark upon Holocaust studies.

Born in Hungary in 1928, Elie Wiesel was deported to Auschwitz in 1944, along with his mother, father, and three sisters, as well as 15,000 other Jews from his birth town of Sighet. As the Russian troops approached Auschwitz in 1945, Wiesel and his father were marched to Buchenwald, where Wiesel's father died. Wiesel himself was liberated three months later by American troops. Because Wiesel and his father were able to survive together for several months, one of the major themes Wiesel explores in *Night* is the relationship

between fathers and sons, and how this relationship can often be distorted by the forces of the concentration camp. Because Wiesel focuses very closely on this autobiographical and obviously male issue, descriptions of women are largely absent.

When Wiesel's young protagonist, Eliezer, enters Auschwitz, he is with his father, mother, and younger sister, Tzipora.' Immediately upon arrival, his mother and younger sister are sent to the gas; their fate, however, goes largely unmentioned, as Wiesel concentrates on his and his father's struggles to survive. Contemplating his mother and sister's fate, Wiesel simply says, "I did not know that in that place, at that moment, I was parting from my mother and Tzipora forever" (*Night* 38-39).

Eliezer does think about his mother and sister occasionally, and he and his father each pretend for the sake of the other that their loved ones must still be alive: "Your mother is still a young woman," Eliezer's father says, "She must be in a labor camp. And Tzipora's a big girl now, isn't she? She must be in a camp, too" (54). It is understandable why Eliezer and his father cannot dwell on the deaths of their family members while struggling against their own death every day. However, Eliezer and his father's mutual denial of the women's fate reveals a deeper void left largely unexplored in this novel.

Eliezer does encounter other women in the camp. Wiesel focuses on one young woman in particular who works in the same warehouse. She is a "forced labor" inmate - a Jewish inmate passing herself as a non-Jew with the aid of forged papers, thus saving herself from the gas chamber. One day, Eliezer is brutally beaten by a Kapo and drags himself into a corner. This beautiful young girl wipes his brow, gives him a piece of bread, and talks him through his pain (60-61). Her small gesture of kindness, given at great personal risk, helps Eliezer to survive. This scene is immediately followed by a similar one, in which Eliezer's father is cruelly beaten with an iron bar. Eliezer watches in fury, but his fury is not directed towards the Kapo, but towards his father: "I had watched the whole scene without moving. I kept quiet. In fact I was thinking of how to get farther away so that I would not be hit myself. What is more, any anger I felt at that moment was directed, not against the Kapo, but against my father. That is what concentration camp life had made of me" (62).

With the juxtaposition of these two scenes, Wiesel illustrates the capacity for kindness and nurturing in the young girl within the inhumane context of the camp, while depicting Eliezer as a disloyal son, one who guiltily distances himself from his father to increase his own ability to survive. Joan Ringelheim addresses this issue by writing that, based on her interviews with Holocaust survivors, "men did not remain or become fathers as readily as women became mothers or nurturers" ("*Women*" 248). Thus it is difficult for Eliezer to accept the role reversal between himself and his father with equanimity. He secretly wishes to be rid of the extra burden of his father, because he is not mentally equipped to handle the responsibility of his father's life without anguish: "It's too late to save your old father, I said to myself. You ought to be having two rations of bread, two rations of soup . . ." (Wiesel, *Night* 115). The young woman, however, did not hesitate to help Eliezer, though she risked her own life in doing so.

Although Eliezer is able to suppress the urge to stop caring for his father, other sons in the novel cannot; at times, they forgo helping their struggling fathers so that they can gain just one piece of bread, even at the cost of their fathers' lives. This is exemplified in the following passage, which occurs during the Nazis' forced "death march" of the starving prisoners from Auschwitz to Buchenwald, farther from the Russian front:



I noticed an old man dragging himself along on all fours ... he had a bit of bread under his shirt. His eyes gleamed; a smile, like a grimace, lit up his dead face. And was immediately extinguished. A shadow had just loomed up near him. The shadow threw itself upon him. Felled to the ground, stunned with blows, the old man cried: "Meir. Meir, my boy! Don't you recognize me? I'm your father ... you're hurting me ... you're killing your father! I've got some bread ... for you too ... for you too. . . ." (106).

Eliezer's own feelings towards his father's dependency are constantly vacillating, swaying between assisting his father and the horrible possibility of deserting him. It is apparent, however, that he also depends upon his father for encouragement and support, and that each watches over the other to make sure he is not giving up, as illustrated when Eliezer pleads, "Come on, father ... We can lie down a bit, one after the other. I'll watch over you, and then you can watch over me. We won't let each other fall asleep. We'll look after each other" (95). There could have been no way to predict which son would stay by his father's side while another would not. This seems to support Lawrence Langer's argument, cited in the previous chapter, that no one was master of his own fate in the camps. In *Night*, the camp turns the relationships and roles of men upside down. This novel is indeed a very powerful narrative, but it is a narrative about men, giving us little insight into the experiences of women.

Of perhaps equal importance to studies of the Holocaust has been Art Spiegelman's two-volume *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. By recording his parents' experiences during the Holocaust, Spiegelman is attempting to understand how it affected the rest of their lives. His father, Vladek, is miserly and a hypochondriac; his mother, Anja, was depressed and committed suicide when he was 20-years-old. Spiegelman uses his own self-termed "comix" style to depict his persona, Artie, conducting a series of interviews with his father, using the medium of comics to illustrate more fully the horrors of his parents' experiences. In two volumes, Spiegelman portrays his parents eluding the Nazis, their capture and deportation to Auschwitz, and their subsequent ordeals in that concentration camp.

Throughout his dialogue with Artie, Vladek describes his younger self as a resourceful, intelligent individual who uses his wits to help himself and Anja to survive. Vladek must also relate Anja's experiences to Artie, for he had destroyed the diaries in which she had recorded her own experiences of the Holocaust. Vladek describes her as weak and dependent, unable to function without his constant ingenuity and encouragement. Indeed, without his help, Vladek intimates that Anja would never have survived the ordeal of first hiding from the Nazis, then struggling to live in Auschwitz. Artie, however, senses that his mother might have added something very different to their story: "I wish I got mom's story while she was alive. She was more sensitive ... it would give the book some balance" (Spiegelman, *Maus I* 132).

Sara Horowitz claims that, in many Holocaust narratives written by men, "women are portrayed as peripheral, helpless, and fragile" (367). This holds true in *Maus*; Anja's

experiences are mere details alongside Vladek's own near-epic stories of survival. When referring to their entrance to Auschwitz, Vladek says, "When we came, they pushed in one way the men, and somewhere else the women" (Spiegelman, *Maus II* 24). He then states, matter-of-factly, "They took from us our papers, our clothes and our hair" (25). This experience is not lingered over; he does not describe the same intrusive and humiliating experience described by women about their entrance into camps. Vladek does admit that the men were cold and afraid, and one man asks, "What about our wives and our - " (25). The men could not imagine what horror their wives were enduring, if they had not already been sent to the gas along with their children.

Vladek has difficulty recounting Anja's experiences to Artie, though Artie intermittently questions him about her experiences. To these questions Vladek finally answers, "I can tell you ... She went through the same what me: Terrible!" thus attempting to nullify the need to differentiate between the two (Spiegelman, *Maus I* 158). Artie persists, however, hungry for more clues as to what shaped his mother's personality. Vladek admits that, after Anja's suicide, her diaries held too many memories - he had burned them in a fit of depression, attempting to destroy the memories that had ultimately destroyed his wife. He was able to remember one sentence that she had written, however: "I wish my son, when he grows up, he will be interested by this" (159).

With more prodding by Artie, Vladek attempts to recreate Anja's experience. He describes Birkenau, a large extension of Auschwitz, remembering that it was the worst section of the camp: "It was 800 people in a building made for 50 horses. There it was just a death place with Jews waiting for gas ... and there it was Anja" (*Maus I* 151). Vladek makes it apparent that Anja could never have survived this "death place" were it not for his frequent, ingenious help. He recounts for Artie a letter that Anja had written to him while in the camp, "Each day I think to run into the electric wires and finish everything. But to know you are alive it gives me still to hope . . ." (53).

Perhaps it is for this reason that Vladek finds it so difficult to discuss Anja with Artie; after all that they had suffered and the risks they had taken to survive, her suicide came as an excruciating blow. Some of what Vladek reveals about Anja, however, belies his descriptions of her as such a frail, weak-willed woman. She was able to secure a job in the kitchen; rather than saving her kitchen scraps for herself, she gave them out to her friends. Vladek scolds her for this, saying, "Don't worry about friends. Believe me, they don't worry about you" (56).

Although this statement might have been true in Vladek's experience, it does not hold true for Anja, as is exemplified when Anja's friend helps to hide Anja from an angry Kapo. The Kapo searched Anja's barracks crazily from room to room but was unable to find her; throughout the Kapo's frenzied search, Anja's friend did not betray her hiding place. Later, the infuriated Kapo demanded that the woman she had been chasing step forward during a roll call. None of the women exposed Anja's secret, though Vladek recalls that the Kapo had made them "to run, to jump, to bend until they couldn't anymore. Then more, the same. For a few appels it went so, but nobody of Anja's friends gave her out" (66).

Throughout Vladek's narrative, Artie continues to search for his mother's voice. By destroying Anja's diaries, Vladek effectively combines her voice with his own imposing his own perceptions onto her experiences. Sara Horowitz claims that this absence of Anja's words exemplifies the way in which women's experiences were marginalized and subsumed into the master narrative of Nazi genocide ("Women" 367). This fact leaves not only Artie searching for his mother's unique story, but all others attempting to grasp the far-reaching effects of the Holocaust, as well.

The irrevocably damaging effects of the Holocaust are apparent in both of Spiegelman's parents; these effects are also deeply apparent in Sol Nazerman, a fictional Holocaust survivor who is the central character of Jewish American author Edward Lewis Wallant's *The Pawnbroker*. At one time, Sol Nazerman had a beautiful wife and two healthy children, all of whom were to become victims of the horror that he was able to survive. This fact causes him never-ending anguish and remorse, as well as repeated nightmarish dreams. Indeed, it is through Sol's dreams that the reader comes to understand his personality - in effect, Sol's spirit died along with his family, and he seems to be merely passing time until his own much-anticipated death.

While much of the storyline is centered on the possibility of Sol eventually reawakening and participating in life, his dreams reveal the awful fate of his family and the weight of his guilt that keeps him from doing just that. In these dreams, Sol is utterly helpless, completely unable to protect his wife and children.

The first dream depicts the family's deportation. They are riding in a cattle car, hundreds of people pressed together and unable to move. Because of the extremely cramped conditions, Sol is unable to keep his young son from falling and being trampled in the bottomless filth underfoot. Little David squeals and retches as he continues to slip and fall, begging his father to help him. Sol, however, is powerless to keep the boy from falling; he complains "peevisly" to his wife's screams that he cannot even move a muscle: "But I can't, I can't. I can do nothing" (Wallant 32). He realizes that his voice contains no passion; he has already become numb to his new reality, and his inability to save his family from this horror turns his emotions on end. Rather than feeling the desperate hope mingled with terror expressed in his wife's "burning, accusatory eyes, Sol is only able to feel cross. Realizing his lack of passion, Sol reiterates his statement, trying to convince his terrified wife (and perhaps himself) that he could no longer be their family's protector: "I am helpless, do you hear? [ ... ] I can do nothing." His son falls to the ground, and finally Sol shrieks at his wife, overcome by the roaring train, the wailing people, and his own impotence: "Nothing, nothing, nothing" (33).

Not only is Sol unable to save his children, he cannot save his wife from being forced into prostitution and later dying in the camp. After Sol's repeated inquiries about his wife's whereabouts, an S.S. man finally reveals the truth. He takes Sol to the brothel where Ruth is being held and forces him to watch as she is cruelly violated. Ruth finally recognizes Sol, and it seems that she is able to endure her agony because of his presence

and, ultimately, forgive Sol for his inability to save her, although he is unable to forgive himself- "She was able to award him the tears of forgiveness. But he was not worthy of her award and took the infinitely meaner triumph of blindness, and though he was reamed by cancerous, fiery torments, he was no longer subject to the horrid view, no longer had to share the obscene experience with her" (12 7).

At that moment, it seems that Sol's spirit becomes an empty void. He is paralyzed, and this numb paralysis stays with him for the rest of his life. This is exemplified in his last dream, in which he and his family, including his mother and father, are poignantly laughing and playing in an idyllic field: "Their faces all came closer; he would have liked to gather them all into him, to drink them, to breathe them." But Sol is unable to connect with them, for as they come closer, they are arrested in motion. He too is paralyzed, "forever out of reach of the dear faces, frozen a few feet short of all he had loved" (178). Eventually, they fade from view, leaving only darkness.

With this novel, Wallant sensitively depicts the unique victimization of women as discussed by Ringelheim and Miller, in that Ruth is victimized by enduring her own internment in the camp as well as rape and sexual humiliation and the death of her children. Wallant also depicts the anguished father as an emasculated figure, unable to maintain his own traditional role of protecting his family. Sol's inability to return to a normal life after the Holocaust reinforces the horror of his inability to save his wife and children.

*The Pawnbroker* is similar to Holocaust survivor Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* in that both are narratives written by men that nevertheless pay particular attention to the experiences of women. However, whereas Wallant elicits emotions for his characters by shocking the reader through the vivid flashbacks of Sol Nazerman's dreams, Borowski's narrator speaks in a dispassionate, detached tone, producing the almost greater horror in a reader who is eventually forced to concede that such horrible events could be described so matter-of-factly. <sup>2</sup> Tadeusz Borowski, an aspiring Polish poet before the war, was arrested and imprisoned in Auschwitz in 1943 as a political prisoner. Borowski survived Auschwitz, although his experiences there caused him to be unable to return to a normal life; he committed suicide in 195 1.

Borowski's narrator, Tadek, is modeled after Borowski himself as a Polish gentile, which allows him certain privileges over all of the Jewish prisoners. However, even the Jewish male prisoners live in better conditions than those of the women, a fact for which Tadek is thankful rather than sympathetic. In the story, "The People Who Walked On," Tadek describes the women's camp as an "Auschwitz of 1940," where bunks built for 500 people were packed with 1000, where women gulped down soup that no one in the men's block would think of eating, and where women were forced to stand, barely clothed, at roll call for hours on end no matter how severe the weather (Borowski 85,92).

Tadek also refers to the women's camp as the "Persian Market," where any of the women could be bought for a piece of bright silk or a shiny trinket: "Since time began," Tadek says, "never has there been such an easy market for female flesh!" (93). This statement

marginalizes the suffering of the women, who, as Borowski writes earlier in the story, must use sex to organize real necessities such as food and even roofs for their barracks. Tadek notes that a block elder could pay for roofing in various ways: "with gold, food, the women of her block, or with her own body. It depended" (86).

Because the women did use their bodies to trade for necessities, they often became pregnant in the camps, despite starvation and disease. At times Tadek offhandedly refers to these pregnant women, who were often rounded up by the S.S. to be sent to the gas. In the short story, "Auschwitz, Our Home (A Letter)," the narrator writes a letter to his loved one who is interned in the women's camp. In this letter, he describes "the Puff," or the camp brothel, as well as the experimental block, where women were "artificially inseminated, injected with typhoid and malaria germs, or operated on" (108). Tadek also writes that he had found someone to make deliveries to his loved one in the women's camp, someone who marched there daily to collect the corpses of male infants to be processed through the men's office of male statistics and the male mortuary (140). This statement very casually reveals the fact that women who were forced to use their bodies to survive were then doubly victimized by being forced to kill any resulting infants in order to survive, for any woman caught with an infant would be immediately sent to the gas.

It is also during this same story, however, that Borowski steps out from behind the cool and dispassionate persona of his narrator to reveal his own opinion about the atrocities of the camp. During a conversation, another prisoner says, "We've figured out a new way to bum people ... you take four little kids with plenty of hair on their heads, then stick the heads together and light the hair. The rest bums by itself and in no time at all the whole business is *gemacht*." To the narrator's dry "Congratulations," the prisoner replies: "Listen ... in Auschwitz we must entertain ourselves in every way we can. Otherwise, who could stand it?" As though he cannot allow this to be the final statement about the horror of Auschwitz, Borowski then adds, in a fashion wholly uncharacteristic of Tadek, "But this is a monstrous lie, a grotesque lie, like the whole camp, like the whole world" (142). With this outburst, Borowski seems to enlighten the reader, as if instructing the reader not to believe Tadek's blasé descriptions of the camp and its horrors, but to delve much more deeply into the implication of his stories for all of the victims.

It was during the initial selection upon entrance to Auschwitz that both women and children had the greatest chance of being sent to the gas. In "This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen," the title story in the collection, Borowski depicts a young mother running from her small child, crying "It's not mine, not mine, no!" (43). Young, healthy women had a chance to be sent to the women's camp; young, healthy women with small children had a chance only to be sent to the gas chamber. In this passage, Borowski illustrates a woman attempting to escape this double victimization. Lawrence Langer confronts this issue by stating, "One has only to immerse oneself in this situation to understand how thoroughly the Nazi system of terror and genocide poisoned that vital source of human dignity and made man an instrument of his fate. [ ... ] Futility drives the mother in this fictional passage to a repudiation of the unthinkable for the civilized mind"

(Admitting 162). Borowski then illustrates the anger of a male inmate, who, outraged at the mother, throws both her and her child into the truck to be taken to the gas.

It is difficult to understand the perspective of a young woman faced with the horrible dilemma of attempting to save her own life over that of her child's. It is just as difficult to understand the perspective of a woman faced with what Miller calls a "choiceless choice" of choosing to save one of her children over another. William Styron is one male author who is neither Jewish nor a Holocaust survivor, yet he draws a very compassionate picture of a mother who was a Polish political prisoner, deported to Auschwitz and faced with the dilemma of choosing which one of her children to save.

In *Sophie's Choice*, Styron depicts a young mother, Sophie, who is haunted after the war by the decision she had been forced to make over the fate of her children. During selection upon her entrance to Auschwitz, Sophie cries to the doctor that she is a Christian, in an effort to save herself and her children from the gas chambers. Styron's fictional camp doctor, however, sees an opportunity to inflict a terrible wound on her, saying, "So you believe in Christ the Redeemer? [ ... ] Did He not say, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me'?" (528). He then instructs Sophie to choose which of her children to save. Confronted with this impossible choice, Sophie screams, "I can't choose! I can't choose!" (529). In the end, however, Sophie does choose, effectively sentencing her daughter to the gas, and herself to lifelong torment.

While Styron's portrayal of a woman's double victimization might seem insightful, two noted Holocaust scholars detect problems with this novel. Lawrence Langer, for one, is disturbed by *Sophie's Choice*; not only does he believe that Styron misused historical figures to persuade his readers' conscience, but also that Sophie's choice is manufactured and improbable, "a decision which any informed reader would know lay beyond the control of Auschwitz's victims, Jewish or not" (*Admitting* 80). Not only that, but Langer believes that Styron's choice of narrator prevents Sophie from truly internalizing her experience. Sophie's story is retold through Stingo, an eager young Southerner who is hopelessly in love with her. Langer asserts that Stingo's interest in Sophie's story is tainted by his sexual yearnings for her, thus inexorably tainting Sophie's testimony and ultimately parodying her experience in Auschwitz (82-83).

Alvin Rosenfeld is also concerned with the implications of *Sophie's Choice*, though for different reasons. Sophie's lover in post-war Flatbush is Nathan, a brilliant but mentally unstable Jew whom Styron characterizes as brutal, eccentric, and sexually insatiable. Because of this, Rosenfeld believes that Styron exploits the dynamics of the Holocaust, thrusting the Jew, Nathan, into the position of tormentor, while Sophie, a Christian as well as a Holocaust survivor, becomes the "ravaged heroine," helpless against Nathan's brutal antics. Rosenfeld lifts a line from *Sophie's Choice* to describe the license that Styron has taken in depicting Sophie as the helpless Christian to Nathan's sadistic Jew: "Oh, what ghoulish opportunism are writers prone to!" (51).

This opportunism, Rosenfeld asserts, can often turn Holocaust narratives into twisted pornography, exploiting the violent victimization of women for voyeuristic pleasure. He

bemoans the literary imagination's perverse attraction to Nazi atrocities, especially those of a sexual nature that feature female victims of violent crimes, writing, "In places where mass suffering once was, prurience has come to be" (53).

This issue is one worth exploring when considering Ka-Tzetnik 135633's novel, *House of Dolls*. William D. Brierley describes Ka-Tzetnik as "the most mysterious and critically neglected of all Holocaust writers," as well as one of the most important (5253). Ka-Tzetnik, who reluctantly revealed his official name of Yehiel Dinur during a war crimes trial, had desired to remain an anonymous victim, prompting his decision to use his concentration camp number as a pseudonym for the series of novels he wrote in Hebrew directly after the war.

One of these novels, *House of Dolls*, follows a young girl, Daniella Preleschnik, throughout her experiences during the Holocaust - first in the Jewish ghetto of Metropoli, then in the women's camp called "Camp Labor Via Joy." As can be surmised, this was not just a labor camp, but one in which beautiful young women were selected for forced prostitution. Each underwent a brutally painful sterilization and was then used for the "44enjoyment" of German soldiers who were on their way to the Russian front. Other women also had to endure excruciating medical experimentation in the Research Block, where their sobs of pain were not allowed to rise past their throats, so as not to disrupt the medical research (Ka-Tzetnik 157).

Ka-Tzetnik does graphically depict the victimization of these women in *House of Dolls*, making it understandable why some might believe his interest in Daniella and Camp Labor Via Joy could be voyeuristic. However, Daniella's diary, and her constantly reiterated wish to be remembered, lends another dimension to the story. Throughout her ordeal, Daniella maintains this diary, which begins with girlish sentiments such as might be found in Anne Frank's diary. Daniella continues to keep a diary throughout her confinement, recording her ever-worsening experiences. Not only does keeping a record of her experiences reflect Daniella's wish to someday let the world know what had happened to her, but it also seems that writing in the diary helps her to stay sane during her time as a forced prostitute, while others around her become "balmy," unable to endure the daily rape and other inhuman pressures of the camp.

Daniella's friend, Fella, assists Daniella and the other women in the camp, helping them to avoid "reports" for such trivialities as not making their beds up to the prescribed measurements. When Daniella learns that her brother, Harry, is interned at a nearby labor camp called Niederwalden, she asks for Fella's help to be enlisted to entertain at one of the seemingly endless German orgies there. In an unfortunate twist of fate, her brother witnesses her awful participation in this orgy, a fact that stuns them both. After this, Daniella is unable to continue living such a life; suicide becomes the only way for Daniella to retain some small piece of herself.

Fella attempts to save Daniella from her self-destructive determination. She realizes, however, that Daniella could suffer a worse fate than that of a bullet - she remembers that women unable or unwilling to perform their "enjoyment" duties are publicly, brutally



flogged to death in a "Public Chastisement" (136). Not wishing this for Daniella, Fella allows her to go, to walk towards the periphery of the camp where they both know that she will be shot. Daniella's last words implore Fella, "Get this [diary] to my brother at Niederwalden" (219). Fella dismisses this wish at first, throwing the diary away with exasperation. After Daniella is inevitably shot, however, Fella realizes the importance of her diary: "She felt as if Daniella's life now rested on the palms of her hands" (221).

While Ka-Tzetnik's story about Daniella might at times seem unnecessarily graphic and brutal, it does feature many of the brutal experiences that women described in their oral testimonies, but which have been excluded from some of the most well-known and respected Holocaust works by other male authors. There is indeed a fine line between material that has been written for the sake of attempting truthfully to depict the terror, uncertainty, and horrible victimization that occurred during the Holocaust and material that has been written to exploit women's victimization for pleasure. In light of objections such as Rosenfeld's about such potentially prurient interest in the Holocaust, it seems even more important to attempt to understand women's unique experiences during that time - the better we are able to understand women's perspectives, the better we will be able to determine whether a work of imaginative literature is merely exploiting women's problems, or whether it is actually giving us a more complete picture of the victimization that occurred during the Holocaust.

### **Chapter Three: Imaginative Literature Written by Female Authors**

This chapter will consider works of prose fiction, poetry, and theater written by female authors, focusing upon women authors' representations of women victims.

As previously noted, *The Diary of Anne Frank* occupies a central location in our perceptions about the Holocaust. As of 1985, the Diary had been translated into 22 languages, published in 20 countries, and had sold more than two and a half million copies (Birstein and Kazin 17). The Diary has been transformed into the media of theater and film, further permeating our culture. Birstein and Kazin, editors of *The Works of Anne Frank*, write, "Soon the story of Anne Frank will have become perhaps the most celebrated document of a single human being's ordeal during World War II" (17).

However, Anne Frank wrote her *Diary* while secluded from society, focusing on the intricacies of her own adolescence and family dynamics under terrifying circumstances. Therefore, it is problematic that her *Diary* could be the most celebrated documentation of the ordeals of World War II as Birstein and Kazin argue, for it can contribute only a limited perspective about the events happening to other European Jews during much of the war and leaves the reader with a false sense of redemption and the eternal goodness of man. Lawrence Langer believes that, while Anne Frank's *Diary* is "incontestably more popular and influential" than Elie Wiesel's *Night*, it portrays a very different, even misleading, message (*The Holocaust* 76). Indeed, Langer contends that the *Diary* can only form a prologue to the works of literature like *Night* that unflinchingly depict the atrocities of the Holocaust: "Their work constitutes a sequel to hers and ultimately

challenges the principle that for her was both premise and epitaph - "In spite of everything, I still think that people are good at heart" (77).

It is difficult to reconcile Anne's message of redemption with her ultimate fate. The *Diary* ends before her capture, allowing the reader to block out the fact of her death in the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen. Patricia Hampl, an author who reviewed the "Definitive Edition" of Anne Frank's *Diary* in 1995 writes:

When I was a girl, first reading the *Diary*, I treasured it because Anne fought and contended with her mother just as I did; she battled to become a person [ ... ] I needed Anne Frank then - not because she was the child who died and put a face on the six million murdered (I was not yet capable of taking that in) but because, like me, she was determined to live [ ... ] I don't think I was able to keep in mind that she was dead. (193)

Hampl reveals the difficulty any reader of the *Diary* encounters: Anne's innocent optimism, sustained through the last days before her capture, overwhelms our knowledge about her death. Indeed, one of Anne's last entries in the *Diary* seems to defy the forces inevitably descending upon her: "I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us too, I can feel the sufferings of millions and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again" (Frank 237). This message of redemption renders unimaginable the possibility of the impending death of this determined young girl.

Whereas Anne Frank's *Diary* details the positive experiences of her first kiss and burgeoning adolescent relationship, it does not describe the experience of living and dying in a concentration camp and does not even touch on the unique aspects of women's experiences as outlined by Joan Ringelheim and Joy Miller. Indeed, because Anne Frank's death is so antithetical to her positive message, readers of her *Diary*, like Patricia Hampl, begin to imagine her narrative simply to be about a young girl's coming-of-age, removing the *Diary* from the context of the Holocaust and realizing it as a tale about a girl who goes through the same adolescent troubles as any other - in short, she is thought of as simply a friend. For Anne Frank, however, reality was unavoidable, and the peace and tranquility that she so eloquently wrote about could only come with her death. Considering its enormous popularity, the missing victimization of both men and women in Anne Frank's *Diary* is lamentable. By allowing the reader to escape the horrors of Holocaust experience, Anne Frank's *Diary* does not do justice to her own; by negating the reality of Anne's senseless death, the *Diary* ultimately negates the senseless deaths of victims whose voices were lost.

One of the earliest controversies over *The Diary of Anne Frank* was triggered by its adaptation for the American stage and the subsequent film version directed by George Stevens. In a conscious decision supported by Anne's father, Otto, who was the only surviving member of the group that lived in the "secret annexe" for two years in Amsterdam, the Jewish identity of the Frank family was minimized. Anne was portrayed

as little different from any all-American girl; a strategy that Otto believed would broaden her message.<sup>3</sup>

Anne Frank's circumstances as a child born in Frankfurt of an assimilated German Jewish family before the "escape" to Holland in 1933 are so well-known as to make further comment unnecessary. But Charlotte Delbo, the next author to be considered here, is still virtually unknown outside her native France. Born in 1913 to non-Jewish parents, Charlotte Delbo was on tour with a theater company in 1940 when the Germans occupied Paris. Against all opposition, she returned there in 1941, where her husband was working for a resistance movement. She joined in the resistance, and she and her husband were both arrested in 1942, after which her husband was executed by a firing squad. Delbo remained imprisoned in France for a year before being deported to Auschwitz as a political prisoner. She remained a prisoner in concentration camps until her liberation more than a year later (Langer, *Art* 75).

Just as Delbo's personal circumstances differ from those of "Hitler's best-known victim," Anne Frank, so, too, does her 1966 play, "Who Will Carry the Word?," convey a very different message from that of the *Diary*. Whereas Anne Frank's spirit remains unflagging throughout her *Diary*, the women in "Who Will Carry the Word?" constantly question the necessity, not only of keeping up their spirits, but of simply living for another day. For these women, there is no respite in God or nature as there is for Anne Frank - they must depend on each other to survive in the camps, forming close-knit groups of support and caring. Unlike Anne Frank's *Diary*, this play does not offer a sense of affirmation in the ultimate goodness of man but rather leaves one feeling an unavoidable sense of loss. Set solely in a women's camp, the play begins with 23 women characters and ends with the deaths of all but two--two who had depended heavily for their own survival upon those who had died.

Throughout the play runs the theme of the necessity of someone, anyone, returning to the land of the living to remember the dead. One prisoner, Claire, argues this necessity in Act 1, setting the precedent for mutual support and survival followed by the other women: "There must be one who returns, you or another, it doesn't matter. [ ... ] There must be one who comes back, one who will tell. Would you want millions of people to have been destroyed here and all those cadavers to remain mute for all eternity, all those lives to have been sacrificed for nothing?" (Delbo 278).

It is for this reason that Claire confronts another prisoner, Françoise, about her wish to commit suicide. Claire is concerned not only about Françoise's life, but about the other women in their group who might follow Françoise's example and give up hope as well. As Claire says, "I'll tell you again that you don't have the right to take your life. You don't have the right because you're not alone. There are the others. And above all, there are the little ones [ ... ] They listen to you, they follow you. If you commit suicide, they may imitate you. Suppose that among them, there is one who has a chance to come back, just one, and that because of you, she loses that chance" (277). Claire's speech later becomes particularly poignant; she is beaten to death for attempting to save yet another prisoner

from the wrath of their Kapo. With Claire's, support, however, Françoise is one of the two who do survive to "carry the word."

Claire is not the only inmate who jeopardizes her own life to help others. Françoise states, "All those who die here die for the others," emphasizing the importance of the women's solidarity, as well as the ultimate goal of being able to retell their unbelievable story (286). This system of group support is exemplified in the women's small, daily efforts to help each other survive, such as hiding those women with swollen legs during roll call so that they would not be selected for the gas (287) and putting their hands into each other's underarms or rubbing each other to keep warm (303).

Many of the women depicted are French political prisoners - women who, throughout the play, reveal their lives prior to imprisonment with bits of conversation that give us a glimpse of the elegance and femininity that had previously defined them. The women talk about their husbands, clothes, and food, reminiscing about their pasts and even planning for their futures. By remembering their humanity and making such plans for the future, these women fight against the dehumanizing effects of a shaved head and a body overrun with starvation, fatigue, and disease, as well as the resulting loss of their feminine identity. Françoise confronts this issue by asking, "Is it enough to have your hair shorn to no longer be yourself," to which a fellow inmate replies, "If the men who loved us could see what has become of us ... Let's be happy that on the morning of their death they could say goodbye to us when still we had the faces they loved" (275).

These conversations not only serve to counter the degrading effects of defeminization that occurred within the camp, but also to act to give the women mutual support and encouragement. One woman, Gina, is a maternal figure for the younger girls. She distracts Mounette with memories of going to dinner with her husband, which Mounette later replays in her mind to stay awake rather than suffer nightmares during her sleep. Denise is another young prisoner who enjoys listening to Gina's reminiscences of past life, for Gina had had many luxuries in life that Denise had not. Gina, however, is called upon to join the "White Kerchief Kommando," the Kommando in charge of ensuring the death of any children, which she knows she cannot do: "Undress children to throw them into a ditch full of kindling wood that they sprinkle with gasoline and then set fire to, never" (322). She decides to commit suicide, unwilling to become complicit in the children's terrible fate. Although Françoise wishes to go with her, Gina persuades her not to go, reminding her that Denise needs her: "Bring back Denise. It would be a shame not to after having kept her till now" (323).

By briefly illustrating the horror of the "White Kerchief Kommando," Delbo introduces the audience to an element otherwise excluded from her play. Just as the fate of these children cannot go unrecognized, neither can the fate of their mothers who were either killed along with them or forced to become unwilling accomplices because of their inability to save them. Sara Horowitz argues that a mother's inability to protect her children was in itself victimization: "When women cannot feed and shelter their children, and protect them from pain and from death, maternal love itself becomes an instrument of torture" ("Women" 374).

Writing at approximately the same time as Charlotte Delbo, but from the haven of her adopted Sweden, the German Jewish poet Nelly Sachs provides her own insight into this torture, intuitively revealing the powerlessness and agony endured by mothers whose children were murdered. At an early age, Sachs formed a relationship with Swedish writer Selma Lagerlof, which would later save her life. In 1940, Lagerlof helped Sachs and her mother to emigrate from Berlin to Sweden, where the poet would spend the rest of her life (Langer, *Art* 635). Although Sachs was removed from victimization herself, her voice resonates with the victimization suffered by so many others.

In Sachs' poem "Already Embraced by the Arm of Heavenly Solace," a mother becomes insane with the grief of her child's death. The mother's life is inexorably combined with her child's; overwhelmed by the horror of his death and cremation, she too symbolically dies:

Already embraced by the arm of heavenly solace  
 The insane mother stands  
 With the tatters of her torn mind  
 With the charred tinders of her burnt mind  
 Burying her dead child,  
 Burying her lost light,  
 Twisting her hands into urns,  
 Filling them with the body of her child from the air,  
 Filling them with his eyes, his hair from the air,  
 And with his fluttering heart -

Then she kisses the air-born being  
 And dies! (68)

Sachs' poetry forces the reader to witness what countless women victims endured. Through this poem, she gives us insight into the destruction of a woman who is powerless to save her child and, therefore, powerless to save herself, "already embraced by the arm of heavenly solace," the mother seems to have died along with her child.

In another of Sachs' poems, "O the Night of the Weeping Children!," she illustrates the loving relationship between mother and child, giving life to the child in the mind of the reader only to wrench it away:

O the night of the weeping children!  
 O the night of the children branded for death!  
 Sleep may not enter here.  
 Terrible nursemaids  
 Have usurped the place of mothers,  
 Have tautened their tendons with the false death,  
 Sown it on to the walls and into the beams -  
 Everywhere it is hatched in the nests of horror.

Instead of mother's milk, panic suckles those little ones.

Yesterday Mother still drew  
 Sleep toward them like a white moon,  
 There was the doll with cheeks derouged by kisses  
 In one arm,  
 The stuffed pet, already  
 Brought to life by love,  
 In the other -  
 Now blows the wind of dying,  
 Blows the shifts over the hair  
 That no one will comb again. (69)

In the first stanza, Sachs illustrates the inability of mothers to protect their children from the forces of the Nazis. She then juxtaposes images of innocent childhood with images of destruction, thus emphasizing the horror of the death of that innocence. The second stanza illustrates that yesterday, the mother was still able to protect and nurture her child; yesterday, the child was still alive with an imagination that could bring life to a stuffed pet. Now, however, the wind of dying symbolizes the terrible death of the child and the destruction of the sanctity of its innocent trust in its mother's protective ability.

Cynthia Ozick is another female author who delves into this type of women's double victimization within the camps. Unlike Anne Frank, Charlotte Delbo and Nelly Sachs, however, she was not personally involved, and so writes as an author removed from the direct experience of victimization. Cynthia Ozick was a child of Russian Jews who immigrated to the United States prior to World War II. Although neither she nor her parents experienced the Holocaust firsthand, Ozick has been described by Lawrence Langer as "one of the few American writers to meet the challenge of imagining mass murder without flinching" (*Admitting* 4). This holds true in her set of two short stories, collectively titled *The Shawl*. The first story, bearing the same title of "The Shawl," portrays a woman named Rosa who, against all odds, has been able to conceal her child in a concentration camp for 15 months.

The shawl plays a central role in both stories, acting as a shield for first the daughter and later the mother. In "The Shawl," it shields the daughter from detection; in the second story, "Rosa," it shields the mother from the traumatic memories of her daughter's death. If not for the shawl, Rosa's daughter Magda could not have survived as long as she did in the concentration camp, for Rosa conceals Magda in the shawl by hiding her against her emaciated chest; under the shawl, mother and daughter are indistinguishable from one another. Rosa thinks of Magda as a squirrel in her nest, safe: "No one could reach her inside the little house of the shawl's windings" (Ozick 4). Yet Rosa knows that Magda is never truly safe; she imagines giving her to strangers who might be standing alongside the road on her daily march to work. Her maternal instinct, however, outweighs this risky plan, for she fears that the person might be surprised or afraid and drop the baby, inadvertently killing her (4).

When Rosa stops producing milk, it becomes obvious that her efforts to save Magda's life will ultimately be futile. The shawl seems to help Magda survive a few more days, however, magically beginning to nourish her as well as protect her: "It was a magical shawl, it could nourish an infant for three days and three nights" (5). Thus Magda depends on the shawl even more, not only for protection but for sustenance, as well. For Magda, the shawl is her "own baby, her pet, her little sister." When taken away, however, it relinquishes these roles; in effect, it becomes her sentencer.

Rosa's niece Stella steals the shawl from Magda because she is cold. Upon missing her shawl, Magda totters on spindly legs into the roll call area, crying for it. Rosa is struck between the decision of immediately rushing after Magda and risking her continued cries, or risking time by first finding the shawl. In the same instant, Rosa feels maternal joy that her daughter has the ability to cry; Magda had become mute since Rosa's milk had stopped. While happy that Magda has once again found her voice, Rosa knows that she must mute the voice to save her child. Her maternal instinct instructs her to find the shawl first: "A tide of commands hammered in Rosa's nipples: Fetch, get, bring!" (8). It is too late, however, for Magda has been seen and taken by a guard, who marches across the camp to throw her unhesitatingly against the electrified fence.

After witnessing this horrid act, Rosa's maternal instincts once again scream for her action, "urging Rosa to run and run to the spot where Magda had fallen from her flight against the electrified fence," but she cannot act: "She only stood, because if she ran they would shoot, and if she tried to pick up the sticks of Magda's body they would shoot, and if she let the wolf's screech ascending now through the ladder of her skeleton break out, they would shoot" (10). In the awful moment of Magda's electrocution, voices in the wires begin humming "Maamaaa!," as if all of the murdered children are chorusing together in an appeal for their mothers to save them. However, like the "hundreds of thousands of Jewish women who witnessed the murder of their children," Rosa can do nothing to save her child (Kremer 152). Her survival instinct overrides the maternal, allowing her to live. She turns to the shawl for her own sustenance, drinking it in as though trying to fill herself with the essence of Magda. This essence, however, is ephemeral, and Rosa's life becomes a parody, for, much like the mothers depicted by Nelly Sachs, a piece of Rosa also dies along with her daughter.

Ozick explores the irreparable damage of this event in the story "Rosa," which follows "The Shawl" and details Rosa's post-Holocaust life many years later in Miami. Rosa, however, never really enters a post-Holocaust period, for, as she states, "Before is a dream. After is a joke. Only during stays. And to call it a life is a lie" (Ozick 58). Although her niece and a Jew named Mr. Persky, who had emigrated from pre-war Poland, implore Rosa to put the past behind her, S. Lillian Kremer explains that Rosa's memory of Magda's murder is so dreadful, she cannot suppress or dismiss it and is therefore unable to live a normal life like the others urge (158).

This fact is exemplified by the first sentence of "Rosa," which states, "Rosa Lublin, a madwoman and a scavenger, gave up her store - she smashed it up herself - and moved to Miami" (Ozick 14). Thus Ozick sets the tone for the story, immediately revealing to the



reader that Rosa has not been able to recover from her Holocaust experience of witnessing the death of her child.

Rosa blames her daughter's death on her niece; it was, after all, Stella who had stolen Magda's shawl. For Rosa, Stella remains eternally cold: "the Angel of Death" (15). Rosa depends on Stella, however, not only to pay her bills but to mail Rosa the shawl, which she had been withholding. Rosa has kept and revered the shawl in the years since Magda's death; with it, she is able to retrieve a small bit of Magda's essence, her smell, her "holy fragrance," for it had been both her swaddling cloth and her shroud (31).

Indeed, it is apparent that Rosa worships the shawl for this connection to Magda, and Stella derides her for this obsession: "Go on your knees to it if you want," she writes Rosa in a letter, "You make yourself crazy [ ... ] What a scene, disgusting! You'll open the box and take it out and cry, and you'll kiss it like a crazy person" (31). To Stella's admonishment "Live your life!," Rosa replies, "Thieves took it;" thieves took Magda, Rosa's life.

While Ozick overtly illustrates Rosa's continued mourning for her daughter, she also expands upon another of Rosa's unique issues hinted about in "The Shawl." In this first story, it is evident that Magda is the result of Rosa's sexual assault by a Nazi - Magda is described as having, "eyes blue as air," with "smooth feathers of hair nearly yellow as the star sewn into Rosa's coat" (4). Although Rosa denies that Magda is an "Aryan" child, Stella icily pronounces her as such. By including this information, Ozick reinforces the vulnerability of women in concentration camps: to sexual assault as well as to witnessing the death of the resultant child.

Ozick returns to Rosa's rape in "Rosa." The loss of a pair of underpants, which Rosa fearfully suspects Mr. Persky to have, brings back intense feelings from the Holocaust. She immediately feels "shame," "pain in the loins," and "burning" (34). Though Rosa later admits that she was raped, she suppresses any feelings about this: "Whatever stains in the crotch are nobody's business," she thinks (34).

Rosa dismisses Stella's assertion about Magda's parentage, complaining that Stella's "pornographic" mind has made Magda's father into an "S.S. Man" (43). Rosa contends that Magda's father was the "son of my mother's closest friend [ ... ] a converted Jew married to a Gentile," thus giving Magda what she calls a "legacy of choice," something that was taken away from Rosa (43). Later, however, it seems that Rosa might have her own doubts: when Magda appears to Rosa in a vision, Rosa feels suspicious of "the other strain, whatever it was, that ran in her" (65). Rosa admits that she was raped more than once, but argues that she was "too sick to conceive," also writing that she had never been put into "their brothel," either (43). However, one cannot tell what is truth and what is not, for later Rosa muses about her pen's miraculous ability to write in Polish, "A lock removed from the tongue. [ ... ] An immersion into a living language: all at once this cleanliness, this capacity, this power to make a history, to tell, to explain. To retrieve, to relieve! To lie" (44).

This passage reveals Rosa's dishonesty towards even Magda (and thus, herself), as well as the fact that her suppressed memories weigh very heavily upon her mind. Rosa's inability to unburden herself of even a small portion of what had happened to her seems to make her experiences even worse, for as she writes to Stella: "Once I thought the worst was the worst, after that nothing could be the worst. But now I see, even after the worst there's still more" (14). Rosa writes a letter to Magda, complaining that Stella can remember, but refuses: "She resists you [Magda] and all other reality" (41). Mr. Persky offers to listen to her troubles but misses the point when Rosa says, "My Warsaw isn't your Warsaw!" (19). This leaves Magda as Rosa's only confidante, worsening Rosa's dependence upon her memories of her daughter and her insistence that she is still alive. Rosa imagines different, wonderful lives for her daughter: she is a doctor married to a doctor (35), or she is a professor of Greek philosophy (39). Rosa clings to her lost motherhood - and by connection, the shawl - as a respite from the truth. Thus she writes to Magda, "Motherhood - I've always known this - is a profound distraction from philosophy, and all philosophy is rooted in suffering over a passage of time" (41). By continuing her fantasies about her daughter, Rosa is able to distract herself from her own continued suffering stemming from the Holocaust. Still, Rosa's victimization, both as a Jew and as a mother, renders her unable to return to normal life. For as she herself says, "For me there's one time only; there's no after" (58). During the Holocaust, she was a mother, and she is unable to face the horrible reality that her motherhood was stripped away.

The four women authors studied in this chapter do indeed offer different perspectives upon Holocaust experience, which makes each of their works an important contribution to studies of the Holocaust. Anne Frank, however, does not reveal insight into the type of double victimization that Joan Ringelheim and Joy Miller discuss, and her *Diary* in fact leaves the reader with a false sense of redemption. Charlotte Delbo does seem to be greatly concerned with women's issues in the camp in her play, "Who Will Carry the Word?" She focuses closely upon the essential support systems formed by women, thus supporting Joan Ringelheim's argument that women tended to form deep bonds with non-relatives in the camp to help each other survive. "Who Will Carry the Word?" also effectively demonstrates the terrible squalor and diseased-conditions of the women's camp as well as the crushing forces of death that prisoners fought against every day. Conversely, the poetry of Nelly Sachs surveyed in this paper deals explicitly with the death of children, illustrating the double victimization of mothers who were unable to save their children.

Of the works considered in this chapter, it seems that Cynthia Ozick's two short stories, collectively titled *The Shawl*, best represent the experiences of women that have so long been absent from the body of fiction that has risen from the Holocaust. Ozick sensitively addresses the issues of rape and maternity in the camp as well as the unending pain and psychological damage caused by a child's senseless murder. Although Ozick did not experience the Holocaust firsthand, and though she herself argues against gendered studies of the Holocaust, her short stories reveal an intuitive understanding of women's double victimization. Ozick demonstrates that writers who were not themselves victims are capable of masterfully illuminating women's experiences during the Holocaust,

leaving open the possibility that male authors, though not themselves victims of this double victimization, could perhaps be equally capable of such powerful, yet sensitive depiction.

#### **Chapter Four: Imaginative Holocaust Films Directed by Men and Women**

The immensely popular genre of film is uniquely positioned to convey a message to a broad audience that might otherwise remain largely uninformed about the Holocaust. The popular success of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* and Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* demonstrates this genre's ability to appeal widely to contemporary European and American audiences, heightening the public's consciousness of this extraordinary period in history. Another unique quality of film is its ability to portray events with extraordinary verisimilitude, making visual impact unavoidable. This same ability, however, can cause difficulties, for the very nature of the Holocaust calls for a sensitive depiction of victims and their experiences. Geoffrey Hartman argues that many contemporary artists forgo a sensitive depiction in favor of a "style that emphasizes incidents rather than character, and graphic horror rather than indirect disclosure," thus effectively exploiting victims for entertainment's sake (156-157). Therefore, both because film has become so influential, and because women as victims are a staple of the genre, it is important to examine the implications of the way women victims are represented in Holocaust films directed by both men and women.

Many film directors tend to rely on beautiful women protagonists, glamorizing them to increase the audience's interest. While this is almost to be expected in popular Hollywood films, films about the Holocaust face a fine distinction between depicting women's victimization realistically and exploiting their victimization for voyeuristic interest. This problem of realism versus exploitation will be examined in several Holocaust films in which the plots rely heavily on fictional women victims' experiences.

Arguably the best-known and most widely honored film dealing with the Holocaust is Steven Spielberg's 1993 *Schindler's List*. Deliberately rejecting the model of the Hollywood action film that had made him famous, Spielberg (an American Jew, although not a second-generation survivor) attempts to portray the Holocaust realistically, visually demonstrating time and again the Nazis' brutality, especially that of Amon Goeth, commander of the Plaszow labor camp. However, even this stunning achievement in realism has opened him to criticism, for, as Hartman argues, such a realistic aesthetic can be denounced for exploiting victims by "allowing the spectator to take pleasure in watching the suffering of others" (157). This fact is particularly important for this study, for, although *Schindler's List* closely follows the male characters of Oskar Schindler and Amon Goeth, women ultimately become the driving force of its narrative. Schindler and Goeth are frequently paralleled throughout the film, one of these parallels being the fact that both greatly enjoy beautiful women. Indeed, it seems that Spielberg emphasizes beautiful Jewish women in the film to reinforce Schindler and Goeth's obsession with them, as well as to demonstrate these women's increased vulnerability.

*Schindler's List* focuses on the experiences of these women and their families as they go from the Krakow ghetto to the Plaszow labor camp, then to Auschwitz, and eventually to Schindler's munitions factory in the then-Czechoslovakia. Schindler compiles his famous list in an effort to save over 100 Jewish prisoners at Plaszow from imminent deportation and death, specifically requesting them to work in his factory in Czechoslovakia. However, a bureaucratic mistake causes "Schindler's Jews" to be sent to Auschwitz instead. Upon their arrival in Auschwitz, the film follows the women as they go through the process of being stripped of their clothes, having their hair shorn, and going through the disinfecting showers.

This shower scene has been criticized because the attractive women become the focal point of the camera as it peers into the shower through a peephole, thereby turning the audience into voyeurs by making it obvious that these women are being viewed clandestinely. Critics argue that this depiction of overwhelmingly attractive young women in such a voyeuristic way crosses the line, unnecessarily exploiting women by purposefully portraying an unrealistic number of attractive women in a sexually provocative way.<sup>4</sup>

A scene that has been criticized for its erotic violence against a woman is one in which Amon Goeth berates his beautiful Jewish housemaid, Helen Hirsch, for being so attractive to him. It is obvious that Goeth struggles between his attraction for Helen and his knowledge that it is strictly prohibited for an "Aryan" to have relations with a Jewish woman. In this scene, Goeth comes upon Helen in the middle of bathing; she is scantily clad, and her skin is still damp. By depicting Helen in this way, it seems to be Spielberg's intent to increase her sexual desirability for Goeth as well as the audience. After Goeth argues aloud with himself about whether or not it is truly possible for such a beautiful creature to be sub-human, he decides that she is indeed and is therefore unworthy of his attraction. He releases the frustration caused by his conclusion by brutally beating her.

It is evident that these two scenes do emphasize the beauty, youth, and particular vulnerability of these particular Jewish women. Spielberg follows these women throughout the film, recording their experiences from entrance to the ghetto until the end, in which Helen is one of the women who ultimately survives. Because the audience becomes emotionally invested in these women's characters, it seems natural for the director to focus on them during such an emotional scene as that of the shower, in which it is uncertain whether lethal gas or water will pour from the spigots in the ceiling.

Two of the attractive women portrayed in the shower scene include Helen, whom Schindler had verbally promised to save, and an attractive woman Schindler had kissed at his birthday party, an event that caused him to be sent to jail for impure racial relations. These two women occupy parallel places in the plot, for each unintentionally tempts Goeth and Schindler. When Schindler is sent to jail for his indiscretion of kissing the Jewish woman, Goeth attempts to help him by explaining the attraction Jewish women hold. Goeth argues that Jewish women place a spell on German men, purposefully ensnaring them and forcing them to become aroused. With this explanation, Goeth

attempts to validate his attraction to Helen, for the only way that he could excuse this attraction is by believing it is an unwilling one.

While Helen and the unnamed woman kissed by Schindler are emphasized in the shower scene, this scene also depicts an older mother with her pre-pubescent daughter, both of whom are important to the film's plot. The mother is one of the women whose overwhelming relief is captured by the camera when it is water that falls from the ceiling rather than gas. The inclusion of this mother and daughter could be a counter argument to the effect that Spielberg was actually intensifying the emotional impact of the scene, rather than exploiting the attractiveness of the nude women.

As is exemplified by the mother and daughter who are followed throughout the film, *Schindler's List* focuses not only upon women, but upon their children, as well. Spielberg attempts to portray the danger of being a child during this time, emphasizing the fact that they were often immediately chosen to die in the selections. In the Plaszow labor camp selection, the children are rounded up into trucks while their unsuspecting parents are undergoing selection themselves, believing that their children are safe in the prisoners' barracks. When the parents see their children being loaded up and taken away, they storm the trucks in anguish; their attempts to save their children, however, are futile.

While this scene does effectively demonstrate the terror of hundreds of mothers unable to save their children, it seems that Spielberg cannot leave the audience to contemplate the fate of these children or the resulting trauma experienced by their mothers. Two of Schindler's female Jews reassure themselves by believing that their children had probably hidden during the raid on the barracks, thus escaping death. Later we see that this is indeed true, for all but one of the children that the audience comes to know do survive the raid by hiding. In this way, the audience is distracted from the anguish of the mothers whose children are taken away only to focus on the clever efforts of the children who do escape. By so doing, it seems that Spielberg blunts the effect of this selection of children for death, allowing the audience to feel relief that the children they know ingeniously survive. One exception is a little girl wearing a conspicuous red coat, whom Spielberg depicts walking alone and seemingly unnoticed through the chaos of the Krakow ghetto liquidation as she tries to find a hiding place. Spielberg later pointedly draws attention back to this little girl, for her red coat stands out among the corpses being dumped into a massive pyre.

However, Spielberg once again distracts the audience from this grim reality, as Schindler is later able to save his Jews' children from certain death. After his Jews have been mistakenly sent to Auschwitz, Schindler must once again bribe officials to redirect them to Czechoslovakia. He succeeds, and the guards gather his Jews to herd them back onto the train. As they are boarding, however, the guards suddenly snatch children from the arms of their horrified and anguished mothers. Their horror soon becomes relief, however, for Schindler is able to save the children at the last minute by explaining to the guards that the children's tiny fingers are necessary to polish the insides of shell casings; mothers and children are once again happily reunited. By depicting this uncommon

reprieve, Spielberg allows the audience to avoid the truth that many children were stripped away from their mothers and sent to the gas with no chance of rescue.

It seems that Spielberg is dedicated to realistic portrayal of the Holocaust through nude scenes, executions, crowded transports, and even, to an extent, the victimization of women. However, though Spielberg attempts to impart to the audience the graphic horrors of the Holocaust, his attempts are ultimately outweighed by the optimistic ending of *Schindler's List*, in which mothers and children survive together, Helen Hirsch is saved from Goeth's irrational, destructive attraction, and the audience forgets the little girl in the red jacket in favor of remembering Schindler's self-sacrificing, good deed.

Such an optimistic ending is not to be found in the Italian director Liliana Cavani's much earlier (1973) film, *The Night Porter*. This film, set in Vienna 1957, explores one Holocaust victim's psychological wounds that resurface when she encounters her former guard and tormenter at a hotel where he works as a night porter. Through the memories of both characters, the audience learns that Max and Lucia's former relationship was complicated during Lucia's imprisonment, for Max had acted as both her tormenter and her protector.

One of Max's first memories to be revealed is of the first time he had seen Lucia upon her entrance to the camp - he was filming the new prisoners who were waiting, unclothed, in line. He spotlights Lucia, whose youth and beauty are a powerful contrast to those standing around her. Max's immediate attraction to Lucia leads him to become obsessed with her, his "little girl." At first, a flashback reveals how Max's obsession causes him to play humiliating games with Lucia, toying with her fear by attempting to shoot her while she runs away, naked. Later, it becomes apparent that Max also helps Lucia: when she is obviously ill, he removes her from the prisoners' barracks, doctoring a wound on her arm and clothing her in a clean, pink dress.

During this time, Lucia seems to be an automaton, a beautiful mannequin hardly able to move of her own accord. Not only does she appear to be too ill to expend energy in movement, but she also seems to be awed by Max's authority and power. She absorbs Max's silent instructions, immediately obeying his physical commands. In this way, Max seems to become her teacher of sorts, using his established power over her life to make her accept even his sexual abuse. Eventually, however, it seems that Lucia becomes emotionally dependent on Max as her protector; he becomes the only constant in a world where nothing, not even life, is certain.

Because his crimes during the war have thus far gone undetected, Max is under constant surveillance by fellow Nazis determined to protect each other. When Lucia, now married to a famous conductor, reenters his life, Max's Nazi cohorts feel threatened and want to kill her. Soon, Max and Lucia find themselves repeating the same roles they had filled during the war, barricading themselves in Max's apartment and continuing their sadomasochistic relationship. Max repeatedly hits Lucia, and she purposefully causes him to step on broken glass. She later smiles with pleasure when he chains her up so that "no one can take her away" from him. They fight over food in an animalistic way, seeking

pleasure in their mutual torment. Finally, however, starvation leaves them both without energy and on the verge of death. Max once again dresses a listless Lucia in a pink dress, puts on his Nazi uniform, and takes her on a drive. The Nazis who had laid siege to Max's apartment follow the couple to a bridge, where they are both unceremoniously shot from a distance. In the end, it is evident that both perpetrator and victim have become complicit in their combined fate.

It was in *Schindler's List* that Amon Goeth rationalized his own attraction to a Jewish prisoner by arguing that Jewish women cast a spell on German men. It is in *The Night Porter*, however, that Liliana Cavani turns this fiction into a reality. Lucia truly is enchanting; she is beautiful and fascinating even while ill. She does indeed seem to cast a spell, not only over Max and the other Nazis whom she entertains in one scene, but over the viewing audience, as well. Because she and her complex relationship with Max are so perversely fascinating, it becomes easier to excuse Max's own perverse fascination and even his resulting abuse of her, rather than realizing her experience as a true victimization. Because of this, the audience can view Max and Lucia as a couple, entwined in a twisted kind of love affair, rather than as a perpetrator and a victim.

Indeed, it seems that *The Night Porter* essentially blurs the line between perpetrator and victim. While entertaining a group of Nazis, Lucia herself is dressed in Nazi uniform: suspenders, hat, and leather gloves, topless. After singing a song, Lucia sits down beside Max, who has a surprise for her: it is a box containing the head of a male prisoner who had been tormenting Lucia. She had asked for him to be transferred to another camp, but Max had had him killed instead and his head brought to her as a cruel joke. Although Lucia is devastated when she realizes what has happened, this scene seems to symbolize how her own position has been changed with her relationship to Max. Not only is she herself a victim, but her wish - in explicit imitation of Salome - causes the death of another prisoner, and so Max renders her inadvertent accomplice to the prisoner's death.

Because of the nature of Max and Lucia's relationship, this film could be criticized for encouraging voyeuristic interest. Indeed, it seems that Liliana Cavani explicitly engenders this voyeurism. During the scene in which Lucia entertains the Nazi guards in a sexually provocative way, Cavani gives the audience the feeling that they are clandestine witnesses to a private, erotic dance. During another previously mentioned scene in which Max is filming the new arrivals, one first sees Max holding the camera, then sees the prisoners as though looking through his camera lens. In this way, Cavani places the audience in Max's position of authority and control over the helpless young woman, a position of authority that Max, and therefore the audience, maintains throughout the film.

While much of the content of *The Night Porter* verges on the voyeuristic, it is an effective study of the disrupted life of a Holocaust victim. This film depicts the unique victimization that women were susceptible to during the Holocaust and reinforces the traumatic effect of this victimization by portraying a victim who essentially goes mad because of it. *The Night Porter* demonstrates a woman's inability to continue living a



normal life after surviving such an abnormal experience. Upon meeting Max again, Lucia's comfortable and seemingly composed post-Holocaust life proves less enduring than the tormented camp relationship. Although she is called "sick" by one Nazi who claims to have put the past behind him and encourages her to do so as well, her normal life has been too displaced to be recovered, so she remains locked in the relationship that eventually kills both her and her tormenter. By dressing in their uniforms of the Holocaust - Max in his Nazi uniform, Lucia in her pink dress - they both die symbolically representing themselves at the time when their spirits had truly died, their fates inexorably combined by the force of Max's continued sadistic authority over Lucia.

Like the actress Charlotte Rampling, who plays Lucia in *The Night Porter*, Meryl Streep is glamorous and beautiful as Sophie in the 1982 film version of William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*, directed by American Alan J. Pakula. Also like Lucia, Sophie is a visually enchanting woman whose beauty plays a central role in the narrative. *Sophie's Choice* is set a few years after the war, and the audience learns about Sophie's horrible Holocaust experiences through the form of her disturbing memories, which she recounts to her friend and would-be lover, Stingo. However, while Lucia remains blatantly sexual and attractive during the Holocaust scenes, Sophie is more effectively de-glamorized: she is also ill, but pale, thin, and verging on asexual in a shapeless prison frock.

In *Sophie's Choice*, one can understand Sophie's motivations and actions; her every effort is geared towards trying to save her children. When she cannot save both, she risks her life by begging the camp commander, Rudolph Hoess, to save her son. When Hoess accuses Sophie of flirting with him, one can see that her motivation arises from maternal instinct rather than sexual desire. Although Hoess is enthralled by Sophie's "Aryan" looks - her fine features, blue eyes, and blonde hair - she does not seem to embody the Nazis' Jewish enchantress, as does Lucia in *The Night Porter*. This distinction is important, for by portraying a woman who seems to participate willingly in sexual acts with her guard, *The Night Porter* disregards the experiences of many women who were forced to use sex as a commodity, much like Sophie verges on doing with Hoess in her effort to save her son.

Like Lucia, however, Sophie too remains a victim after the war. Her relationship with her lover, Nathan, is as unhealthy as Lucia's with Max, and both relationships end in mutual death. In this way, *Sophie's Choice* also demonstrates the continuing malignancy of the Holocaust experience. Sophie's life is irreparably changed with her inability to save her children, and her continued suffering and guilt is evident through her worsening alcoholism and her reply to Stingo's entreaty to marry him and begin a family: "You should have another mother for your children." It is during this scene that Sophie reveals the truth of her daughter's death: how Sophie was forced to choose one child over another. It is apparent that, although Sophie is still young and could have another family, she believes her actions during the Holocaust were a betrayal to the sanctity of the relationship between a mother and her children; in essence, because she could not fulfill her maternal role, she feels unfit to bring more children into a world that she can no longer control. Pakula reinforces Sophie's continuing pain in this scene by overlapping the memory of the sound of her daughter's flute into the present-day scene, showing the

awful legacy of Holocaust memory and how such memories forever remain a part of the present.

Whereas Sophie copes with her memories by turning to alcohol, Sol Nazerman copes with his by turning away from life in American director Sidney Lumet's 1965 film version of Edward Lewis Wallant's *The Pawnbroker*. Unlike the women protagonists of the previously mentioned films, the actor Rod Steiger plays a shapeless, unattractive man, a man to whom the sexual act is merely a perfunctory, joyless act in an equally joyless world. In contrast, both Lucia and Sophie are depicted to be unhindered in their enjoyment of this seemingly life-affirming act, a fact that is antithetical to the message of both *The Night Porter* and *Sophie's Choice* and which demonstrates a great difference between depictions of women and men in Holocaust films.

In this way, Lumet effectively depicts a survivor who has ceased to care at all about his present-day life in a post-Holocaust world, and the reason for Sol's apathy is gradually revealed as different events trigger memories of his family and their victimization and death during the Holocaust. Lumet begins *The Pawnbroker* by showing Sol's family together in an idyllic setting, with the children playing in a field while their parents and Orthodox grandparents prepare a picnic. Sol's wife, Ruth, is shown gaily calling to her husband and children; she is full of life, happiness, and beauty, later described by her sister as having been "beautiful like a picture." This brief picture of Ruth is constantly replayed in Sol's mind and stands in stark opposition to his memory of her during their imprisonment.

A present-day scene in which a prostitute tries to tempt Sol by baring her breasts prompts him to remember his wife's victimization of being forced into prostitution at the camp's brothel. In this memory, a guard forces Sol to look at a scene in which room after room contains a naked woman, all in various stages of health and awareness. Sol sees his wife sitting on a bed, naked and listless, when suddenly the silhouette of a Nazi appears in the doorway. Lumet cuts back to present-day Sol, who is trembling and whose eyes are filling with tears -he screams in anger and pain, shaking his fist in frustration at his remembered inability to help his wife.

Whereas Wallant, author of the novel *The Pawnbroker*, graphically describes Sol witnessing Ruth's subsequent rape, Lumet chooses instead to imply Ruth's victimization by focusing upon Sol's anguish over this incompletely portrayed memory. By making Sol's memory of Ruth as a vibrant wife and mother constantly reappear, then juxtaposing that image with her near-catatonic state in the brothel, Lumet effectively enforces Ruth's double victimization and is able to convey the horror of her experience without exploiting her as a sexual object. Indeed, the same could be argued for all of the women who are briefly depicted in the brothel scene, for although they are all nude, Lumet's portrayal of their listless stares and unmoving positions seems to counteract the possibility of exploiting their victimization; instead, Lumet reinforces their hopeless states.

In the most recent film to be reviewed here, the Italian director Roberto Benigni's 1998 *Life is Beautiful* conveys a very different message from the other films in this study.

While it has been as widely acclaimed as *Schindler's List*, its purpose is not to portray the Holocaust realistically, but rather to explore the dynamics of a family trapped in terrible forces beyond their control. An opening voiceover says, "This is a simple story but not an easy one to tell. Like a fable there is sorrow and, like a fable, it is full of wonder and happiness," thus immediately revealing that this story will ultimately convey a positive lesson about life. Since he focuses closely upon the relationship between father and son, Benigni does not delve into the victimization of women as much as Cavani, Spielberg, Pakula or Lumet. Rather, he portrays the lengths that a man will go to save his son, even at the cost of his own life.

This fable depicts the maneuverings of Guido, a carefree and apparently nonreligious Jew who falls in love with a gentile woman in fascist Italy. Guido's bumbling attempts to woo Dora are temporized by undertones of anti-Semitism; his uncle's house is vandalized and his horse is later painted with the words "Achtung! Jewish horse." Eventually, however, Guido succeeds in winning Dora's love, and they have a son, Joshua.

The film skips forward four years, and Guido and his family still seem to maintain their carefree spirits. In his humorous way, Guido is able to keep Joshua from realizing the increasing discrimination against Jews. After they pass a store that does not allow Jews or dogs, Guido manufactures an explanation for Joshua, saying that many businesses could choose their clientele in this way, and that Guido himself might decide not to allow Visigoths in his bookstore. In keeping with his glib ability to bypass the evidence of their persecution, Guido tells Joshua that they are going on a birthday trip when they both are deported. This trick works throughout their ordeal in the camp, for Guido is able to prolong his tale about a game they are playing, in which the winner is awarded Joshua's favorite toy - an army tank.

Upon learning that Guido and Joshua are being deported, Dora attempts to save them, arguing with a Nazi official that their inclusion on the transport is a mistake. When she cannot help them, however, she joins them, boarding the transport to go to the camp as well. Although she becomes paler and is drab in her prison uniform and scarf, Dora's appearance remains essentially unchanged by the camp. She is separated from Guido and Joshua, placed in the women's section of the camp where she remains until liberation; her experiences are not broadly developed.

Meanwhile, Guido displays an amazing ability to keep Joshua alive against all odds of the camp, for all of the children and the elderly, including Guido's own uncle, are taken to the "showers" soon after their arrival. However, Joshua later wonders astutely where the other children have gone, and Benigni obliquely emphasizes their fate by showing Dora and other female prisoners sorting through a mound of clothing on which a kitten is climbing, meowing pitifully - a little girl had been holding this same kitten during the transport that had held Guido and Joshua.

In the end, Joshua and Dora are happily reunited. Joshua "wins" his tank when American soldiers find him and give him a ride and, while riding his tank, Joshua sees his mother walking alongside the road. Dora is just as beautiful as before her camp ordeal, and

Joshua cries excitedly, "I won, I won!" while they embrace. Although Guido's death lends a somber note to the fable, the message of his enduring love for his son and the reunion between Dora and Joshua ultimately outweigh the sadness of Guido's death.

While Benigni's purpose is not to portray the Holocaust realistically, it is problematic that *Life is Beautiful* contains such a positive, life-affirming message. It does not leave the audience with a true awareness of the victimization that occurred during that time. With Guido's attempts to make his son believe that the Holocaust is a game, Benigni avoids the horrific, allowing the audience to concentrate on the uplifting aspects of the film without realizing how implausible would be Dora's reunion with Joshua in an actual Holocaust context of separation between mother and child.

In concluding this chapter, the issue of whether a man or a woman directed a given film does not seem to be an important factor when considering that film's depiction of women victims. It could be argued that Liliana Cavani's *The Night Porter* is the most voyeuristic of the films studied, for it presents Lucia as a beautiful young Jewess who willingly participates in her own victimization. Though the relationship between Max and Lucia is an interesting study of the effects of Holocaust experience upon the human mind, the film glamorizes Lucia and turns her into a blatantly sexual creature, thus fulfilling the fiction of the Jewish enchantress. The American director Steven Spielberg, despite his reputation for employing attractive women as stock foils to his action heroes, and despite the serious objections to certain scenes verging on the prurient, actually seems to depict the victimization of women more sensitively than does Liliana Cavani in *The Night Porter*.

Alan J. Pakula is faithful to William Styron's original novel in depicting the present-day Sophie as a glamorous, sexual creature, yet he too pays great attention to de-emphasize Sophie's sensuality during the flashbacks to her time in the camps. Indeed, Pakula's *Sophie's Choice* is one of the most sensitive depictions of women in this study, for it delves into the wounded psyche of a mother who was unable to save her children and so bears that trauma for the rest of her life.

Yet it can be argued that Sidney Lumet is the director most concerned with sensitively and truthfully depicting Holocaust experience and memory. In *The Pawnbroker*, he does not concentrate on the awful process of victimization, but instead he skillfully depicts the effects of these traumatic events, like forced prostitution, on both the victim and the survivor. In this way, Lumet emphasizes character rather than incident and is therefore ultimately more effective in revealing the implications of the Holocaust. The horribly painful memory of the vanished beauty of Sol's savaged wife blends with the numb and mechanical present of survivors who have yet to recover their lives.

In each of these films women figure prominently as victims: sometimes as lovers, sometimes as mothers, sometimes rendered as mere objects. The extent to which the double victimization of women might take film narratives dangerously close to pornography will be explored in the conclusion to this study; based on this sample, at least, it would be premature to conclude that in terms of sensitivity the gender of either author or director is significant.

### Chapter Five: Conclusion: New Perspectives on Double Victimization

Joan Ringelheim and Joy Miller are two proponents of gendered studies of the Holocaust who argue that women were subjected to different victimization than were men, thus necessitating an acknowledgement of and more studies about women's unique experiences. However, Holocaust scholar Lawrence Langer and author Cynthia Ozick both argue against focusing upon the suffering of women in the context of an event that sentenced all Jews to death, whether man, woman, or child. With such controversy surrounding this issue, the purpose of this paper has been to examine the body of imaginative literature and film rising from the Holocaust in an attempt to discover evidence supporting or contradicting the argument that women's experiences should be held as distinct from those of men.

Studying fictional representations of women in imaginative literature and cinema has proven to be an effective way to test whether recent arguments for gendered studies of the Holocaust are well founded. Given the array of works by male and female authors and directors reviewed here, it seems that both men and women address in some way the gender issues discussed by Ringelheim and Miller, often supporting the thesis that women were doubly victimized by not only being Jews (or, for the non-Jewish victims, simply prisoners), but women. The previous chapters having demonstrated that imaginative literature in fact reflects women's double victimization, this chapter will further investigate how male and female authors and directors have dealt with these unique experiences, with the ultimate goal of expanding upon the standard perspective of Holocaust experience offered by such renowned authors as Elie Wiesel, Tadeusz Borowski, and even Anne Frank. An important issue to be discussed in this chapter, then, will be how male and female authors and directors have treated women's experiences: whether women have been depicted in ways sympathetic to their plight, or whether their victimization is exploited for prurient interests or commercial exploitation. Because male authors have established the paradigm for Holocaust experience, this chapter will also consider whether or not there is a profound difference between the portrayals of double victimization given us by male authors and directors and those given by female authors and directors.

Of those studied, the male authors Borowski, Wallant, Styron, and Ka-Tzemik, the female authors Delbo, Sachs, and Ozick, and the film directors Spielberg, Pakula, Lumet, and Cavani all portray different degrees and perceptions of what could be termed women's double victimization. For the purposes of this paper, the types of double victimization studied were the violation of the maternal bond between mother and child and the sexual exploitation of women through rape and sexual humiliation.

While Elie Wiesel largely ignores the issues surrounding women in the Holocaust, his novel *Night* can form a foundation of men's experiences from which we can measure that of women. For instance, whereas Wiesel describes the competitive and often ruthless nature of the men's camp, where even fathers could not always count on their sons, Charlotte Delbo's play "Who Will Carry the Word?" demonstrates the solidarity and

support of women in non-relative groups such as those discussed by Ringelheim. Indeed, while a more in-depth comparison between these two works is not possible here, further meaningful contrasts can be found, portraying very different reactions of men and women to such universal forces within the camps as starvation, abuse, and disease.

In contrast to Wiesel's *Night*, Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* forms a comparison between the men's and women's camps. His narrator, Tadek, bluntly describes the worse conditions of the women's camp, dispassionately relating the necessity of women to use sex as a commodity in order to obtain essentials like food and clothing. Tadek also deals with issues concerning the women in the experimental block, pregnancy, childbirth, interrupted motherhood and "the Puff." In the short story, "Auschwitz, Our Home (A Letter)," Tadek implores his own loved one interned in the women's camp to "try to grasp the essence of this pattern of daily events, discarding your sense of horror and loathing and contempt, and find for it all a philosophic formula. For the gas chambers and the gold stolen from the victims, for the roll-call and for the Puff, for the frightened civilians and for the 'old numbers'<sup>5</sup>. "

Tadek's instructions, however, to discard horror and loathing and contempt, belie Borowski's true wish that he might be able to "give an account of the fraud and mockery to the living - to speak up for the dead" (116). Indeed, Borowski seems to be successful in relating that awful fraud and mockery of humanity that was the Holocaust, depicting not only his own experiences as a somewhat privileged political prisoner through the narration of Tadek, but also an extent of women's double victimization. However, while Borowski is often effective in imparting the horror of women's experiences, he does not explore the traumatic effects of their victimization, nor does his narrator offer a woman's perspective, but rather he demonstrates women's victimization as merely a way of life in Auschwitz. In this way, Borowski does not supply his women victims with a voice; though he describes women's experiences, he does not engender sympathy for their particularly unique plight.

American writers Edward Lewis Wallant and William Styron focus more upon the implications of double victimization than does Tadeusz Borowski, each approaching the Holocaust in a similar way with their respective novels, *The Pawnbroker* and *Sophie's Choice*. Both novels reflect upon Holocaust experience years after the fact, portraying the lastingly traumatic effects of experiencing such horrors of the Holocaust as a parent's impotence in the face of his or her children's deaths. Wallant, however, further dramatizes the issues confronting his protagonist, Sol, by depicting Sol's wife's sexual humiliation, and later, death. While Ruth is depicted as a beautiful woman in Sol's flashbacks to happier times, the brief portrayal of her victimization in the brothel effectively eschews eroticism, emphasizing instead her hopeless state.

The two authors diverge in their depictions of the survivors, however, for Sol is a nondescript, paunchy man, who wears old-fashioned glasses and seems older than his age. Sophie, on the other hand, returns to being the object of intense sexual desire that she had been prior to her Holocaust experience. She is an iconic, beautiful heroine, one who is still abused even in post-Holocaust Flatbush by her lover. By making Sophie so

absolutely erotic in her post-Holocaust victimization, author William Styron detracts from the tale she recounts to Stingo, coloring her experience with Stingo's overwhelming erotic fascination with her. This is unfortunate, for Sophie's dilemma of having to choose to save one of her children's lives is a profoundly moving example of Joy Miller's argument for women's double victimization.

The director Alan J. Pakula remains faithful to Styron's present-day depiction of Sophie as an incredibly attractive woman in his (1982) film version of *Sophie's Choice*, although he is careful to de-emphasize her sexuality during flashback scenes of the Holocaust. Likewise, in the (1965) film version of *The Pawnbroker*, director Sidney Lumet closely follows Wallant's formula, which successfully demonstrates double victimization as well as the resulting traumatic effects upon both victim and survivor. These two films represent a departure from what seems to be a tendency of film directors to depict beautiful women as arguably erotic in their victimization. Interestingly, a woman directs the film most notable for this transgression: Liliana Cavani's (1973) *The Night Porter*.

*The Night Porter* is effective in that it straightforwardly depicts women's unique vulnerability within the camp to rape and sexual humiliation, as well as the long lasting effects of such victimization. However, this film can be criticized for engendering voyeuristic interest in Lucia, a victim who is portrayed as undoubtedly erotic and even complicit in her own victimization. Lucia enchants the audience with her beauty, and the perversely fascinating relationship between Lucia and Max ultimately undermines the power of her terrible victimization.

Steven Spielberg has been similarly criticized for a latent eroticism in his depiction of women's victimization; however, his portrayal of their victimization seems less voyeuristic than emphatic, in the controversial shower scene as well as the erotically charged scene between Amon Goeth and his Jewish housemaid, Helen Hirsch. Indeed, Spielberg's intent for the scene between Goeth and Helen seems to have stemmed from a desire to illustrate the irrationality of Goeth's belief in the Jewish temptress, for it is obvious that Goeth's advances are frightening and repulsive to Helen, whose life, of course, depends upon Goeth's continued fascination with her. It is important to note, however, that Jewish men are depicted very differently from Jewish women in *Schindler's List* and can neither be described as attractive nor sexual creatures; indeed, there has been no criticism as to the exploitation of men in *Schindler's List*, although they too are shown unclothed in camp selection scenes. This fact lends an ambiguous note to Spielberg's true intentions for depicting what could be thought of as a disproportionate number of attractive women in *Schindler's List*, although the emotional impact and sympathy engendered for the victims during these most criticized scenes often seem to outweigh what has been called voyeuristic in this film.

To return to literature, Holocaust survivor Ka-Tzetnik's *House of Dolls* also occupies an ambiguous position between portraying women's experiences perceptively and forthrightly, and portraying their experiences voyeuristically. While this novel effectively imparts the horror of forced prostitution in a camp brothel, it risks attracting prurient interest for what is possibly the inherently voyeuristic nature of such a direct narrative

about rape, mutilation, and sexual humiliation. Nevertheless, Daniella's wish for her experiences to be remembered forms a litany throughout the novel; though the nature of her experiences might attract voyeuristic interest, the author's motive for relating Daniella's experiences seems to stem from a desire to inform others about such experiences that are today, and were then, incomprehensible.

Although Cynthia Ozick is not herself a Holocaust survivor, her two short stories, collectively titled *The Shawl*, are perceptive and sensitive in depicting women's double victimization, intuitively realizing the disintegration of a mother's sanity along with the death of her child. With *The Shawl*, Ozick deftly addresses women's unique issues of violated motherhood and rape within the camp, illustrating the dilemma of a mother who has gone to great lengths to keep her child alive, only to become unable to help her at the most critical moment, in which the powers of the camp force this mother to repress the maternal urge to save her child from death. Seeing her screaming daughter being carried across the camp to be thrown against the electric wire, Rosa knows that any effort she might make to save her child would be futile and could only result in her own death, as well. In witnessing Magda's murder, however, Rosa is forever changed. She is rendered unable to live with the reality of her daughter's death, so she must fabricate her own reality in order to reconcile the fact she lived, while her daughter died.

While Ozick is powerful in her illumination of women's experiences, Rosa's victimization through rape is merely implied; Magda's true parentage is revealed to the reader only through innuendo and supposition. Rosa struggles, at times unsuccessfully, to suppress the horror of her memories of this victimization, although she finally admits, "I was forced by a German, it's true, and more than once" (43). Ozick was, however, the only female author in this study to address the issue of sexual exploitation - Nelly Sachs' two poems studied here focus entirely upon the destruction of the maternal bond, while Charlotte Delbo's play focuses more upon the supportive relationships between women and the degrading effects of de-feminization in the camp. In fact, Liliana Cavani, director of *The Night Porter*, was the only woman studied who straightforwardly confronted this important factor of double victimization, although her film seems to emphasize the voyeuristic interest that can occur when dealing with this particular type of victimization.

Conversely, several of the male authors and directors, such as Ka-Tzetnik, Wallant, Spielberg, and, to a lesser extent, Borowski, straightforwardly explore the issues of prostitution, rape, and sexual humiliation, often very effectively demonstrating the horror of this victimization upon women. While one can only speculate as to the reason why the male authors in this study seem to be more willing to delve into this type of victimization, the inherent shame and degradation of such a traumatic event could affect the ability of women to expose it so openly. However, one can question whether it is indeed necessary to portray this victimization so explicitly, for works like Ozick's *The Shawl* and Lumet's film *The Pawnbroker*, both of which merely imply women's sexual victimization, seem to be just as effective in imparting the very real trauma of such events as rape and sexual humiliation. Ka-Tzetnik and Cavani, however, choose to portray women's victimization more graphically, raising the issue of whether their intent is to increase our understanding of the complex victimization that occurred during the Holocaust, or whether there is an



underlying, prurient interest driving these depictions of attractive female victims in such an arguably exploitative way. Perhaps the extremely sensitive nature of this victimization automatically renders any attempt at realistic portrayal voyeuristic and even, at times, pornographic - an issue that is not easily solved. Despite this dilemma, the fictional representation of the Holocaust in poetry, drama, fiction and film continues with no apparent slackening of either audience interest or the readiness of artists to tackle this extraordinarily complex and freighted subject.

The extent to which male authors and directors dominated this literature is giving way slowly to a richer mix of men's and women's voices, especially in the memoir. Whether this new balance will produce works more sensitive to the double victimization of women is as yet unclear. The evidence of this study is that, while some male authors and directors have proven remarkably sensitive in this regard, previously overlooked female authors can contribute greatly to a better understanding of this victimization, revealing new insight and interesting comparisons to Holocaust experiences that have been so widely documented by men. Indeed, it is clearly evident that Elie Wiesel's *Night* and even Anne Frank's *Diary* can no longer remain the major narratives influencing our understanding of the Holocaust. While both of these works form important perspectives, they are only two pieces of the puzzle that makes up this incomprehensible period in history. However, as the literature of the Holocaust moves increasingly into the domain of popular culture, the challenge for audiences and artists alike will be to develop sensitivity to the double victimization of women without slipping into a kind of pornographic exploitation of female vulnerability. When that happens, the obscenity that was the Holocaust is compounded.

#### End Notes:

<sup>1</sup>Wiesel, in his autobiography *All Rivers Run to the Sea*, discusses two of his surviving sisters, Hilda and Bea, who are not, however, mentioned in *Night*.

<sup>2</sup>*This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* is a collection of short stories, each with a slightly different point of view. Often, it seems that Borowski himself does not agree with his narrator's point of view, revealing new dimensions to each of his stories.

<sup>3</sup>The point in mentioning this here is not to resolve the controversy, but to recall that *The Diary of Anne Frank*, along with the next work to be discussed, were composed by women who themselves were victims. The issue of whether the autobiographical voices of actual witnesses are more important in Holocaust literature than are purely fictional voices becomes especially important to a consideration of double victimization if an attempt is made ultimately to credit or discredit the way male authors can make these double victims credible.

<sup>4</sup>For reference, see Horowitz, Sara R. "But is it Good for the Jews? Spielberg's Schindler and the Aesthetics of Atrocity," particularly pp. 126-32. (Listed in Bibliography)

<sup>5</sup>See page 112 for reference. The "old numbers" were those camp inmates who had been imprisoned the longest, which often gained them seniority in the prisoners' camp hierarchy. The numbers tattooed on their arms were much lower than newer arrivals' numbers, and Borowski describes these older numbers as a source of pride for inmates because they had survived for so long within the camp.

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