DECONSTRUCTING DIASPORA DREAMS

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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Abstract

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Deconstructing Diaspora Dreams provides an initial attempt to critically examine through a variety of feminist frameworks the use of oral histories from female Holocaust survivors in the emerging field of Women and the Holocaust. This thesis begins with the recognition that social constructions and regulatory discourses constitute and enable our subjectivities in ways that produce and reproduce systemic inequalities. Reflecting on recent feminist debates, this thesis probes the tensions between, on the one hand, the importance of feminist calls for women to come to voice and Holocaust Studies' calls for survivors to bear witness, and on the other hand, the limitations to forms of knowledge that rely on the transparency of language, as argued by the poststructuralists. Finally using postcolonial theories this work explores the dangers to ignoring the material realities enabling the articulation of personal narratives.
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**Table of Contents**

Abstract......................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgments.......................................................................................................... iii

Chapter One: Introduction................................................................................................. 1
Chapter Two: Love Is A Rebel Bird.................................................................................... 8
Chapter Three: Dear Kitty................................................................................................. 50
Chapter Four: In Conclusion.............................................................................................. 93
Bibliography..................................................................................................................... 99
Relations between the individual unconscious and political life are, I argue, neither separable from each other nor reducible to each other. Instead, they comprise crisscrossing and dynamic mediations, reciprocally and untidily transforming each other, rather than duplicating a relation of structural analogy.¹

I tell stories of the deep-rooted commonplaceness of our economically rationalized notions of humanity. Once I took the F train to 14th Street, were I saw an old beggar woman huddled against a pillar. Behind me, a pretty little girl of about six exclaimed, "Oh, daddy, there's someone who needs our help." The child was then led off by the hand, by her three-piece-suited father who patiently explained that giving money to the woman directly was "not the way we do things." Then he launched into a lecture on the United Way as succor for the masses. It was a first lesson in distributive justice: conditioned passivity, indirection, distance -- statistical need positioned against actual need. I walked behind them for a little way, listening to him teach: responsiveness to immediate need was being devalued as wrong.²

Small disenfranchisements give birth to large disenfranchisements, sympathies come and go.³

Another painful denial. Isn't the memory which will free us so much more difficult than the balm which helps us forget?⁴


³Ibid., 25.

Chapter One: Introduction

On May 8th, 1995 as I was driving, the radio was tuned to the CBC (the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation). It was broadcasting a special anniversary series recollecting the 50 year anniversary of the end of World War II. The program began with the VE Day of May 8th, 1945 and tried to represent the heady fervour and optimism that this documentary characterized as the essence of the overall Canadian mood. The production concerned the connection between the impetus for increased political regulation and the value of World Ward II veterans to the nation. It was the benefits accorded to these valuable veterans that subsequently set the stage for the historical underpinnings of our 'social safety net.'

By the end of World War II Canada was the fourth largest arms manufacturer in the world. Canada's economic base had changed from that of agriculture to industry. Canada with 10 million people, was actually underpopulated, at least in terms of the needs of this new, industrial, labour-intensive shift. 5 Throughout the war, government had increasingly regulated industry in order to maintain the war effort. This paved the way for increased government involvement afterwards. That is, public opinion began to assert that if government could regulate jobs and benefits during the war, then why not afterwards? According to the CBC documentary returning war veterans were seen as integral to rebuilding the country, consequently receiving a long list of benefits. 6 Some of those benefits included the return of previous jobs, or free retraining, including free university education assisted by a salary. They were entitled to a small portion of

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6Ibid.
land, housing subsidies, and free medical care as well.  

The 'feel of the nation,' according to the war veterans interviewed was almost euphoric. The war was over, the Depression was over, and everyone felt like all problems had been solved. This is the view from the war veterans' perspective.

Turning back the pages of history to the beginnings of what would turn out to be the Second World War, Germany increased its anti-Jewish mandate while Canada correspondingly tightened its already restrictive immigration legislation. As of 1938 Canada had officially closed its doors to all Jewish immigrants. Mackenzie King's agenda, from early on was to teach Hitler and the rest of Germany, that Canada would not be 'dumped' with their internal problems with minorities. What follows are King's instructions to his representatives at the Evian Conference in France, which was the first of many international conferences to make pretensions towards solving the ever-escalating refugee dilemma.

Other governments with unwanted minorities must equally not be encouraged to think that harsh treatment at home is the key that will open the doors to immigration abroad. It is axiomatic that no state should be allowed to throw upon other countries the responsibility of solving its internal difficulties.

The Evian Conference attendees supported this sentiment, and as one Nazi newspaper concluded

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7Ibid.

8Irving Abella and Harold Troper, None Is Too Many (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1982), 27.

9Ibid.
"The Evian Conference serves to justify Germany's policy against Jewry."11

Once the war had actually ended, the pressure to 'save' Jews is reported to have been relieved in the eyes of the politicians, and the rest of the nation too; the concern for the Canadian government was to pre-empt what they feared would be a post-war depression.12 Although North American's thought the end of the war had meant repatriation for former Jewish refugees, most Jews had little desire to return to the communities that had rejected them. Canada, therefore, became deluged with appeals for immigration from all over Europe.

Largely as a result of the burgeoning needs of industry, in the spring of 1946 a newly aligned corporate, senatorial and pro-immigration coalition persuaded the government to reactivate the "long dormant" Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour with the directive to review Canadian immigration policy and practice and "to consider options for the future."13 Eventually as a concession to capital demands for labourers (and not an overwhelming change in the public's antipathy for Jews), the Immigration law was changed. A target of 20,000 Displaced Person's to be let in by 1948 was set.14

Public embarrassment, and the desperate need for labourers during an unprecedented economic expansion, finally made this an allowable option. It was at this point in time relatives from my own family were able to immigrate to Canada, to their new destiny awaiting them in a factory, in the 'needle trade.'

11Ibid., 32.
12Ibid., 196.
13Ibid., 237.
14Ibid., 248.
When I set out on my oral history project, intending to investigate female Holocaust survivors' emigration experiences, I was interested in understanding their perspectives on Canadian identity and Canadian 'femininity' during the 1950's. For those like myself, born in Canada, into middle class affluence in the suburban theatre of the post World War II period, June Cleaver images spring immediately to mind. Although Ward and June's continual adventures with the Beaver were in rerun form when I watched them as a pre-adolescent, they none-the-less, along with the Brady Bunch and the Partridge Family, shaped my ideal notions of family and motherhood. While these latter two examples include divorced and 'blended' family forms, the white, Anglo-Saxon, understanding, and endlessly helpful and sympathetic mother remained, like June Cleaver -- image perfect.

Needless to say my family (along with many, many others) did not come anywhere near these television fantasies. There were, however, definite similarities. Like the Cleavers, mine was a nuclear family. I have a younger brother, a mother who in early childhood, at least, stayed at home, and a father who won the bread. The similarities end there. My family was different by virtue of religion -- we are Jewish. My mother is both a Hungarian immigrant and a Holocaust survivor. While trying their best to fulfill the North American familial ideal, the Holocaust, and my family's inability to deal with its traumatic aftermath, encroached upon -- indeed defined, almost every aspect of my childhood life.

Hence my interest in exploring how it is we think about and come to know Canadian survivors' experiences of that dreadful period in time, and how that time has circumscribed their place in the Canadian body politic -- particularly those of women. After conducting numerous lengthy and intensive interviews with female survivors in Toronto, I realized how misleading these
investigations were without first considering and questioning the more fundamental ways in which we come to understand history. In particular I needed to consider how academic and experiential approaches to knowledge such as the Holocaust can shift.

How concepts change can most significantly be seen in the Academy through the fundamental changes created by the Civil Rights and Women's Movements over the last several decades. These changes contest conventional views of history. As well these political challenges contest how knowledges are produced and kept coherent. Finally these challenges to the status quo question to what ends academic knowledge has been and is currently being put. Since these changes, feminist academics and in particular feminist historians, have been hard at work examining both the content of the 'Western historical canon' for what it lacks, and exploring the assumptions which underpin its epistemology.

In an attempt to break from 'whiggish' historical forms, the general political disruptions by feminists to scholarly work paved the way for new forms of collecting and documenting history.

For example:

(0)ral history interviews provide an invaluable means of generating new insights about women's experiences of themselves in their worlds. The spontaneous exchange within an interview offers possibilities of freedom and flexibility for researchers and narrators alike. For the narrator, the interview provides the opportunity to tell her own story in her own terms. For researchers, taped interviews preserve a living interchange for present and future use; we can rummage through interviews as we do through an old attic -- probing, comparing, checking insights, finding new treasures the third time through, then arranging and carefully documenting our results.15

In the first part of my thesis I will explore how female Holocaust survivors' narratives are used in

two key feminist texts in the area of Women and the Holocaust. The academic work in this area, while ground breaking, also shows a common and troubling phenomenon. The problem is how women, as a category of analysis, are used to understand the specificity of gender for female Jewish survivors during the war.

For the most part, in academic work written about female survivors, it is their experiences during the Holocaust that is focussed upon. Often their narrative ends upon liberation. Or, their liberation and everything afterward goes comparatively unremarked. It is the limits to identities forged through these truncated narratives: of an idealized life before the war, of death camps, and huge, huge losses, and the need to highlight and centre these loses, that will lead to a discussion about how "truth" and the "real" are constructed through the literary device of oral histories.

From these discussions I will move to reflect more closely upon the use of women's voices as a liberating technique. In the second part of this thesis, I will begin an initial attempt to theorize questions, provoked by recent feminist poststructural critiques. These critiques make problematic easy and transparent notions of speech. While feminist oral histories do provide female survivors with a rational presentation of their lives in a manner that permits a coherence to their trauma, the transmission of such experiences through narration, represents more than a subjective act. Consequently I will explore how categories and concepts used for "reflecting upon and evaluating ourselves" come from a cultural, political and historical context.

I will argue that without critically examining how we use and construct oral narratives we risk reproducing dominant regulatory mechanisms, despite the challenge oral narratives pose to traditional forms of history. And If we consider over time, the material changes in the lives of

16Ibid., 18.
female survivors in Canada, we see that contextualizing women's experiences of the Holocaust teaches us not only of the dangers of systemic racism and hatred. Their stories, moreover, teach us about the limits to memory, to storytelling, and to constructions of self at moments in history. Equally as important, and what I hope this work illustrates, are the dangers of reinvoking systems of difference and inequality by collapsing experience and universalizing oppression. Here the effort I am making is not to prevent the call to voice or limit the uses of oral histories. Rather I am suggesting that the time may be upon us to make obvious the connection between what is said and what is unsaid.

This last form of struggle was the one that possessed Charlotte Salomon. What she made and what she hid, more than any account to surface so far, brought an artist's perception to a life that was shaped by deception. In telling a story of suicide and secrecy, CS traced a course from "I knew nothing of all that" to "Suddenly she knew." Here was a victim who scraped away secrets, thickened the lines around each hard-grasped truth, and painted her life knowing that knowing was all.17

Chapter Two: "Love Is A Rebel Bird"\textsuperscript{18}

In their earlier work, the writings of Anna Davin and Sally Alexander indicate how Western academic historians began to theorize feminism, in the latter half of the twentieth century, as integral to historical research. Among their priorities included articulating, as the historical research of the progressive labour politics did for workers, women's unexamined position in the burgeoning field of social history. At the time they were writing, and still often today, women were there in historical texts only inasmuch as they remained fixed as an "unchanging backcloth" to "real history."\textsuperscript{19} Davin and Alexander responded in particular to orthodox histories which they described as an evidential and accumulative project which tried to produce an authentic replication of a limited past. The problem, for there were many groups left out of orthodox history, was that the fundamental ordering being written into history remained untroubled.\textsuperscript{20}

The initial struggles to have women as a category of analysis accepted as a legitimate academic investigation are useful in reminding us that what women do, and their place in the social ordering of the day, matters in ways barely conceivable at the time Davin and Alexander wrote "Feminist History." Questions of political economy, culture, citizenship and reproduction need women in specific locations, at certain historical moments, often serving very particular roles, integral to both family life, community, labour and politics. Women's role (however


\textsuperscript{19}Anna Davin and Sally Alexander, "Feminist History," \textit{History Workshop Journal} no. 1 (Spring 1976), 4.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid.
dangerous it may be today to use such a generalized term), theorized as an unchanging backcloth to history, is important to keep in mind. I will argue that it is significant to keep the 'unchanging backcloth' image in mind because it is this sense of fixity that simplifies the ranging ways in which women have occupied and challenged their diverse locations. Theorizing women as an 'unchanging backcloth' misses how women's labour as workers, reproducers, farmers, gardeners and nursemaids are and were necessary to everyday existences, and hence politically structured and regulated in changing ways. For my project this tradition of fixity, moreover, remains inadvertently embedded in some feminist historical projects. At this point I want to suggest that it is the use of oral histories, particularly in writing the Holocaust, that reproduces a static, unchanging category of women, in this case, Jewish women. In exploring this terrain I will use Joan Ringelheim's reflections on her interviews and historical research on women in the Holocaust in comparison to other researchers in this area, such as Sybil Milton, to indicate the differences in how survivors' narratives are theorized.

Specifically, I am interested in raising questions which Natalie Zemon Davis characterizes as "establishing changing identity and how you write about it," and "how people make a motif for themselves to tell a specific story." 21 Natalie Zemon Davis teaches us to look for narrative devices that permit 'the accused' to tell stories in a way that let them avoid punishment or responsibility. Through reviewing the book Frauen, I will seek to address the ability to access the "truth" and how the "real" is constructed for the women who were interviewed by Alison Owings in her book. The interviews collected in the book regarding German women's subject positioning

during the Third Reich are useful here because the book exemplifies the historical breadth given to the topic. The knowledge produced thus far about female Jewish Holocaust survivors, in comparison, is more limited in its theoretical scope. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's article "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race" highlights a similar discrepancy in the attention paid to theorizing women's sexuality between white women and African American women. She documents the extensive writings that have reflected "changing and conflicting images" representing white women's sexuality in the centuries between the Renaissance and the Victorian Era. Western conceptions of black women's sexuality, however, in comparison to those of white women's sexuality, remained obliquely the same during this time. Until quite recently as Ringelheim's work indicates, I will argue, a similar essentialist trend has developed in Jewish women's representations of their experiences in the Holocaust.

As well, I want to begin to consider how fixity and its opposite, fluidity, are used in feminist writings of history that produce historical subjects with agency, while simultaneously, as in the case of survivors' representations, producing a closure that keeps these same survivors in place and frozen in time. Neither concept is mutually exclusive and both can (and have been used) in the writings of both the Holocaust and the Third Reich; but it is how each is utilized in embedding motifs of gender that provides what I call a manoeuvring of agency, in ways that regulate how we think about and write about history, complicity, and the 'other'. Embedding fixity not only reduces and diminishes agency, it obscures the complexity both of complicity and

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23Ibid.
of victimization. Moreover fixity in the case of the Holocaust, and relatedly, the sense of closure we derive from it, produces a kind of containment of the horrors, and subjective consequences, for those who survived. To this end we must keep in mind whose narratives are embedded with a greater sense of fixity and whose purposes this fixing serves.

As memory retreats from its object, a new kind of work on the war is born. It can't approach its subject directly. It worries as much about what it doesn't as about what it does have to say. It speaks sometimes not about the war but in spite of it. It wants to know not what happened in that war, but how it was desired; how it was prepared in language, what use it is to speak of it now. Its critical idiom, its analytical tools were sharpened on the mass culture form of the fifties and sixties. It knows that World War II itself is not just a memory, but a memory industry, with enormous political value. Bitburg, Gaza, Faurisson, Le Pen: by necessity it thinks World War II not in terms of memory but in terms of forgetting.

**The German Women**

Feminist theorists use the concept of gender systems in order to negotiate and explore the political terrain of research. Two aspects of such a system are first of all the notion that gender is a social construction and secondly, the notion that disputes the former, that gender is "an independent and determining factor in the organization of society." I will return to this controversy shortly. My intent is not to limit the analysis to 'oppositional thinking' or to emphasize only sexual differences, rather I am acknowledging that

one "becomes a woman" in ways that are much more complex than in a simple opposition to men. In cultures in which asymmetric race and class relations are a central organizing

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principle of society, one may also "become a woman" in opposition to other women.26

Resisting a foregone binary defining 'man' and 'woman' and a privileging of women's ways of knowing where, as Norma Alarcón contends, a flattening of feminist epistemology becomes produced, I am arguing that the only way to understand the paradoxical and contradictory locations inhabited by female Holocaust survivors who were at one point in time heavily raced, and then, within a relatively short period of time, considered to be somewhat white, is through refusing to define terms such as woman or race according to some essence.27

The telling of history, then, argues Jane Flax, if the telling is to be done from a feminist perspective, must necessarily refuse linear, teleological, hierarchical or binary ways of thinking.28 If the primary goal of feminism is to change conditions which oppress women, then it is important to think about how we conceptualize gender and how we analyze male domination. Studying gender, says Flax, allows us some critical distance. This distance helps us to reevaluate existing social arrangements so that new ones might become possible.29 The foundation upon which theory is developed, particularly in Western academic sites, has been the basis for a wide ranging critique of Enlightenment epistemologies. It is the breakdown of Enlightenment beliefs, like the belief in


27Ibid., 361-362.

28Jane Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 12, no. 4, (Summer 1987), 622.

29Ibid., 623.
rationality, science, and the ability to access the 'Truth,' caused by historical events like the Holocaust, the invention of the atom bomb, and the Vietnam War,\textsuperscript{30} that galvanized a critical thinking about who we are, how theoretical underpinnings are informed by politics, and how we produce knowledge.

For those German women who lived through the Nazi era in Germany, the book Frauen, by journalist Alison Owings, elicits a definitive sense of how history and complicity became gendered and raced through Nazi ideology. For Jews, German women recalling the Third Reich is a nightmare. As readers we are often made to see Jews as Hitler saw them - as greedy, competitive and self-serving. It forces us to "experience anew that Hitler's word did become law - that 'what he saw went.' "\textsuperscript{31} The narratives most women interviewed for Frauen could rely on, during the Third Reich, allowed them then, and allows them today, to distance themselves as victims, as naive and unknowing citizens, and at best, with a few rare exceptions, as "passive"\textsuperscript{32} political dissenters.

The women not only had known the Third Reich from its first cloaked entreaties to its last temporal and spiritual rubble, they were the Third Reich. Theirs were the scrubbed faces meant for photographs and posters. Theirs were the hearts and hands and bodies enjoined to beat and bake and beget for the Fatherland. Their minds were discouraged from exertion.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., 622.


\textsuperscript{32}Alison Owings, Frauen: German Women Recall the Third Reich (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 354.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., xxiii.
According to the women interviewed in Frauen, the Third Reich pursued an ideal of womanhood that valorized a chaste femininity that was pure and loyal, so that political inactivity, contrary to the gains made by German women in the previous Weimar Republic, was cultivated. This femininity provided the material conditions for the reproduction of the men who conducted the mass killings, the bureaucrats who processed Jewish "goods," the Hitler Youth who terrorized Jews not yet in the camps. Most of the time, German women were not allies to Jewish women, at least not in Germany during the Third Reich.

Questioning oral histories and truth, Owings is circumspect and critical about the 'value' of insider knowledge. Owings plumbs the female, adult resources still in existence, the women who participated and supported, either tacitly or complicity, Hitler's government. We do not often see women, and consider their behaviour, in this way: as supporting, maintaining, and sometimes participating in (as one woman who was a concentration camp guard did) an inhumane, perverse and genocidal war machine. And to point this out through personal testimonies is the strength of the book Frauen, for it contributes to, challenges and makes nuanced the gendered way in which we write about and remember history.

This work shows most German women were not pure victims of the Third Reich as has


35Alison Owings, Frauen: German Women Recall the Third Reich (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995), xi.
been argued by some leading German feminists as well as the German women themselves.36 They were integral to the war effort. Frauen shows the everyday world as supporting the Third Reich, indeed this was required for it to function. When we no longer see history as 'simply' patriarchal, and include women's voices, we indeed must include, and theorize, how persecution and cruelty are gendered.

Owings' own expectations are interesting in that they mirror many cultural feminist intentions like those found in the early work of Joan Ringelheim. Owings' anticipation that "the German women would provide a collective sense of reflection and remorse, and perhaps persuade me they had not supported Adolf Hitler"37 is routinely (in all but a few exceptions) refuted. Ambivalently Owings concedes that quickly and then consistently throughout her interviews, her hopes were dashed. Yet, overall, she really 'liked' these women. She also notes that most German women interviewed had known about the concentration camps, and, another revelation: the majority were willing and eager to talk about their experiences.

It is not difficult, in the federal pre-election fervour gripping Canadians, to understand the magnetism of employment, rebuilt military might, and national pride. What confounds me is that while the Third Reich was intensely a German phenomenon, it was the Reich's power over other countries, and the rapidity at which appeasement and collaboration took place which speaks to the immensity and accessibility of virulent anti-Semitism throughout central and Eastern Europe at


37 Alison Owings, Frauen: German Women Recall the Third Reich (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995), xvi.
And the Frauen in Frauen echo this anti-Semitism. From Frau Mathilde Mundt, an aged, yet still vigorous anti-Semite, we learn that all people are understood through narrow, limited descriptive categories. Jews are unlawful, greasy, dishonest and very rich. They control all banking, all stock exchanges, and the world's largest diamond exchange. Poles are stupid, drunk, slovenly, and, according to Frau Mundt's "history" lesson, they tormented East Prussian Germans prior to World War II. In other words, the Jewish body politic threatened the true German populace with displacement and poverty through unfair competition. Hitler's belief became not only law, but the lens through which many average German citizens saw Jews -- as poison. Germans had had enough victimization, according to Frau Mathilde Mundt. Politically, Germans were humiliated by their World War I defeat and its aftermath -- the 'Dictat of Versailles,'\(^{38}\) from the Jewish onslaught on German jobs, businesses, government (Jews were not considered German by Frau Mundt), and finally, by the ill treatment at Polish hands in the 'Polish Corridor.'\(^{39}\) The Third Reich, Hitler, and war, were supposed to restore the economy for Germans and satisfy German Nationalism. All of this was a mighty and enormous undertaking. All necessary, believes Mundt to this day. Hitler was close to success. Frau Mundt's pain and distress come from the loss of the war, the defeat of her dreams.

Frau Verena Groth came from a wealthy and well respected Stuttgart family. Her father was a physician, and, unbeknownst to Verena, he was also a Jew -- at least by the standards developed under the Nuremberg Laws. Frau Groth's social position growing up changed

\(^{38}\)Ibid., 85.

\(^{39}\)Ibid., 93.
dramatically, as the scope and power of the NSDAP grew. She is no doubt a paradoxical symbol and a symptom of the Nazi era. At once critical, fearful, and also an inadvertent participant in everyday Nazis practices, Groth's half-Jew identity straddled and continues to inhabit both worlds:

"Elobt sei, was hart macht?" When asked later where the phrase came from, Frau Groth said she had no idea. Her response may exemplify, if ironically, the subconscious power of Nazi propaganda. The phrase was a Nazi slogan used to describe 'Aryans.'

Her parting sentiments belie her relatively accepted childhood identity. Discussing the resurgent neo-Nazi movement in Germany in the 1980's she wrote "...if it gets really bad, she could find a little place with her brother in Canada."41

Beginning, during, and to the end Frauen does not relent. The reading is difficult. There is little remorse felt, redemption granted or responsibility taken. The German women are thoroughly disappointing. There is no other word for it. Yet, they come across to the reader, to me, as quite human. Some cringe at the how the rest of us judge their Germany, and by extension, themselves. But over and over three themes resurface: that they did know about, or, were not explicitly aware of the torture and genocide taking place in the concentration and extermination camps; that there exist 'true' Germans as well as foreigners in Germany, then and now, and that these groups are fundamentally different; and that Germany was not entirely responsible for starting the war -- that the defeat of World War I and the subsequent Versailles Treaty, which rendered German militarily impotent and all but destroyed German pride and self-respect, created a seething frustration.

Another theme or phenomenon to consider: Alison Owings' commentary through which

40Ibid., 104.
41Ibid., 115.
she struggles with her vacillations, between sympathy and frustration. In her interview with Frau Ellen Frey, the original Third Reich matron found years earlier in Spain, what mesmerizes Owings is the 'dazzling hospitality,' with which she is treated.\textsuperscript{42}

If there is one interview that could be considered an archetype, it would be Frau Lingen's. She embodies the contradictions found in the many interviews. It is particularly the contradiction between her unwillingness to fully see the devastation caused by her husband (who was a military officer during the war) and her own lobbying efforts to construct a memorial to concentration camp survivors, that exemplifies how historical reflections are complicated and complicate the process of reading interviews as an accurate and true reflection of subjectivity and 'how it was.'\textsuperscript{43}

Frau Muller and Frau Kretzschmar, both critical and progressive thinkers, were bound by Hitler's ideology, despite their subversive actions against the Third Reich. Frau Muller believed explicitly in essential race differences, and Frau Kretzschmar's military husband, who wanted to desert, wanted to do so because of the gruelling circumstances of war. He was not, in other words, moved to respond to some ethical reprehension towards the killing of civilians, or as a way to protest concentration camp deaths.

Most women's recollections and position during the Third Reich are not straightforward. And most did little actively to resist Hitler and the genocidal practices that ensued. Many were inspired and relieved materially and psychically by the changes furnished from the massive Jewish expulsions, enslavements and exterminations. These changes meant vastly improved access to employment, business ownership, and for some Germans access to corporate buy-outs that were
thinly veiled expropriations from the German Jewish population. Accessing employment held by Jews and appropriating Jewish businesses, combined with an inability -- that is historic, deeply embedded, and manipulated brilliantly by Hitler -- to recognize Jews, and others, as fully German, expedited their genocide.

Another repeated motif reiterates the belief that many Jews "escaped early" as Frau Sasowsk claimed some had. And Frau Sasowski further wondered why more Jews did not leave for America or England when they had the opportunity. As Owings explains, Jews were made politically pernicious during the Third Reich, a lesson that seems to have, for the 'Frauen,' endured. Over and over again Owings asked her subjects what their reactions were when they learned that their fellow Germans had committed genocide. Replied Frau Sasowski

"The terrible thing was, one could do nothing oneself. We were completely powerless under Hitler. Once could not utter a free thought, for God's sake."

Some Frauen, although the minority selected in the book, were openly critical of Hitler, despite the repercussions. The Frauen that listened to illicit radio, such as Frauen Amschel and Leib for instance, claim to have been opposed to Hitler from the start. Frau Amschel, Frau Leib and Frau Maier, the 'country women' interviewed by Owings, defied their German pro-Nazis stereotype impressively. More than most German women in the book, they, as a group, consistently disapproved of Hitler, his policies, his government, and admitted that they knew about the concentration camps.

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44Ibid., 224.

45Ibid., 224.

46Ibid., 230.
They said they all had known about Dachau through newspapers and 'black radio.'

Frau Amschel added,

"There were more camps, ne?"47

Such massive contradictions. Frau Anna Rigl an out-and-out anti-Semite, eventually through the interview revealed she lost a husband through the war, blamed all governments involved, and ultimately (when questioned) blamed Hitler for starting the war.48 This is a rare admission. More common responses in Frauen avoid the subject, pretend Germany was under attack by Poland, or had never given the political circumstances any thought -- and maintain their ignorance to this day.

The distinction between ability to pursue active versus passive resistance, according to Owings, was another narrative device used frequently. Frau Rauhut described her life during the Third Reich. She is younger than the average woman interviewed, but her childhood memories, and the responsibility she as a German citizen of that time takes, is uncommon. These childhood memories also indicate how pervasive the changes were that Hitler and his followers imposed on an everyday existence. While both her parents were upper middle class by our standards and opposed to Hitler, their's was an example of the moral and psychic compromises endured by conscientious Germans.49 As a result, Karma Rauhut, raised as a relatively free spirit, was openly critical and never joined the Bund deutscher Mädels. Her father intermittently tried to help Jewish

47 Ibid., 236.
48 Ibid., 295.
49 Ibid., 258.
friends and acquaintances leave Germany by helping them sell their possessions. He associated with people in the resistance, harbouring some in his home, yet neither he nor his wife ever, as their daughter explained, 'actively' resisted. The little he did do placed him under suspicion from the local Nazi authorities, and put him in danger -- the family would only do so much, the times were already so disquieting. Frau Karma Rauhut's parents could not come to terms with themselves, and the compromises they made after the war. Her mother became an alcoholic, and her father committed suicide.\(^50\)

Silence and speaking are like most dichotomies, problematic. Language is not transparent. Thinking in relations helps us to see that gender, and German female gender in this case, was and still is constituted through social processes. In its most general sense, gender as a category describes men and women. These two categories are posited as exclusionary;\(^51\) however, gender as a social relation is asymmetrical and "enters into and partially constitutes all other social relations."\(^52\) How these categories are produced, allows us to considered how gender affects subjectivity, through language, through reading interviews. For poststructuralists

Subjectivity is produced in a whole range of discursive practices -- economic, social and political -- the meanings of which are a constant site of struggle over power. Language is not the expression of unique individuality; it constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways which are socially specific. Moreover, for poststructuralists, subjectivity is neither unified nor fixed. Unlike humanism, which implies a conscious, knowing, unified, rational subject, poststructuralism theorizes subjectivity as a site of disunity and conflict, central to the

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\(^50\)Ibid., 355.

\(^51\)Jane Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 12, no. 4, (Summer, 1987), 628.

\(^52\)Ibid., 630.
processes of political change and to preserving the status quo.\textsuperscript{53} And Frauen clearly illustrates the difficulty in considering claims to truth, innocence and victimization given the historical context from which the book comes. The German women interviewed, with a few exceptions, could not be considered Nazis, if one considers Nazis, or Nazi sympathizers broadly as \textit{active} participants who enthusiastically supported Hitler's war against the Jews. Those women who genuinely wanted to help the German war effort, by sewing mitts and scarves for soldiers fighting in Russia, for example, perhaps could be more readily categorized as Nazi supporters. But, through and through the majority of the women in Frauen did not portray themselves as readily enthusiastic about Hitler or his ideology or his practices. The key here in historical interpretation is understanding that the world abhorred and was repulsed by the death camp revelations and the overwhelming figures that indicated more than mere genocide -- the Third Reich created an efficient killing machine unparalleled in recent history. Being interviewed about living through that time, being asked questions that probed how one felt about the Holocaust, must have put these women, to a certain extent, on guard. And so it would be understandable that even though they may have wanted to discuss their guilt, or their culpability, many did not see the blame resting anywhere near themselves and many wanted to make that clear.

Their narratives do, however, often reveal contradictions. Many Frauen, for example, still believe in Eugenics, and see the Jews and other groups as inherently different, a different race, with 'good' and 'bad' feature's. Drawing on a common racist tendency, many described 'the Jew'

disparagingly yet spoke compassionately about Jewish acquaintances and neighbours, wondering about their fate -- assuming that they emigrated early enough. Sometimes virulent anti-Semitism was revealed, and yet acts of kindness, or aid were offered to a Jewish colleague none-the-less. The point is they unintentionally exhibited Nazi ideology, at the same time as they exhibited human frailties we can all identify with. The Frauen exemplify -- at their worst moments -- the pitfalls of being human.

As gender can become a metaphor for biology, it can also become a metaphor for racialized difference. And as Joan Ringelheim points out, the relatively high extermination rates for Jewish women, indicates that German women were to be the only proper female gender. As the Nazis began the deportation of German Jews eastward to ghettos in Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia, to be considered a proper mother in Germany after 1941, one could no longer be female and Jewish. As Flax argues unless "we see gender as a social relation, rather than as an opposition of inherently different beings, we will not be able to identify the varieties and limitations of different women's (or men's) powers and oppressions within particular societies." And despite the limits of what we can ever really 'know' about the Frauen Owings interviewed, we do get a sense, actually an awful sense, of how complicated and instilled such differences can be.

**The Jewish Women**

The past is not waiting for us back there to recoup our identities against. It is always retold, or discovered, reinvented. It has to be narrativized. We go to our own pasts

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54Jane Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," Signs: Journal of women in Culture and Society, 12, no. 4 (Summer 1987), 641.

55Ibid., 641.
through history, through memory, through desire, not as a literal fact. 56

This is not the way in which Jewish women who lived through the same time period are written about. For example, Sybil Milton argues her case for a gender specific analysis by asserting that overall, the literature on the Holocaust is based upon male experiences. 57 Classic Holocaust historiography remains undifferentiated by gender in its chronological pursuit of events, attempting to grapple with how, and why Hitler and the NSDP were able to capture ideologically and physically the hearts and minds of many central and Eastern European governments and citizens. Milton's point is that, and I agree, including women's voices will broaden and shift how the historical record is produced, and consequently, how we come to 'understand' the Holocaust.

She is mindful that the women she writes about are not a unified group as she tries to guard against erroneous assumptions. Her focus is on Germany because this is where Nazism began and where policies were initially tested and developed before being exported to other countries. 58 What is fascinating about Milton's subject matter is the distinction she makes between non-Jewish German and German Jewish women as they each became early targets of National Socialism, when, prior to Hitler's overt policy of genocide, both groups faced similar persecution, particularly if they were politically active. In fact, Nazi female intimidation and confinement,


58 Ibid., 215.
beginning immediately after Hitler gained power, concentrated on socialist, communist and liberal politicians at all government levels.59

Because fewer prison facilities had existed for the women in Germany prior to 1933 than for men,

The camps created for Austrian and German women before 1939 became the models for the vastly expanded network of concentration and labour camps created after 1940 throughout occupied Europe.60

Jewish women, prior to 1939, were held in prison only if they were active politically or were considered "domestic subversives."61 Milton argues that prior to the Jewish ostracism institutionalized by law and decree beginning with the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, Jewish women felt disquiet as Jews, but not necessarily as women. Kristallnacht, the pogrom of the night of November 9-10, 1938, culminating the previous five years of Jewish vilification, dislodged previous social inhibitions that had buffeted Jewish women from overt anti-Semitism, leaving them with an increased vulnerability to physical violence at the hands of Nazis vigilantes.62

What Milton's work illustrates, and in light of Frauen bears repetition, is that while female German politicians were targeted by the Nazis because they were not seen favourably as 'women,' they did not face to nearly the same extent, the daily, routine, erosion of civil and personal exclusions by friends, colleagues, and neighbours that Jewish women steadily did.

59Ibid., 215.

60Ibid., 225.

61Ibid., 216.

62Ibid., 217.
How to explain the growing uneasiness and disquiet that increased almost daily? In To Paint Her Life: Charlotte Salomon in the Nazi Era, Mary Lowenthal Felstiner describes the trickling stealth of fear among German Jews by this grim statistic:

**SUICIDE RATE PER MILLION INHABITANTS [PRUSSIA], 1923-27**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Protestant</th>
<th>Jews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>530 (!)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jews took that punctuation to heart. Theirs was a small and defensive group in which news of suicides spread fast: Jewish families talked to Jewish families. They learned of a "suicide catastrophe" among Berlin Jews in "hazardous occupations" like commerce. Their journals warned, "Such an appalling increase has not been noted among any other civilized people." Their demographers sent out alarms. Their leaders put most of the blame on the Jews' own "growing alienation from traditional ways." Their writers asked: "How do we contain the suicide epidemic among the German Jews?"

While small acts of kindness and courtesy may have defrayed the more unsettling aspects of Nazis ideology, they did not prevent deportations, and they in no way united the increasingly divided German population between Jews and non-Jews.

By 1941, when the war against the Jews was in fully realized form, more German Jewish women than either Jewish men, or non-Jewish German women, were being deported. Magnified numbers resulted from several factors between 1933-1942: an excess number of World War I widows, a higher male mortality rate, and an increase in international emigration by Jewish males. All these factors meant that there were simply more Jewish women around to be annihilated.

While German and Jewish German women would be vulnerable to state sanctioned

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violence, it was by far Jewish German women who soon learned that they, along with Gypsy women, had to fear state sanctioned enslavement and death for themselves and their families. Initially Jewish German women would be incarcerated for their political activities, like their German counterparts in places like Gotteszell, Stadeheim, and the Barnim Street women's prison.65 These prisons are characterized by Milton as initially being 'proper' facilities with specially trained administrators from the Weimar penal system. As the categories of women changed after 1935 and Jewish women were increasingly incarcerated for breaking the escalating racial laws, so too did the staff.

The SA and the SS took over and recruited staff from the Nazi Women's Group (NS Frauenschaft). Stepping stones for greater and more notorious camps, these prisons were where many careers, particularly for the female SS, were made.66 Not a lot has been written about the over 3,000 women, some volunteers but mainly conscripted labourers, who worked as uniformed guards in the prisons that became the prototypes for the women's concentration camps. Although for most the work entailed supervising work details, some were also nurses and doctors who conducted "pseudomedical experiments."67 These guards ranged in their ability to be cruel, while some tried to lessen the drudgery.

Focusing on a letter by the misogynist SS Captain Max Koegel, Milton enters into a tricky supposition. Supervising the transference of Lichtenburg inmates to the then under-construction Ravensbruck concentration camp, Koegel, in his letter, is frustrated by the architectural plans. No

65Ibid., 219.

66Ibid., 222.

67Ibid., 224.
solitary detention cells were being built and Koegel could not see discipline being brought to bear any other way. While his prisoners were largely not Jewish, Milton argues that his letter indicates that not only were German women spared corporal punishment, but further, that

the Nazis recognized the importance of camp friendships and bonding in women's resistance and survival. These bonds could be physical, occupational, intellectual, religious, or political, and were often effective in combating the depersonalization and disorientation caused by the camp regimen.68

The assumption is that physical, intellectual, and political bonding was and is somehow a female survival technique, such that it enabled them (sometimes) to endure the worst humiliations, starvation, disease and exhaustion. What this discourse does, besides reinscribing a naturalized gendered slave, is romanticize and leave out how women survived with perhaps less integrity.

When we remember Jewish women inside the camps as "nursing sick inmates, refashioning clothing from discarded items, and stretching limited food supplies,"69 what are we choosing to ignore? Did the social construction of masculinity, at that time, deprive male camp inmates of the ability to share their food? Not according to Primo Levi. His experiences, documented in Survival in Auschwitz, offer not an archetypal male view, but one that troubles the concentration camp as a terrain that can be described by gross gender pronunciations.

January 18, 1945 Auschwitz was evacuated. For Levi, sick with scarlet fever, remaining in the convalescent ward was the only option. Levy was devastated to remain, while his "inseparable" friend and confidant, Alberto was forced to leave. "[W]e were 'the two Italians' and foreigners even mistook our names. For six months we had shared a bunk and every scrap of

68Ibid., 223.

69Ibid., 224.
food 'organized' in excess of the ration. As the sick prisoners became abandoned,
simultaneously they started organizing themselves. While there always existed a need to protect
against those inmates more desperate than oneself, Levy also writes about the enormous efforts
made among the remaining men, to take care of each other.

An anecdote about Arthur, Charles and Primo, on their first scavenger hunt after
Auschwitz had been evacuated, reveals how deeply they cared about one another, despite their
own destitution, and the lengths they were willing to go to tend to their fellow patients' well
being.

We hurried to the kitchens as fast as we could: but the potatoes were already almost
finished. We filled two sacks and left them in Arthur's keeping. Among the ruins of the
Prominenzblock Charles and I finally found what we were searching for: a heavy cast-iron
stove, with the flue still usable. Charles hurried over with a wheelbarrow and we loaded it
on: he then left me with the task of carrying it to the hut and ran back to the sacks. There
he found Arthur unconscious from the cold. Charles picked up both sacks and carried
them to safety, then he took care of his friend.

And, after that arduous task,

I finally reached the entrance of the hut and unloaded the stove into Charles's hands. I was
completely breathless from the effort, large black spots danced before my eyes.

It was essential to get it working. We all three had our hands paralyzed while the icy
metal stuck to the skin of our fingers, but it was vitally urgent to set it up to warm
ourselves and to boil the potatoes.

I do not want to get into a gruesome competition of kindness and collectivity. And I would

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1966), 141.

71 Ibid., 144.

72 Ibid., 145.
agree, to a certain extent, that since many women throughout Central and Eastern Europe were primarily engaged in childrearing and caring for families, adept at cooking, and organizing households, they were more effectively equipped with certain kinds of practical and psychological survival skills. However, the assumption that the majority of women would be in this category is problematic. Young women, educated women, professional women, very wealthy women, prostitutes and other 'asocial' prisoners may not so readily have come equipped with the skills considered by Milton.

What I am suggesting is that while many women before the war were quite likely to be involved in roles that required them to nurture others, this in itself does not necessarily mean that they were more inclined than men to take care of one another. Certainly to explore the degree to which women nurtured inside the family, in pre-war Europe, would mean exploring what 'family' meant and how motherhood was constructed across regional and class differences at the very least. Further, I would also like to point out that there were a great many kinds of survival skills required in the death camps, in the sense of learned ability, and men had many of these.

Other kinds of useful survival skills, for example, would involve activities such as stealing. In Levi's Lager, theft among the Häftlinge occurred daily. In fact, there were at least two illicit markets in operation in the men's camp at Auschwitz. One market specialized in materials stolen in the forced-labour factories, the other market specialized in goods stolen from the Lager. The former was condoned by the SS. Levi maintains the camp could not function without it. The stealing from the latter, however, was a crime punished by death.

It is worthwhile considering within this context, where theft among prisoners became

73Ibid., 78.
routine, Levi's challenge to our morality -- born of an ordinary world. How do we judge, or account for behaviour in these sites, forgotten and ignored for so many years, by the international community? For Levi, there are "no criminals because there is no moral law to contravene, no madmen because we are wholly devoid of free will..." in the Lager. Although this should in no way obscure the cruelty and inhumanity between and among prisoners, it does reconfigure how we frame gendered behaviour from our 'ordinary' and comfortable standpoint. Not only did the camps exist in a suspended moral animation, Jews and other prisoners, transmuted by law, culture, and language, became the despised and defiled Nazi fantasises: "Muselmänner (the emaciated walking corpses of Auschwitz and other camps)."

How do we know which women's or men's special survival skills were maintained from the past, and how can these skills be separated from what was produced, under concentration camp conditions? We do know that since women remained with their children, they were gassed at a faster rate than their male counterparts, and that even Nazis officers remarked about the generally worse conditions in women's camps than in men's. The women's camps or sections of camps were notoriously overcrowded with abysmal sanitary and hygienic conditions. Levi

74Ibid., 89.


76Ibid., 224.

77Ibid., 228.

78Ibid., 229.
reiterates the point that the system imposed by the Third Reich "buried humanity."\textsuperscript{79}

I would argue humanity was buried not only for the concentration camp prisoner, but in the SS, and all the other Nazis workers, bureaucrats, and guards who helped the Reich function. It is undoing this memory that is the task for many women who make up the book Frauen. Once the news reels of liberated concentration camps reached across the Atlantic, the rest of the world condemned Nazis, and by extension, Germans as monsters. In order to recuperate their femininity and their humanity the Frauen distanced themselves from culpability, and their ability to do so relied to an extent on available gendered discourses.

Where gendered contemplations become more informative is in the production of Holocaust documentation and historiography. It is historical documentation which links the present with the past. Writing the Holocaust by making the theoretical basis self-evident pushes us to examine what happened, what might have happened but cannot be discussed (and why), as well as the limits to our own discourses -- indicating just how much more there is to explore and how rigid structures of gender, race and class produce certain kinds of discussion. Inhibitions, such as those about lesbian relationships, that trouble the problematic 'rules of human dignity,' and of femininity prevent us from knowing a fuller picture, and for the second generation, a fuller identity. These inhibitions further produce, actually, reproduce and reaffirm a singular female survivor: heterosexual, middle class, and always able to nurture.

When gendered discourses no longer structure the everyday world to the extent they once did, as is the case in say Auschwitz or any other concentration camp (although, these discourses

did remain in operation), the differences between incarcerated men and women become murky.

In one interesting section on relationships between women in the camps, Milton begins by continuing her gendered postulation that women 'bonded' not only on religious, national and political lines, but also on the basis of a marked female propensity for greater solidarity.

Bonding because of religious or political convictions may not have been specific to women, but the degree of group cohesion and noncompetitive support available to women seems markedly greater than among men.80

On the one hand, Milton insists that women's unique ability to bond with other women remained with them and helped them to survive in the camps. On the other hand, she also points out that women's other socially conditioned traits, like modesty and virtuousness towards men, were suspended. Clandestine heterosexual relationships were not uncommon among prisoners. There existed brief, stolen moments in Auschwitz and Ravensbruck, impossible contact between work details "in potato storage sheds, clothing depots, warehouses, laundry vans, the bakery, the canteen, and even in the chicken coops."81

Visual contact, emotional support and covert messages cannot be underestimated. Less talked about, although it is mentioned by Milton, is the degree to which sex from female inmates was used to acquire food, or a better work station. Milton writes that sex could and did serve as a strategy for survival and that

Traditional anxieties and guilt about sex were not applicable in the world of total


81 Ibid., 231.
subservience reinforced by terror in the camps.82

Other conventions and anxieties were ignored as well. In every camp there was an active resistance movement linked to the outside world.83 Women acted as saboteurs, message carriers and participated in revolts in the Sobibor, Treblinka, and Auschwitz concentration camps.84 While Milton suggests women were superior to men in many of these activities, what seems more relevant is that under specific conditions, and when the traditional rules no longer apply, subversion and revolution belong exclusively to no one. In the words of Ringelheim, "Oppression does not make people better; oppression make people oppressed."85

Feminist analyses, like any other, are historically constituted and subject to rigorous debate and extensive reconfigurations. One historian, Joan Ringelheim, through reconsidering her own work, makes evident how what we can know is shaped to an extent by, and changes according to, the conceptual tools we have available to us at any given time. Ringelheim scrutinizes her own research about Jewish women and the Holocaust, illustrating a "...philosophical turn of mind that will keep leading her to reconsider, reevaluate, and revise her own historical research."86 Going over her own work she reflects on the assumptions embedded

82Ibid., 231.

83Ibid., 231.

84Ibid., 231.


86Ibid., 374.
in her early work on women and the Holocaust. She brings to the forefront the historical and personal influences explaining when and why she entered into a cultural feminist analysis producing essential female Jewishness in the course of her research on Jewish women and the Holocaust.

Initially she intended to establish, from the standpoint of gender, women's particular experiences of the Holocaust. Her desire, and this motivation should not be underestimated because it has provided us with the grounds for much fertile theoretical growth, was to include in Holocaust studies the experiences of a substantial group of Jews that had been left out. What surfaced from her interviews and what Ringelheim initially felt was important, was the centrality and vulnerability of women's sexuality. Survival in the concentration camps, if one was lucky enough not to be immediately exterminated, was based on relationships.87 In Ringelheim's earlier work, women's relationships to men and women both in the ghettos and in the camps characterized female survivors' distinctive vulnerability and their distinctive self-sufficiency. Particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, humiliation and rape female survivors also had special resources, according to Ringelheim, that men lacked, like the ability to form intimate friendships, and supportive families; as well as the ability to better endure starvation, trauma and dislocation.

One can barely imagine surviving Auschwitz. What Hitler turned Jews into, in those camps, Ringelheim cautiously confronts.

Although there are many stories about sexual abuse, they are not easy to come by. Some think it inappropriate to talk about these matters; discussions about sexuality desecrate the memories of the dead, or the living, or the Holocaust itself. For others, it is simply too

87 Ibid., 374.
difficult and painful. Still others think it may be a trivial issue.\textsuperscript{18}

Universalizing male Holocaust survivors' experiences misses the unique way in which female survivors were at greater risk. But there are real and discursive risks involved in recuperating the more ruthless aspects involved in surviving the relentlessly murderous Reich. The risks point to the emotionally laden reasons for not documenting the more unspeakable ways women may have treated each other, in order to survive, in the camps. As feminists committed to changing unequal power relations, focussing on women's experiences historically can recuperate the previously unknown abilities for women to choose, exert agency, and exercise hitherto unidentified power, in contradiction to the prevalent codes of feminine behaviour at the time. But to place these experiences in the historical context of the Holocaust, and to look at what has not been said, may force us to confront new horrors regarding the effects, consequences, and responses to the Third Reich for female Jewish survivors.

To contextualize these experiences by looking at what cannot be said, may also mean confronting the particularly female ways in which humanity was transgressed. Conventional discourses both of citizenship and femininity will not allow these degradations to be spoken for they violate conventional boundaries of feminine and 'Canadian' behaviour. I am not suggesting we cease exploring gender as a category of analysis. Rather, I am suggesting that while producing the Holocaust through categories that construct 'male' and 'female' as binary opposites might contain certain horrors, it might also conceal the more abhorrent differences. To theorize gender in terms of the Holocaust through binary categories suppresses the similarities between

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 377.
men and women, and it reproduces static boundaries of identity rather than challenging how 
inequality is reproduced by these very categories at the start.

In her piece "Women and the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research," Ringelheim 
takes selections from her earlier interviews and demonstrates the narrative devices used by the 
female survivors. Rose is a hairdresser and a prisoner in Auschwitz for three years. While 
imprisoned she saves from suicide a Greek Jew named Rollie who was inconsolable when she lost 
her sister Teresa. Rose is quite graphic when describing the conditions under which she was 
living.

"There were mountains of dead bodies outside of the barracks which were picked up by 
trucks every morning. If you had to go to the bathroom [diarrhea was rampant and 
getting to the latrine difficult], then you went to the bathroom on top of them. Didn't 
think twice about it." 

For Rose, it is the relationship she has with Rollie that keeps her identification as a human kindled.
She sheltered and protected Rollie; Rollie, in turn, took care of Rose when she fell ill with typhus.
Rose details the ways in which women unequivocally took care of each other, explaining that she 
did not witness the same diligence from male inmates. For instance, women were seen

"picking each other like monkeys [for lice]... Never remember seeing the men do it. The 
minute they had lice they just left it alone; the women have a different instinct. 
Housewives. We want to clean...Somehow the men, the [lice] ate them alive..."

The differences, according to Rose, were that ultimately women were more willing to sacrifice 
their own well being for another's, and that was the substantial difference in how they survived.

89Ibid., 379.
90Ibid., 379.
91Ibid., 380.
In Susan's case, a Viennese Jew deported to Theresienstadt in 1942, surviving was characterized by the ability to reciprocate. "When people let themselves go, they also lost touch with other people." During a week of excruciatingly high temperatures, her adopted Berlin friends helped her emotionally, spiritually, and physically, literally propping her up during role call so that she would not be sent to the gas chambers. "Without this protection, I would have died...Always part of some group for whom you went through fire..."

It is the friendships, 'families,' and collective "maintenance strategies" that were of import to Ringelheim. In order to resist dying or allowing Hitler's aims to be accomplished entirely, the women Ringelheim interviewed, at least as she interprets their stories, developed support networks through which they could not only acquire materially what they needed to stay alive but also maintain their inner core. But as she reconsiders her own work, she questions not only the cultural discourse framing her interview questions, and her assumptions, but also her own desires.

While reflecting on the influences of "cultural feminism" to her work, whereby male dominance is attributed to male biology and femininity is identified with women's biological role in procreation, Ringelheim shows how this conceptualization implicitly underlines the notion that women are somehow superior to men. Further, the tendency, as found in most cultural feminist

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92Ibid., 381.

93Ibid., 381.

94Ibid., 388.


96Joan Ringelheim, "Women and the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research," in Women and the Holocaust: Different Voices, ed. by Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (New York:
epistemologies, is towards individual as opposed to collective liberation. And while this theory is applied universally, to cover all women, its inherent inability to account for material and historic inequalities means that some women are privileged over others. To reiterate Anna Davin and Sally Alexander's problem: the fundamental ordering being written into history remains untroubled. Uncritical valorization of women damages not only our politics but our research. We want to justify our valorization of such beliefs and practices so much that our critical faculties become quiescent when we discuss these questions. The claim of female superiority is not at issue so much as the nature of gender differences and the kind of woman who best exemplifies them.

This is important for it speaks to the construction of a limited, fixed female Jewish identity whereby the female victims of the Holocaust remain 'pure' victims.

Ringelheim's critique leads her to recontextualize the Holocaust itself. As she puts it, it is "death which defines the Holocaust," without the killing operations, there is no Holocaust. Her question shifts from "did women survive better than men?" to "were more Jewish women killed in the Holocaust than Jewish men, and if so, how were they distinguished by the Nazi government?" As reproducers, as less valued labourers, even amongst their own, in the ghettos

Paragon House, 1993), 385.

97Ibid., 386.


100Ibid., 391.
across Europe, they were considered less at risk than Jewish men, and so emigration occurred at a much higher rate for men than for women. Women's unequal economic position, as well as their care giving to children reduced their chances for survival both in the ghettos, and during selections for the gas chambers in the concentration camps. More women were left in the ghettos, women took care of children, women were not selected as frequently as men for forced labour, hence, more women died than men during the Holocaust. Gender mattered. "All in all, genocide was not neutral about gender. Gender was a coordinate in the process of destroying the Jewish population."102

Here in her reconsideration, gender, or the category 'woman,' becomes theorized within the Holocaust experience as a whole. She does this by looking at what subject positions were available to Jewish women, under specific circumstances, asking what were the limits of such positions, and by considering the rules of the sayable and the askable. Oppression and exploitation between women, lesbian relationships and sexual abuse are restricted subject areas. As she states earlier, however, there exists a need for survivors and feminists alike to diminish the horror or to learn something significant, in this case, about Jewish women, from it. Ringelheim explains this as a desire for both the appearance of, as well as a real need for, order, to provide solace from a "disturbed world."103 This is profoundly true. And she cautions this need for solace may be where an uncritical valour, or purity becomes produced.

Alison Owings, in an attempt to understand the Holocaust differently, aspires to hear

101 Ibid., 399.
102 Ibid., 392.
103 Ibid., 388.
similarly inspiring, alternative stories, from the German women she set about to interview in Frauen. The stories, particularly from the Jewish women who survived the Holocaust, remind us that female collective and individual subversion, rebellion, and confrontation are always, even under the most excruciatingly oppressive regimes, possible.

There is nothing wrong with valourizing courageous behaviour, despite oppressive conditions. It cannot be cut off discretely from the historical experiences of these women. But Ringelheim demands a critical reading of the valourizing found in her own representations of women in the Holocaust. We glorify these women, that is, we circumscribe their behaviour as more insurgent or unprecedented than would 'normally' be the case, because the Holocaust was not normal, and their bravery, courage and independence, wrought from these macabre circumstances, were exceptional. What is the danger in glorification? By way of an answer, from Alison Owings -- we learn the opposite is true, we cannot entirely disparage all German women who participated in the Third Reich.

What might be more helpful in learning about the operation of gender during the Third Reich would to be to examine the degree to which Jewish women's place in the domestic sphere is being ascribed an ahistorical permanence, and hence a permanence to what it is to be a Jewish European female, by such postulations. None is Too Many documents the anti-Semitic and misogynist immigration policies that distinctly considered Jewish women to be unprepared and unfit to be maids or domestic workers. The lobbying attempts to allow Jews into Canada shortly before Hitler closed off emigration provided, on paper, the ability for Jewish women to come here as maids. The reality was that Canadian Immigration officials routinely considered Jewish women
a priori to be unsuitable for domestic work.104 They were, after all, too urban, too moneyed, and hence too unsuitable for cleaning, cooking, and looking after other people's children.

Further, there lies the question, did the sense of familial caring and nurturing and solidarity that Milton documents arise from what Jewish women learned at home or from no longer being in an individualized family unit, but rather, in conditions of terrifying, bizarre collectivity. I say this not to diminish or deny Jewish women's agency, but rather to keep in mind that the material conditions these women were placed in required them to nurture, care and share whatever meagre resources they had. What Milton and Ringelheim's earlier work did was to tie women to a singular, traditional 'role,' making heroic these exclusively constructed, feminine traits.

Currently gender as a category for historical analysis is a hotly debated topic. Its proponents are engaged in a continued debate articulated in feminist discussion about the political dimensions and timber of feminist analysis seeking to explain and transform dominant, unequal, everyday power relations. On the one hand, there is the debate that is committed to articulating oppression and consequent courses for change through understanding how oppression is experienced, lived, if you will, by those most immediately oppressed by both the local and historic configurations of dominance. Specificity and difference are primary concerns in this attempt to conceptualize how gender, and intersecting dimensions, like race, nationality and class, reformulate how we understand subalternity through the past, into the present. The other side of the debate examines the shifting epistemological grounds upon which feminist, and other critical theory can represent lived experiences: in language, text, and discourse. In other words, the

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104 Irving Abella and Harold Troper, None Is Too Many (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1982), 255.
second approach is a critique of the critique(s).

What is distinctive to Scott's conceptual approach is the move away from causality and origins in an attempt to break free from what she claims are modernist analyses of social history. Descriptive in nature, these attempts locate women in history, once thought to be an irrelevant endeavour. While these attempts resisted and critiqued biologically rooted notions of gender, seeing gender instead as a construction in relation to men, they nonetheless inadvertently incorporated existing normative definitions that reflect status quo relations of domination. \(^{105}\)

Her question "How does gender give meaning to the organization and perception of historical knowledge"\(^ {106}\) followed from a desire for theory that attempts to undo the traditional historical paradigms. One answer lies in how gender, as an analytic category, is used and deployed. Overall, historians have conceptualized gender in two ways: descriptive and causal. \(^ {107}\)

Theorizing gender and history involves articulating the connection between these two terms. Scott uses the term gender, borrowing from Michel Foucault, to conjure up an understanding/knowledge about sexual difference. \(^ {108}\) Gender, as a product of knowledge, is relational, contested, and constructed historically. It is, for example, partially constructed through the writings about the Holocaust.

Analyzing how that happens requires attention to the assumptions, practices, and rhetoric of the discipline, to things either so taken for granted or so outside customary practice that

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\(^ {106}\) Ibid., 31.

\(^ {107}\) Ibid., 31.

\(^ {108}\) Ibid., 2.
they are not usually a focus for historian's attention. These include the notions that history can faithfully document lived reality, that archives are repositories of facts, and that categories like man and woman are transparent.\footnote{Ibid., 2.}

As Scott reviews the theoretical difficulties experienced over the years in women's history, it is the separate treatment for 'women,' initially sought to redress the exclusionary historical register, that particularizes a modernist critique for her. Recuperating a singular women's history is a problematic approach to historical study because it does not necessarily dislodge the male universal subject. For example, detailed descriptions chronicling women's historical experiences, such as those by Milton and Ringelheim, "lead to explanations that serve(d) to more often confirm than to challenge prevailing views about women."\footnote{Ibid., 4.}

Consequently, this approach tends to describe traits attributed only to women. Gender is naturalized, and becomes fixed in knowledge production as a biological determinism (biology is destiny), rather than being treated as a "social phenomenon."\footnote{Ibid., 4.} Starting historical research from this position not only fixes notions of gender difference, it rationalizes exclusions.

Poor women, prostitutes, Gypsies, lesbians -- their exclusion from women's experiences in the Holocaust and in the concentration camps, produces a historical record made up of and theorized on the basis of middle-class, heterosexual Jewish women's experiences in the camps and elsewhere. When we take their experiences only, yet write in general terms about women and the Holocaust, we are producing a white, heterosexual, nuclear, middle class normativity.

\footnote{Ibid., 2.}
\footnote{Ibid., 4.}
\footnote{Ibid., 4.}
Many Jewish women incarcerated in Hitler's camps came from diverse areas where their lives were not lived in isolation from other groups, particularly non-Jews. In the prisons and camps, while they were primarily among other Jews, this was not exclusively so. And the other Jewish women they worked with were from, literally, across the continent. Their backgrounds varied widely: in nationality, in region, in class, in religion, in politics, in education, in age and in marital status.

Ringelheim and Milton each recollect for us acts of bravery, organized resistance -- valourizing the strength and endurance possible when women are forced to rely only on each other. These are heartbreaking stories. I read them with pride, wondering how a history so heinous, yet a history that is so close to me, could possibly become legendary. At once these acts conjure up feelings I am comforted and consoled by -- that my grandmother, aunts, and cousins, did not die in vain. I hear family stories about their keen intelligence, loyalty and heroism -- how my Auntie Eva sewed fruit in the lining of her prison smock to smuggle food to another sister ill with scurvy, defying the Nazis guards, keeping her alive. And I wonder, did I inherit that defiance? Was it always there in my family lineage, or did the circumstances foist it upon Eva? Would I be able to do the same? Yet I am also aware that what the Nazis turned Jews into, turned my mother, uncles, and aunts into, was not at all valorous. Deprivations on such a grand scale could make any woman ruthless. As both authors hint, behaviours that pushed the boundaries of proper, appropriate female behaviour are rarely made explicit, although they are there, implied.

Hierarchies of gender become made. Without making apparent how gender is produced as a category, how meanings are dynamic and shift, gender and the positions flowing from it, appear
anchored and untroubled. ¹¹² When we begin to methodologically consider World War II, the Holocaust, and the women's lives wrought through this time, then "we find that what is at stake is not simply a literary technique for reading but an epistemological theory that offers a method for analyzing the processes by which meanings are made, by which we make meanings."¹¹³

Milton writes about skills that helped Jewish women survive in a more sustaining and collective manner than Jewish men. These skills were gleaned supposedly from their position in the household. When describing and then conceptualizing female survivors only in this manner, their heterogeneity gets lost. The varying political economies in central and eastern Europe during the 1920 and 30's, ranging, say, from that of rural Czechoslovakia to that of Berlin, and the varying opportunities and sites of economic participation for women are erased. The gender distinction implied, that women ruled the private household world and that men worked (and garnered their specific skills) in the public, reduces the ways in which households and the sexual division of labour, in non-urban settings, was often more combined.

As a feminist, borrowing from Scott, I believe a gendered historical frame provides a critical, albeit partial, understanding. The history Ringelheim and Milton portray is a necessary first step in recognizing Jewish women's experiences during the Holocaust. These writings, further, illustrate how historical knowledge is produced, and how we are always producing knowledge that at once attempts to trouble and broaden historical discourse, at the same time as we create new exclusions.¹¹⁴ When we posit Jewish women only in terms of the Holocaust, only

¹¹²Ibid., 5.

¹¹³Ibid., 9.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 10.
as relatively uncomplicated victims, and as a testament to women's unique skills, we are creating a limited, fixed historical subject, that, contrary to the agency that these women did have, reduces and fixes their experiences within patriarchal relations. Although we may want and need to make these women into martyrs, there is a danger in producing texts that leave us with a sense of comfort.

In contrast, although in some ways a more disturbing read, are the stories told by the women interviewed in Frauen. While Owings' own commentary is troubling, as she becomes enchanted with the hospitality and generosity of the Frauen, her work challenges how we think about and understand the gendered nature of responsibility, complicity, and how German women's femaleness was premised upon the denial of womanhood for their Jewish counterparts. When we read the Frauen's own words we see the success of the Eugenics movement and Hitler's endemic racism. There is in Owings' work, no relief from history. We see these women and their understanding of events as historically produced and changeable.

The temporary fixing of meaning is never a neutral act; it involves both interests and questions of power. This can be clearly seen in the case of history writing. Poststructuralism does not offer a position from which to write a history that is objectively true. It suggests that history writing is a site of struggle over meaning which has important implications for how we understand the present and the possibilities for change open to us.¹¹⁵

The point is not to be fearful that this stance will limit politics and the ability to advance political change, but rather the point is to consider that this premise refuses and repudiates the permanence granted to established practices and power dynamics, reified in modernist historical

analyses.

For the women in concentration camps who ran the gauntlet and survived, their intrepid and supportive actions are important to remember and honour -- without their survival, I would not be here, writing this piece. What is vital about the current work done on the Holocaust means more than adding women's experiences to the archives. What it needs to do, concerns how we conceptualize agency historically. Scott would like to see us replace the notion that social power is unified, coherent, and centralized with something like Michel Foucault's concept of power as dispersed constellations of unequal relationships, discursively constituted in social 'fields of force.' Within these processes and structures, there is room for a concept of human agency as the attempt (at least partially rational) to construct an identity, a life, a set of relationships, a society within certain limits and with language -- conceptual language that at once sets boundaries and contains the possibility for negation, resistance, reinterpretation, the play of metaphoric invention and imagination. 116

Constructing heroines and acknowledging bravery, by women, is one way to build an identity, but we must do so in a manner that refuses the "hierarchical construction of the relationship between male and female." 117 As Mary Lowenthal Felstiner writes, inmates, upon following their first set of orders from camp guards, "took in the primary code: identity is formed at conception, untouched by personal history." 118 The work of feminist academics is to vigilantly consider how we write and interpret, so that we resist invoking and reinscribing "unalterable sexual differences


117 Ibid., 41.

that are used to justify discrimination. The female Holocaust survivors and German women who tried to resist or were critical of the Third Reich -- their lives are displayed on paper and are recounted not only to remember that they were there, and responded in ways that challenge orthodox, stable notions of gender and history, but also because they want to impart, what for different groups of women, operating under terrifyingly constrained circumstances, is possible.

Chapter Three: Dear Kitty

Years later a handful of his Drancy deportees returned in spite of him, but stayed haunted by unfinished harm. One survivor from Transport 60 couldn't bear recalling the "human degradation" of victims attacking each other for bread. Another thought himself only "intact in the eyes of the world" and wrote about Auschwitz under a pseudonym. Another whispered for fear of renewed anti-Jewish attacks, and never mentioned any survivors' names. And yet: When two friends from that transport of October 7-10, 1943, met after forty-five years, they started cuffing one another, snapping out SS commands, then bursting into hoots. The Nazis, they said just once, had been had.120

Recent debates about marginality and power, and how Western liberal canonical thought structures knowledge production, lead me to question the very grounds upon which I began research into female Holocaust survivors' experiences before, during, and (most importantly to me) after World War II. Months after a series of interviews which left me with an awe-inspiring amount of data and innumerable themes upon which to write, I had to confront several key problems. Firstly, how to delimit the huge amount of themes recorded? Secondly, how to theorize 'the Holocaust' itself, that is, whom is this Holocaust about and whom/what am I centring? Finally, and these are the problems with which I will begin an initial attempt to theorize here, come the questions provoked by recent feminist poststructural critiques of the liberal feminist project that seeks to 'break the silence,' and bring to voice those voices previously excluded from Western knowledge production. To this end I will investigate how feminist oral histories allow for female survivors a rational presentation of their lives in a manner that makes coherent their trauma.

I will then illustrate how poststructuralist theorizing tackles the underpinning assumptions

in oral history projects and coming to voice campaigns --such as liberation, coherency and subjectivity. Specifically I am interested in how these processes limit what today would be considered controversial historical events and 'unfeminine' behaviour. The testimony these women might have given, had there been the opportunity to tell their story immediately after the war, would have produced a different story from the one given today. There is no pure story.

Staggered by the amount of data my interviewees felt compelled to pass on to me I could not help but be struck by one overarching response to my questions. Through their oral histories, I intended to investigate what migration to Canada involved for these women personally, and how the politics, and culture of the Canadian landscape shaped desires, such as the desire to belong and to feel a sense of patria. What figured most in their interviews, however, had little to do with what happened after the war. Despite my power to structure and intervene during the interview process, each woman, to a profound extent, could not come to the present, without remaining, at times very solidly, in the past. I am forced to consider, then, the question: does subjectivity require a present self? Gayatri Spivak argues that our subjectivity is predicated on a non-European, neo/colonial other. How then do the temporal dislocations experienced by the female Holocaust survivors I interviewed, who were themselves constituted by a European attempt at colonization, trouble these dualities? And what does this mean for their ability to speak?

During the 1940's, in Canada, after the Second World War had ended, a host of benefits were bestowed on returning war veterans.¹²¹ Survivors were admitted into Canada only with the express provision that they would not place any demands on the Canadian welfare state and

therefore required sponsors, family, or guaranteed employment in order to be allowed in.\textsuperscript{122} It has been argued that Jewish women could not speak about the Holocaust and the camps, because they needed to recuperate from its trauma.\textsuperscript{123} However, recent research indicates that the reconstitution of post World War II nationalism has been constructed in such a way as to require the absence of such voices.\textsuperscript{124} The work of Gayatri Spivak and Ron Shields indicates that nationalism and citizenship are historically constructed through absences and that these absences, while based upon a violent and racist colonial legacy, are also able to change over time. Through their theorizing I will argue that the ability today for female Holocaust survivors to come to voice is premised upon their ability to be able, at this point in time, to be considered Canadians. Gaining citizenship for Jewish women, in other words, allows for a coming to voice. Coming to voice is premised on being a citizen.

In sum, I want to discuss how the ability to speak is predicated on feminist politics that insists on marginalized voices being included in the historical register. The limits of this campaign are indicative of the limits of my own project. That is, that there was not simply a delay in survivors talking about their experiences immediately after the Holocaust. Had I interviewed these women in 1957 instead of 1997, their take on how they were treated by Canada, and by Canadians would be much different. Time, material security, and the ability to assimilate (to a

\textsuperscript{122}Irving Abella and Harold Troper, \textit{None Is Too Many} (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1982), 243-248.


\textsuperscript{124}Ibid.
degree) will have produced another subjectivity, hence another story. It is the insights offered up by poststructuralist critiques of the liberal notion of coming to voice that make more evident how it is that the very categories we use to construct subjectivity can constrain and render problematic easy notions of speech.

**Dangerous Voices**

Sometimes one need only glance at a survivor's memoir to know how it will unfold: the story generally starts with the description of a more than comfortable pre-Holocaust family life, usually in Poland, with relatively prosperous, adoring parents and lovable brothers and sisters. The hero is intellectually curious and recalls his considerable academic achievements. . . Although many of his family members perish, the author's inner dignity and readiness to help others keep him alive. After the war he goes abroad, usually to the United States, where he finds a new family and once again becomes fairly prosperous. He is haunted, however, by recurring nightmares from which some relief is provided by his addressing young audiences on the Holocaust and by his generous contributions to worthy Jewish causes.125

That oral histories may act as a radical tool for pedagogy or act as a liberating mechanism needs to be investigated through the debates about subjectivity and disciplinary practices. Discussions about the ability to access 'pure' subjective experience question the coherency that is produced through the underlying grammar of particular discourses. If we consider narratives about the Holocaust as having an underlying grammar, as the afore mentioned quote indicates, then it is worth investigating what the rules are, and what kind of 'normal' Holocaust narrative is getting produced. For it is through such investigations that we come to understand what kind of identity and subjectivity is being constructed and what is being excluded. In particular, it is investigating these exclusions which have been of use to feminist research. Through examining what cannot be said, as will be seen in Linda Martin Alcoff's work, we come

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to see how conventional and seemingly 'natural' truths are reproduced, leaving in place unequal relations of power.

It is Michel Foucault's supposition that power is productive and that rules determining what is 'normal' are produced through discourses of truth.\textsuperscript{126} We come to experience subjectivity through disciplinary power; these disciplines produce 'normal' practices such that a "cohesive body politic" is assured.\textsuperscript{127} Modern forms of power, Foucault argues in \textit{The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction}, have developed in such a way as to create discourses through scientific study, through legislation, and through medicine conspiring together, sometimes intentionally, sometimes unintentionally, to, in ways not immediately obvious, regiment and regulate populations. This is accomplished by producing categories of individuals where behaviours become attributable to that category.

To understand the routine of daily regulation, this separating out of controversial behaviours from the construction of identity is useful in terms of locating remote power sites and in getting closer to recognizing how the dispersal of power takes place on people's bodies. Alcoff explains it is useful to acknowledge how power can operate in these ways if we want to understand discrete or seemingly naturalized domination.

Putting together how we learn about the Holocaust begins in an area where initial steps are just starting to be taken, despite the vast literature already in existence on the topic. Both feminist theorizing and poststructural concepts encourage a critical and sceptical approach to

\textsuperscript{126}Jane Flax, \textit{Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 207.

\textsuperscript{127}Ibid.
what we can know from the apparent transparency of language and texts. These moves help us to take a step back, and think about what critical, progressive, academic work might entail, particularly if we take seriously the need to change dominant regimes of knowledge production.

With these ideas newly in hand, I am forced to take a troubling look at my own desire to hear and include voices from female survivors. I wanted to do this because, again despite voluminous texts, little is heard (although this is changing) from their standpoint. But then I had to ask, what is their standpoint and can I make generalizations about the Holocaust and its particular horrors for Jewish women from this research. How am I contributing to and constructing the newly developing category 'female Holocaust survivor?' At this point, the ground becomes even less stable, and my intellectual knees begin to knock. How are these voices produced? How are they being taken up? And what will happen by my asking these questions when, as we know, challenging seldom heard voices in this larger politically conservative context betrays their fragility and vulnerability?

Still it is important to keep in mind that it is the very atmosphere and epistemology invalidating certain voices that can also produce the grounds upon which we begin to challenge these dominating pedagogical structures. In other words, as critical pedagogues, and as feminists, the work that lies ahead must in part, include a critical look at how we are producing new categories which partially form discourses and practices that constitute and enable very particular kinds of speech.

Taking apart 'voice' and 'speech' makes more noticeable how categorical identities develop, and in my case that would be the category of identity created by female Holocaust survivor narratives. Part of the way to make this development obvious is to look at what does not
or cannot be said in public versions. In "Memories of Hell," a recent essay reviewing several new books about the Holocaust, author Istan Deak argues that there is a predictability to Holocaust survivor's autobiographies.

I do not say that such stories are false, simply that many details appear to have been embellished by selective memory. It was almost always someone else, hardly ever the author himself, who lost his dignity and self-respect at Auschwitz, who stole a spoon, a needle, or a slice of bread from a neighbour, who lorded it over the other prisoners, or who escaped the gas chambers at the cost of a fellow inmate's life.128

It then becomes imperative for feminists to ask, what happens when deconstructing articulations and utterances, particularly if we are, at the same time, interested in using coming-to-voice as a liberatory pedagogical or consciousness raising project?

If all language is made cogent through interpretive devices, such as oral histories, what happens to the speaker's intention in contexts where variable differences in accessing dominant power formations exist? Mary Lowenthal Felstiner, in her beautiful biography recounting the life and art work of Charlotte Salomon, documents how Charlotte's first book of reproductions, published in 1963, omits her very prevalent "suicide motif."129 As Felstiner explains "The family that once hid its suicides in hopes of muffling noise about the Jews still had to keep quiet: Too many were waiting for proof that Jews had destroyed each other and themselves."130

Alcoff in her work criticising Foucault's position on consent and paedophilia raises serious concerns about deconstruction for feminists. Foucault, according to Alcoff, argues that legal


130Ibid., 225.
discourses pre-empt children's ability to consent because such discourses cannot, through their logic, recognize children as legitimate decision makers. Seeing consent as a construction that excludes subjective articulations by certain populations, in this case, children, raises for feminists serious criticisms about using deconstruction as an analytic tool when it is used without paying attention to the larger real and unequal terrain of relations of domination. That populations are controlled through discourses of science, the law and citizenship, as well as through more oppressive and dominating forms of power allows me to introduce the notion that Holocaust survivors, while able to speak now, and I would argue, as citizens, are responding to an inability to do so historically. This inability in other words represents a collision that is "fantasmagoric and social."¹¹¹ A collision of loss: a loss of language, of home, of citizenship, of almost everything that held together one's identity.

What Alcoff's criticism of Foucault offers us is a warning -- we cannot talk of pedagogical projects or consciousness raising campaigns without considering the economy of language through which ideas are expressed. We must consider these implications when we want to hear from speaking subjects and voices from the margins. Creating the circumstances for these voices to be heard does not necessarily mean that repression and domination are not occurring on some one else's body.

Speech may be limited by the immediacy and meta-narratives of social, economic, performative structures in place, in my case, structures that limit citizenship and structures through which language is translated. As these New Canadians (the Jewish refugee women of my

study) developed roots, friendships, and families, and because they eventually, were able to be considered white, they became able to claim a partial right to citizenship in the social sense.

When we consider interpreting behaviour or speech, particularly from marginalized locations, we must guard against constituting meaning within an economy of meaning to which they very well may not conform.

Incorporating meaning based on sameness, as Foucault does in the case of children's consent to sex, writes over grossly real and unequal relations. For oral histories we should consider, then, the range of and limits to what constitutes white privilege historically.

Additionally, we might consider how those doing the listening may not have access to or knowledge of the same kinds of discursive meaning making, or may be resistant to new forms, or may have very complicated investments in current oral history projects. I am thinking particularly of the narratives told by women Holocaust survivors where they talk about immigrating here and scraping by, because they were willing and able to work for extremely low wages under disastrous working conditions.

The opportunities and employment they were able to access, their ability to eventually (for many) attain a middle-class status, partly because of a historical need for labour, partly because of the explosion of a vigorous and expanding economy, goes untheorized. This historical moment witnessed the rapid development of Canada's social safety net. Temporal changes bring material changes, where, today, we see this very same support system slipping away from many other new and old Canadians.

Who gets to speak, and who has the authority? Those with more power have the ability to impose their own interpretation of discursive debates across "linguistic borders over which
meanings can change drastically."\textsuperscript{132} Certain groups and certain speakers will be invested with a certain authority that structures historical memory. Different audience members will have differing amounts of power and ability to interpret. So it's important to consider how one's story will get used and what it means to have it out there.

Alcoff raises the point that damage and pleasure can coexist but this should not exculpate responsibility particularly when power relations are overtly dominating. The variety and wide ranging use of Anne Frank's diary should caution us about Holocaust narratives in this regard and will be explored further. It is not only the historical and social context that produces the structural and discursive field in which sexual trauma/violence/manipulation arises, but also the context of embodiment. As we shall see in Coco Fusco's reflections about her performance in The Couple in the Cage: a Guatinaui Odyssey, real and harmful effects occur jeopardizing the safety of her actual body. In both Coco Fusco's work and Anne Frank's writing, their voices are reinterpreted in ways that not only distance their perpetrators, but in ways that also diminish the immediacy of their trauma.

Alcoff reveals in reflection that she has survived, is surviving from childhood sexual abuse. Understanding what happened to her, long ago, and its effect, is produced discursively through therapy, feminist consciousness, from talking with other survivors, and from reading a range of literature on the subject. This habitual reconstructing and reassessing is an inevitable part of childhood trauma, whereby how one understands the events changes as the discursive domain develops. This is part of how we grow, cope, agonize, learn, how our 'selfhood' changes. But she cautions: the point is not to suspect reassessment as a fiction. Rather we must recognize that

\textsuperscript{132}Ibid., 125.
there is not a pre-discursive, pre-theoretical experience that can be discovered, once and for all. Experience is always reconstructed in memory and memories are not pure representations; however, we can make evaluative distinctions between better and worse memories.\textsuperscript{133}

As Jewish women from the Holocaust became Canadian citizens, as women survived the trauma and established a life for themselves, the stories they would have told about the Holocaust immediately after the war, and the stories they tell now are going to be different, and told in a much different way affected and inspired by structural, discursive, temporal and linguistic changes. The discursive realm too, of course, has changed. Feminist interpellations, the concepts of gender analysis, new information, revealed on an almost daily basis -- from frozen Swiss bank accounts, to Nazis deportations -- effect how we come to understand the Holocaust and the effect of the Holocaust on Jewish women in particular.

Holocaust narratives, where the only content considered valuable pertains to the survivor's ability to maintain his/her integrity in the camps, lead to overly simplistic and limited categories of identity. As in the case of childhood sexual abuse, narratives that deny the inextricability found in living under extreme oppression produce identities that exclude the complexity of collusion and the exhaustion that leads to passivity. Oral histories constructed with such limitations operate to lessen the effects of brutal domination and diminish, in the case of the Holocaust, the complicity of the larger international community. We should not have to worry about writing history such that untoward individual behaviours would derail us from recognizing the way in which embedded racist notions of Jews were integral to the every-day investments (for Germans, and for all other countries unwilling to take Jewish refugees) in genocide; Hitler did not

\textsuperscript{133}Ibid., 129.
do this on his own.

**Putting The Pieces Back Together**

The real of philosophy is not the Real of Being, but rather an artifact and consequence of certain philosophic practices. These entail both inclusion and exclusion. The exclusions are not neutral or extrinsic to the discourses or the cultures that follow the founding. Instead they actually determine and dominate their texture.\(^{134}\)

In paraphrasing Karl Marx, Flax describes philosophy as a discipline, that interprets the world, but cannot change it.\(^{135}\)

Postmodernists paradoxically accept fundamental Enlightenment tenets -- the identification of Western culture and self-understanding with reason and of reason with philosophy.\(^{136}\)

Western culture, she argues, is imprisoned by this paradox; therefore, understanding the crisis of representation attributed to Enlightenment beliefs must begin with "an immanent critique of reason.\(^{137}\) A postmodernist critique of Western philosophy's composition enlists three tenets: firstly, representation is always incomplete and therefore a misrepresentation. Difference and contradictions are suppressed so that the real can appear coherent. Secondly, postmodern criticisms posit that Western philosophy is characterized by an obsessive will to know the truth and that this knowledge is emancipatory. And thirdly, Western philosophy falsely claims that


\(^{136}\)Ibid., 192.

\(^{137}\)Ibid., 193.
there is an autonomous selfhood and subjectivity that can be readily accessed and identified. I am drawn to these insights for they provide a first step towards thinking through the use of oral histories as pedagogical and liberatory techniques. The ability to articulate suppressed and absent experiences, particularly when we are dealing with, for example, the 'official' version of Canadian history at a time when debates about Canadian nationalism are dominating provincial and federal politics, is of the utmost importance. How these debates are played out, and what versions of history we invoke through these debates will profoundly affect the ever-emerging boundaries defining the Canadian body politic.

It remains imperative to remember not only the gross and violent forms in which boundaries, inclusions and exclusions in Canada were wrought, but also the dispersed and discrete forms. These more complicated, less easy to see forms of regulating national identity can be brought into these debates, quite potently through oral histories, from first-hand accounts.

If we consider Canada's behaviour towards Jews during and immediately after World War II, and its refusal of sanctuary to almost all, then the Canada many have seen as a freedom-fighting nation, diminishes. Through public forums Holocaust survivors give testimony to the inexplicable devastation Jews in particular faced during the Third Reich. The ability to literally make history 'come alive' can be a powerful pedagogical tool, an effective political strategy to invoke change, and a useful therapeutic tool for dealing with immense personal trauma interconnected to large scale destruction. It then becomes necessary to consider how we tell these narratives, under which conditions, to whom.

The aforementioned tenets offer a way to reflect on and critically consider the limits to the

138 Ibid., 193.
transparency, truth and role of subjectivity, that is, the limits to what can and cannot 'be said' through invoking personal accounts. I argue for critical reflection not to truncate these strategies, but in order to improve, enrich and to think about when they may not be effective, even dangerous to use.

Postmodernism seeks to reread how conventional disciplines are founded, so that rather than reiterating disciplinary structures that operate to foreclose and confine debates and arguments, accounts are written that allow for further investigation and discussion. Flax via Foucault reminds us that struggles for power are waged in the discursive, and at the same time, in the tangible world. Keeping in mind that struggles for power are waged in both the discursive and tangible world is the feminist project. Feminism reminds us that violence and conflict engendered in discursive shifts are metaphysical and embodied. Moreover, shifts occur not because of stimulating conversations, but out of real and theoretical struggles. "There are dominant and marginal discourses, innumerable instances of the effects of power and local resistances to them." 139 Discursive shifts are an effect of ongoing struggles that constitute history. 140

Eighteenth-century knowledge production insured that, by studying populations, new and efficient forms of extracting labour from bodies with "increasing regularity" were established. 141 Disciplinary power made sure the body politic cohered. And to make disparate, heterogenous elements cohere "concepts and practices of 'normalization' are produced." 142 By using concepts

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139 Ibid., 205.
140 Ibid., 205.
141 Ibid., 207.
142 Ibid., 207.
of democracy and the welfare state, for example, governments can under the guise of 'obligation' and 'protection' collect information through which bodies are increasingly surveyed and regulated. 143 Coherence is enacted not just on average citizens, but also and in differing ways, upon those who interrupt the story, the new comers, the immigrants. What we see in the Holocaust narratives of survivors in Canada is a way for survivors to both fit into the body politic and explain why and how they do so. These narratives can trouble or reproduce coherent versions of Canadian history.

What is lacking is a theoretical accounting of how regulation and coherence operated individually for survivors upon arriving here, and temporally, as they continued to survive and speak of their nightmarish experiences, and this brings us into the realm of subjectivity. It is vital to the area I explore to question the limits to accessing subjectivity and to recognize the possibilities for putting together fragments of subjectivity torn apart by trauma, through oral history practices. Through the feminist concern with the inattention given to questions of self and subjectivity by postmodernists, it has been argued that in fact the sense of subjectivity invoked by postmodernists remains congruent with and reinscribes the Western sovereign subject.144

Postmodernists have made important contributions to deconstructing the (apparently) universalizing forms of conceptions of the self. Postmodernists join feminist theorists in viewing these concepts as artifacts of (white, male) Western culture. However the postmodernist critique of subjectivity differs in important ways from both psychoanalytic and feminist views. Postmodernists seem to confuse two different and logically distinct

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143Ibid., 207.

concepts of the self: a 'unitary' and a 'core' one. According to Flax, in her psychotherapy, there exists this tension between the core self and the painful and disabling fragmentary self. In order to function on a day-to-day basis we must appear and act (somewhat) rationally despite our fragments. Repression plays a large part in our ability to do this. For women and particularly women who have experienced severe trauma, is it difficult, if not at times impossible, to confront the extreme forces of repression that inure in all our social relations. In order to present a rational whole what is often held back and excluded from coming to voice is then a combination of experiences that contradict prevailing versions of femininity, that contradict prevailing notions of history, and the necessary memories that are too painful and too awful to contend with.

_The Human Exhibition – Musings on Women's 'Coming to Voice Campaigns' and Oral History Projects – Liberation, Education, or Spectacle?_

Although her intentions in "The Other History of Intercultural Performance" may not be so explicitly stated, bringing to consciousness readers' and viewers' inclination towards an acceptance of embedded colonial relationships undergirding the Quincentenary celebrations certainly became an unexpectedly difficult project for actor and writer Coco Fusco. It is the ambivalence encountered by viewing her video, by reading her written reflections on her own anti-colonial performance(s), and by what coming to (a provisional) voice can mean, that interests me in this section. Varying campaigns for marginalized groups to 'come to voice,' often considered as

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146 Ibid., 220.
a political intervention for those from positions considered subjugated, now brings forth more critical and circumspect questions. These questions concern pedagogical efficacy, cultural authenticity, and identity. The context in which I am writing will start by addressing how broadly defined genres that employ 'coming to voice' tactics, such as performance art and oral history projects, allow for innovative, yet not unproblematic interpolations into our every day assumptions about the historical canon.

Metaphorically, the artistic political intervention in Fusco's work is relational and is represented as a cage. The cage, in which she remains silent, can stand for how race forces particular investments and understandings of colonial relations. It can also stand for the historical racist exhibition of other peoples in educational/entertainment practices in Europe and North America. And the cage finally can stand for a separation, a restrictive, yet contextually protective site that prevents audience encroachments: some boundaries are still not meant to be trespassed. These dimensions to political/pedagogical performance art also reflect the different elements that need to be considered in the coming-to-voice projects.

In the wake of the quincentenary celebrations of Christopher Columbus's so-called discovery of the Americas in 1492, Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Pena staged a cross continental performance intended to critique and protest the over 500 years of indigenous genocide and exploitation caused by colonial domination. From the video we see the two performers staging a show wherein they pretend to be from an 'undiscovered' indigenous population, on display, for educational purposes. Swathed in a hybrid fashion sensibility, eliciting neo-colonialist chic, they are adorned in grass skirts, Converse running shoes and sunglasses. As we watch the video, watching audiences watch Fusco and Gomez-Pena, troublesome events
occur; various audience members think that this scathing satire is real. Believing in the
performers' authenticity, the audiences behaviour appears even more troubling. In fact, often their
behaviour is disturbingly racist, but not in the way we tend to immediately recognize as such.
There are few, if any, racist slurs, no grotesque imitations. It is not the nocuous commentary that
is so problematic as it is the way in which these unknown, human exhibits are talked about --
indeed talked over -- indicating the unconscious historical weave of relations of domination.

Sometimes Fusco and Gomez-Pena are talked about by the people who visit their cage, on
display in various sites like the Field Museum in Chicago and The Smithsonian in Washington
D.C., as if they are, as the cage inspires, a potential threat. Reactions ranged from moral
outrage, to claims of inaccurate representations, to paternalistic fears about the caged inhabitants' well being. According to Fusco, these responses failed to treat the people in the cage as having the ability to be anything but an imposed indigenous fantasy. This pushes the reader to wonder, what happens after one has come to voice? Will the stories be believed? There are no guarantees.

These intercultural and political performances beg the question: what does it mean to perform against the grain? What does it mean to shock readers or audiences, or bring them to crisis? Is this, from a pedagogical viewpoint, politically effective? Can eliciting a deep rooted sense of one's own racism ever be done without disturbance? These are just a few thoughts that preoccupied me, long after seeing Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Pena act as new-found native Amerindians, in The Couple in the Cage: a Guatinaui Odyssey \(^\text{147}\) video, and then after

reading Fusco's reflections about the video in "The Other History of Intercultural Performance."\(^{148}\)

For Fusco the performance's point is to produce a strategically effective way to examine the limits of the 'happy multiculturalism' that currently reigns in cultural institutions, as well as to respond to the formalists and cultural relativists who reject the proposition that racial difference is absolutely fundamental to aesthetic interpretation.\(^{149}\)

Whether or not her project(s) achieved this goal becomes difficult to assess, because, as is indicated in the quote, a determining factor would have to be one's social racial location. Which from my standpoint, or anyone not clearly inhabiting a neocolonialized position, is problematic.

Fusco, in fact, gauges audience reactions primarily by their racial composition. Her written work offers us an awful, yet insightful look at how, visibly white cultural consumers treat 'others.' She discusses the colonial legacy in North America and how, by extension, celebratory multiculturalism promotes a distancing from this violent history. She posits conservative Quincentenary projects as a controlling mechanism for those groups whose race, class, or nationality do not conform to the status quo. And she situates her own performance along the historical continuum of racist endeavours that present, through such exhibitions, Enlightenment claims to 'Evolution,' written accounts of which, as she points out, were produced by observers, never those who were exhibited.\(^{150}\)

**Audience Investments**

\(^{148}\)Coco Fusco "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *The Drama Review* 38, no. 1, (Spring 1994), 143-167.

\(^{149}\)Ibid., 145.

\(^{150}\)Ibid., 143.
We did not anticipate that our self-conscious commentary on this practice could be believable. We underestimated public faith in museums as bastions of truth and institutional investment in that role. Furthermore, we did not anticipate that literalism would dominate the interpretation of our work. Consistently from city to city, more than half of our visitors believed our fiction and thought we were 'real,' with the exception of the Whitney, where we experienced the art world equivalent of such misperceptions: some assumed that we were not the artists, but rather actors who had been hired by another artist.¹⁵¹

Relying on truth and authenticity as The Couple in the Cage demonstrates, particularly from those who speak on behalf of the public good, such as anthropologists and art critics, indicates an uncritical investment in the status quo Fusco argues. In response, she places her audience-reaction discussion on a neocolonial threshold. On this threshold the need to control 'foreign' elements through exhibit (the World's Fair), education (traditional Western anthropology), and Dadaist performance art, is perpetuated. These new and old practices regulate the 'other.' These practices and encounters are characterized by "perceptions of the black body -- as imbued with vitalism, rhythm, magic, and erotic power, another formation of the 'good' versus the irrational or bad savage."¹⁵² Otherness can be accepted but only along white, Western, multicultural lines.

Historicizing this phenomenon makes sense in that it can explain how easily audience members could slip into overtly colonial positions, at the same time as it also explains audiences' dependence on literalism. This dependency on literalism for Fusco represents an insultingly reductive interpretation of the work and identity of artists of colour. Continuing from the Enlightenment mania to classify and explain supposed scientific and biological differences between

¹⁵¹Ibid., 154-155.
¹⁵²Ibid., 150.
humans, the modern day version, requiring a literal understanding, enforces predetermined regulations for authenticity based on race.\textsuperscript{153} To this end many audience reactions are recited: ready disapproval and disappointment faced Gomez-Peña when audience members learned he was not a 'real shaman' and that the language he spoke was fictitious.\textsuperscript{154}

The relationship between audience and performer is manoeuvred on unequal grounds by the ironic theatrical 'props,' like fictitious maps and guides that reproduce false information about the guests in the cage. How the performance is experienced by the performers in Fusco's writings demonstrates that the 'primitive' is still produced through unequal relationships between white consumers, critics, academics, and in this case, non-white performance artists. Literalism for Western cultural interpreters is a tool for controlling the Other. In many forms actual non-Western art/culture is only believed or legitimated \textit{through} a Western explanation.\textsuperscript{155}

The central position of the white spectator, the objective of these events as a confirmation of their position as global consumers of exotic cultures, and the stress on authenticity \textit{as an aesthetic} value, all remain fundamental to the spectacle of Otherness many continue to enjoy.\textsuperscript{156}

While Fusco condemns white audiences for their inability to engage critically with the performers, she valorizes children, First Nations People, black and Latin American audience members for their ability to 'get it.' Fusco's criticism of literalism and its use in controlling "the other" explain responses from the audience. It is her unifying of audience members who are white that bears

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 151.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 152.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 151.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 152.
some questioning regarding its essentialism -- is she not literally interpreting the audience reaction? Literalism, does this imply imposing binary logic? The ability to see more than what is literally displayed makes claims to authenticity questionable and broadens the discussion about what is possible.

Agency & Silencing

Dear Kitty,

My nerves often get the better of me: it is especially on Sundays that I feel rotten. The atmosphere is so oppressive, and sleepy and as heavy as lead. You don't hear a single bird singing outside, and a deadly close silence hangs everywhere, catching hold of me as if it will drag me down deep into an underworld.\textsuperscript{157}

\textit{Anne Frank: The Diary of A Young Girl} is a childhood book I read nestled in the somewhat dull sequestered suburbs of Don Mills, Ontario. I would have been between the ages of twelve and fourteen which meant reading the book in the late nineteen seventies. During this time I yearned for some excitement and felt painfully alone and isolated although I had a healthy circle of friends. But I was much different from my peers. To begin with, I was Jewish. Almost no one at my junior high school had even heard of Judaism. Cut off from anything remotely resembling cultural diversity, Anne's Diary had little relevance to my life. The activities of Anne, a preadolescent Jewish girl from Frankfurt, in hiding from Hitler in Holland between 1942 and 1944, did not resonate in my life. Even though I grew up in the shadows of the Holocaust, about the only part of the diary I could relate to was Anne's eternal conflict with her mother. After

\textsuperscript{157}Anne Frank, \textit{Anne Frank: Diary of A Young Girl}, translated by B.M. Mooyaart- Double day (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), 101-102.
watching *Anne Frank Remembered* and learning about Mrs. Frank's severe depression, my sympathies now extend to her as well as Anne.

Reading this book again in my early thirties brings Linda Martin Alcoff’s lesson to mind: how we understand earlier experiences and memories of those experiences, is, to a variable extent, shaped and influenced by discourse. Over the last decade, and beyond, academics and literary critics alike have debated and discussed the content, translation, and symbolism that Anne Frank's Diary represents. The *Anne Frank Remembered* documentary provokes and pushes these debates in new directions. To what extent did Anne herself rewrite her journal upon hearing about the possibility that wartime diaries might get published? How did and does our notion of the ideal female heroine shape the editing and translating process? And how is Anne's death as the ultimate Holocaust heroine discussed?

As I start rereading the diary I feel chagrined. I often feel like I am violating some sacred trust when I read published diaries that are so personal and private. Yet, Anne wanted hers to be read. But I am disconsolate about how alone she felt and how dependent she was upon this document to act as her confidant, warmly named "Kitty." Her diary brings us Anne Frank's "voice." Ironically, Anne turned to the diary not only out of the loneliness of hiding, but because she was always being silenced, even before Jewish families went into exile and hiding in order to save their lives. Anne, an irrepressible character, was repeatedly admonished by her teachers in class for talking too much.

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My arguments were that talking is a feminine characteristic and that I would do my best to keep it under control, but, I should never be cured, for my mother talked as much as I, probably more, and what can one do about inherited qualities?^{160}

Anne, as punishment for talking in class, is forced to write about the pitfalls of being an "incurable"^{161} chatterbox, and this is when she discovers her talent for writing. The classroom situation escalates to such an extent that Anne's final penance is to write an essay "Quack, quack, quack, says Mrs. Natterbeak."^{162} Anne is so annoyed about having her unrepentant spirit dampened she responds, entirely in prose. Her composition is about a father duck who bites his baby ducklings to death because they were too noisy. Her teacher gets the point and never again reprimanded Anne for talking in class.

Anne's ability to defend herself and her recounting of it is a story that holds several ironic circles. We could read this travail as a gendered conflict, we could read this story as a textual debate in which Anne demonstrates agency within the unequal relationship between teacher and student; additionally at a historic moment in time, when Jewish rights and access to citizenship in Germany, in 1942 had been obliterated, this could be read as a metaphor for and a resistance to the increasing inability for Jews to speak at all. Jews were "...scared to do anything because it may be forbidden."^{163}

Throughout the diary, speech and silencing are routine themes. Anne tells us she is the

^{160}Ibid., 6.
^{161}Ibid., 6.
^{162}Ibid., 6.
^{163}Ibid., 4.
source of all adult bickering in the secret annex; further, she is not allowed to defend herself.  

I'm expected (by order) to simply swallow all the harsh words and shouts in silence and I am not used to this.

In their secret apartment where two families plus a dentist live in hiding, the forced quiet and silence weigh heavily on Anne -- truly this was quite contrary to her vivacious nature. Her steadfast documentation over the two-year period before they were discovered transmits the suffocating, restless feelings she struggled with daily.

Who would have ever guessed that quicksilver Anne would have to sit for hours -- and, what's more, could?

Furthermore, what Anne says, when she does come to voice through her diary, is truncated by the historical context.

Through Mr. Frank's former employees' support, and through listening to the illicit BBC, Anne is all too aware of the privileged position she occupies in the secret annex. She hears and sees on the street Jews being humiliated, and sent to their death. The circumstances further circumscribe her ability fully to appreciate and to articulate her own difficulties. From her annex location, Anne passes the time by studying, writing in her diary, and watching other Jews "dragged off." Guilt at times overshadows her oppressive living conditions, rendering the effects of Nazi occupation on Anne as inconsequential.

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164Ibid., 29.
165Ibid., 29.
166Ibid., 33.
167Ibid., 57.
Families are torn apart, the men, women, and children all being separated. Children coming home from school find that their parents have disappeared. Women return from shopping to find their homes shut up and their families gone.\textsuperscript{168}

Bombings, food shortages, lack of any useful purpose, rats, illness and dirt. Cleaning and laundry are impossibilities now -- incarceration under these conditions frays everyone's nerves, yet, they are truly better off than most Jews in Europe at this point in time.

\textit{Comparing Cages}

Symbolizing the persecution of European Jewry during the Second World War places Anne Frank in a position that defies easy comparisons. As revealed in Coco Fusco's work on the historic figurations of colonialism expressed through audience-performer dynamics, the structural relations that forced Jews into brutal social schisms linger in subjective consciousness with ramifications for generations of Jews to come. Although Coco Fusco chooses to be a performance artist and perform in a cage, the slavery and colonialism in the West leave a violent legacy which she experiences from audience reactions, and which she documents.

The key distinguishing features of common-sense knowledge -- its assumption of the transparency of language and its appeal to experience -- rely on a particular understanding of the individual and of subjectivity. This understanding of subjectivity is itself the product of the long development of humanist discourse in Western Europe through which the God-given, socially fixed, unfree subject of the feudal order became the free, rational, self-determining subject of modern political, legal, social and aesthetic discourses.\textsuperscript{169}

Experiences voiced by individuals, in other words, unless contested, stand for the truth. And it is the wish to give expression to the long absences and preclusions of women's experiences and

\textsuperscript{168}Ibid., 57.

subjectivity that is a key ingredient to "the current feminist emphasis on the importance of speaking out as women."\textsuperscript{170}

Women from particular groups, excluded or marginalized even in feminist organizing, often feel the need to place emphasis on speaking out about their shared oppression. As Chris Weedon points out, such political strategies insist and make apparent that our experience as gendered and raced beings is not inherent or biological, but determined between, through and amongst variable power relations.\textsuperscript{171} If we want to use our experience to inform radical strategies for change, however, we need to consider further the social construction of women's subjectivities. In other words, Weedon asks, where and what is the awareness linking women and language?

In the \textit{Couple in the Cage} performance white and non-white audience members with the exception of some people of colour, and children, take for granted the two actors are who the display purports they are: new found indigenous people. It is this Western trap of transparency, for Fusco, that flattens and renders ahistorical and 'innocent' our relationship to language. Relying on language as automatic and straightforward reforges racist and gendered formations. Similarly if we look at how Anne Frank's diary gets translated, into German and into several reincarnations as a play, we can see that Anne's voice that is found in the diary itself becomes a vehicle not for the transmission of her experiences per se, but for its ability to reconfigure the Holocaust itself by obscuring German culpability and by reproducing a heroine that is purer and more palatable than the Anne that appears to us in her journal.

\textsuperscript{170}Ibid., 78.

\textsuperscript{171}Ibid., 78.
I cite these versions of Anne Frank in order to emphasize the plastic nature of the figure we have been examining. In looking at the crime we have come to call the Holocaust through the figure of Anne Frank, we see that 'the Holocaust' is itself a variable term and is explained and understood in ways that do not readily lead to consensus.172

The 1992 Christopher Columbus Quincentenary allows us to see the malleability of historical accounts. Performance artist and writer Coco Fusco argues it was the super saturated, overly produced commercialization characterizing the Quincentenary that demanded an alternative intervention. Those blatant Hollywood productions, like 1942: The Discovery, found historical justification for colonization, and crassly reminded and reaffirmed Westerners of their 'right' to be neocolonialists.173 Irredeemably mired in the white supremacism constituting the turn-of-the-century discourse of civilization174 came a phenomenon of considerable import to which Fusco's performance and writing on the performance harken back to. Exhibiting Other peoples, often in grand fairs or expositions, instructed Americans that they were high on the biological ladder of evolution while a range of other human species descended accordingly. The colonial gaze, made domestic by these fairs, allowed the average white American the ability to inspect, control, learn about and be entertained by the live people on display. More odiously, these fairs reinforced a racist discourse that unified white fair goers from a myriad class locations.


173Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," The Drama Review 38, no. 1, (Spring 1994), 145.

174For a very detailed look at how race, gender and power were knitted together, defining the discourse of civilization in the West at the end of the nineteenth century, see Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).
This dehumanizing practice was evidently lost to many audience members viewing the Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Pena performance that recollects and reenacts, in 'modern' form, these once more common events. To Fusco's initial horror audience members believed her metaphorically based performance "linking the racism implicit in ethnographic paradigms of discovery with the exoticizing rhetoric of 'world beat' multiculturalism."\(^{175}\) In country after country, museum after museum, disheartened docents, workers and the performers were routinely disturbed by the inability of visitors to understand the political message. Yet, audience members' interaction and commentary about the two performers reveal the degree to which endemic racism pervades educational encounters today -- the scenario, in some respects, is all too familiar.

While the actors become positioned by cultural and social constructs still in place, they are however, also using these constructs, such as academic journals, to position themselves, as is evinced in Fusco's writing. Through Fusco's reflections we are brought to a place where we see that the historical memory of the World's Fair is lost to popular consciousness, and the Quincentenary celebrations produce only happy symbols of 'progress' and European 'advancement' proffered to the colonies. Fusco's writing exposes the still active and reinterpreted colonial relations called up by her performance as she tries to transgress the genre.

In a desperate bid to balance notions of discursive production, without losing agency altogether and the tension between the two, I am reminded of both Coco Fusco's reflections, video, and the writing of a young, impish, teenage girl -- a Jewish refugee in hiding -- as she saucily writes or gives voice in writing to her own thoughts that, under different circumstances, would be almost impossible to squelch. In a sequestered attic above the Travies N.V. firm Anne

\(^{175}\)Ibid., 145.
Frank tells us:

The rest of our family, however, felt the full impact of Hitler's anti-Jewish laws, so life was filled with anxiety. In 1938 after the pogroms, my two uncles (my mother's brothers) escaped to the U.S.A. My old grandmother came to us, she was then seventy-three. After May 1940 good times rapidly fled: first the war, then the capitulation, followed by the arrival of the Germans, which is when the sufferings of us Jews really began. Anti-Jewish decrees followed each other in quick succession. 176

Alvin H. Rosenfeld details how these memories can so easily become anesthetized and depoliticized through looking at the diary's manifold uses in artistic Holocaust reproductions.

Roughly 1.5 million Jewish children perished in the Holocaust. The most famous one, Anne Frank, projects an image that is "ubiquitous and compelling," although remembered in a very commanding fashion for often unsettling reasons. Jan Romein, Professor of Dutch History at the University of Amsterdam, among the first to comment on Het Achterhuis, 177 sounded a strong note of pessimism about the prospects of such a story as Anne Frank's finding many readers. 178 He read the diary through the very recent horrors of Nazi fascism. But the book exploded as a publishing phenomenon despite the fact that people in the immediate years following the Second World War, might not want to relive the recent sufferings. From the first edition put out in Paris by Calmann-Levy in 1950, followed in the same year in a German language version, followed shortly thereafter by an English and then American version, translations into numerous languages


178 Ibid., 246.
continued and multiplied.\textsuperscript{179}

Counter to Jan Romein's opinion, Anne Frank's popularity grew because reader's found in it humour, optimism and a stirring belief, against all odds, in humanity, although reading Anne Frank's personal journal in this way "undercuts the historical catastrophe that Jan Romein stressed."\textsuperscript{180} In my 1972 version, on the back cover, there is a quote from the \textit{New York Times} that states the diary is:

\begin{quote}
A truly remarkable book... Anne Frank's diary simply bubbles with amusement, love and discovery... It is a warm and stirring confession, to be read over and over for insight and enjoyment.\textsuperscript{181}
\end{quote}

Similarly another quote on the back of \textit{The New York Herald Tribune} states:

\begin{quote}
It is a poignant, heartbreaking yet somehow heart-warming story, fresh with the dew of adolescence.\textsuperscript{182}
\end{quote}

"Dew of adolescence?" Anne's own biting criticism and wry sense of humour, and, her exhaustive accounts of the claustrophobia and fear in which the Frank family lived in hiding, would discredit these interpretations. Who, then, asks Alvin H. Rosenfeld, is this Anne Frank we remember?\textsuperscript{183}

In order to read the book in the above way one must dehistoricize it from the era and caged

\textsuperscript{179}Ibid., 248.

\textsuperscript{180}Ibid., 249.

\textsuperscript{181}Anne Frank, \textit{Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl} (New York: Pocket Books, 1972) Translated by B.M. Mooyaart-Doubleday, back cover.

\textsuperscript{182}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{183}Ibid., 246.
existence in which Anne wrote, and detach from Anne her very deep sense of herself as a Jew.  

The back cover with its quotes celebrating Anne's flinty courage typifies the early responses to the book, particularly among American readers. Next came Anne Frank the theatre production. According to Rosenfeld's commentary, playwrights Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett rose to fame and fortune by recreating Anne Frank in 1955 as a "triumphant figure, one characterized by such irrepressible hope and tenacious optimism as to overcome any final sense of a cruel end."  

Anne increasingly is beatified and reified as a heroine that remains a precocious young girl -- and never grows up. By excluding the more garrulous 'Anne' found in the diary and by suppressing the more foreboding entries, highlighting only her girlish naivete and humour, her symbolism as a perpetual, courageous, uplifting, adolescent girl that at least American audiences can enjoy and appreciate is ensured.

Rosenfeld reminds us that there was a far more serious, religious, graver sense to Anne found in her journal pages. Yet, disturbingly, in Anne Frank, the play, the lead heroine is reduced and sentimentalized "... to the point of silliness by having Otto Frank remark, 'It seems strange to say this, that anyone could be happy in a concentration camp. But Anne was happy in the camp in Holland where they first took us.'  

And in a document attempting to write Anne Frank's life beyond her last journal entry, Ernst Schnable, according to Rosenfeld, claims Anne died

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185Ibid., 251-252.

186Ibid., 258.
"peacefully, feeling that nothing bad was happening to her." 187

Reducing Anne to such vague platitudes, an image that still remains popularly received, signals the limitations to how Anne's voice is heard. For example, Anne Frank the book and the play, brought to Germany after the Second World War provided an easier access to very difficult debates about how Germans understood the war and how they explained it to themselves. The reincarnations of Anne's diary allowed people to see the 'other' side of the wartime experience and to enforce a realization of the sufferings their nation had caused to the innocent. No doubt it was for these reasons that many responded powerfully, almost desperately, to the message of hope they detected in the diary and to which they gave such a heightened emphasis. The Anne Frank they would favor, indeed almost the only Anne Frank they could bring themselves to acknowledge, was the one who spoke affirmatively about life and not accusingly about her torturers.188

Even more adroit are the changes to Anne's writing brought about by the German translation. In the Annelies Schutz translation references to the Franks speaking or, for example, saying prayers in German are omitted.189 This happens on several occasions. Annelies Schutz further routinely disconnects and submerges the national identity of the perpetrators from their German heritage in passages that make this connection explicit.190 Severing links to the Frank's German identity coupled with suppressing the national identity of the perpetrators discourages German readers from fully engaging and recognizing that, like themselves, the Franks were Germans; and German readers are further discouraged from realizing that, again like themselves, "the persecutors of

187Ibid., 259.
188Ibid., 265.
189Ibid., 267.
190Ibid., 267.
these Jews were their own countrymen."

These interpolations that remove Anne Frank, the story, from its national and historic context are, for Rosenfeld, characterized as distortions indicating a disturbingly unauthentic version of Anne's own accounting of her life in hiding. Interestingly enough, though, Anne wrote two versions of her diary. Anne herself talks about the process, indicating to "Kitty" that the prospect of publishing her story after the war brings her a new found purpose. Which version does the public read? Ferreting out what happens across translations shows us the degree to which voices can be rewritten. While this is an important endeavour, my interests lie in what happens to Anne's voice afterwards.

Out of both sorrow and shame, Germans have named streets, schools, and youth centers after Anne Frank, but to this day most probably do not comprehend why, a generation ago, a significant number of their countrymen deemed it necessary to hunt down a fifteen-year-old Jewish girl and send her off to suffer and die in places like Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. Until that issue is joined, the German encounter with Anne Frank is destined to remain incomplete.

Centring one's own pain, trauma and oppression while ignoring what rights and privileges we possess (over others) enables a distancing from culpability. Anne Frank's voice becomes a metaphor (like the Quincentenary projects that try to invoke subjective experiences to trouble the popular, anglicized accounts, projects insisting on the crushing cruelty, inhumanity and irony living through these circumstances and with their ghosts involves) for discursive power. Not all discourses are created equally, and hence the German translation of the book and the play reflects

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191 Ibid., 268.

192 Ibid., 270.
how Anne Frank gets made into a formula for "easy forgiveness." This is not a triumphant return of Anne's voice to the country which expelled and killed her, but rather the reverse, "the triumph of Anne Frank's former countrymen over her. In her name, they have, after all, forgiven themselves."

What can be explicated from a process that measures authenticity? Reading Anne Frank and the degree to which her translations diverge from historic certainties, like the fact that Germany waged war against the Jews, indicates that the past is continually reconstructed and can be transmitted for reasons that retell or diminish the particular historic events. Caution and reflection about our own political motivations should be considered when we invoke the desire to 'hear' marginalized voices.

_Speech_

Although we depend on words for communication, we should not let this beguile us into neglecting moments when words are not a bridge of contact.

There is a 'place,' between the "hyphen" of the nation and the state that characterizes Gayatri Spivak's literary metaphoric technique invoked as she figures out how and where civil structures and groups respond to and write the transfiguration of global capital and neocolonialism. The relationship between nation and state, in "the" nation-state, is theorized by

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193Ibid., 271.

194Ibid., 271.

195Kyo Maclear, "Not in So Many Words: translating silence across 'difference,'" *Fireweed*, no. 44/45 (Summer 1994), 11.

Spivak as a displacement of culture through ideological national figurations, and through the civil services of the state. In an ideal democratic state citizens can call on and use state services like health care, education and welfare agencies. In the welfare state there is a (limited) political impetus for state apparatuses to serve its citizens.\textsuperscript{197} How operative civil society is, in our nation-state, can be adjudicated based on access to services and availability to the widest catchment of citizenry.

Currently, Spivak argues, transnationality is privatizing whatever services existed (in her case she is speaking about the United States), as priorities have been shifted from servicing the citizen, to "capital maximization"\textsuperscript{198} where "the only source of male dignity is employment, just as the only source of genuine female dignity is unpaid domestic labour."\textsuperscript{199} Although Spivak is concerned with the reduced possibilities of redistribution of resources in developing nations, her discussion is helpful in understanding how we as feminists can think about claims to citizenship and about how such claims are both historical and gender specific.

Diasporas old and new are caused by religious oppression and war, slavery, trade and conquest,\textsuperscript{200} as well as a range of colonizations and the resulting inverted economic development. For Spivak, new diasporas in this era are being determined by the neocolonial inability (or impediments) to provide welfare state structures and redistribution of resources in neocolonial administrations. Similarly, it can be argued that after the Second World War, the inability of and  

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{197}Ibid., 248.
\item\textsuperscript{198}Ibid., 248.
\item\textsuperscript{199}Ibid., 248.
\item\textsuperscript{200}Ibid., 245.
\end{itemize}
understandable repulsion felt by Jews and other targets of the Third Reich to reclaim their status within Europe's civil structures forced the vast majority away from what was once their home, to migrate to other continents, rarely thought about before extermination threatened.

Following on Spivak's logic, it can be argued that access to the welfare state in Canada, over the last fifty years, was not and still is not available to all Canadian inhabitants equally. Certainly resources made available through the state and one's ability to know of them, and to exploit and/or be regulated by them, are in part determined and reconciled by gender, race, socio-economic status, and one's status as a Canadian citizen.

Further, it can be generally argued that public services and resources, as is evinced today in Canada, are receding. Those worst off are women, children, and particularly those women and children compromising the "diasporadic underclass." And even in this description, the category 'women' cannot take into account variable subject locations and should be distrusted. Not all diasporadic women will be dominated and exploited in the same way.

As Canada declared itself a freedom fighting nation, offering a helping hand to the displaced people of Central and Eastern Europe, it was also producing itself, indeed, considered itself now to be, a refuge for political asylum. Spivak, now in writing about a more current context, is suspicious of such innocuous national scripts. Where, she challenges, are the homeworkers, illegal immigrants and others whose exploited labour supports this country of asylum? Consequently one way of thinking about the migration of female Holocaust survivors' after the war, then, is as highly exploitable migrant labour. But this is neither why Holocaust

\[201\text{Ibid.}, 249.\]
\[202\text{Ibid.}, 249.\]
survivors speak out publicly about their wartime experiences, nor is it how they would centrally characterize their new homeland.

In the present tense, Spivak argues that:

Political asylum, at first sight so different from economic migration, finally finds it much easier to re-code capitalism as democracy. It too, then, inscribes itself in the narrative of the manipulation of civil social structures in the interest of the financialization of the globe.²⁰³

Exploitation of illegal or indeterminate civil labour is nothing new but rather part of an historical North American trend that minimizes discursively and materially both the state and corporate obligation to subsidize social reproduction. According to Spivak, the differences between old and new diasporas is the exploitation of women.²⁰⁴

For Spivak it is the shoring up of civil structures here that provides alibis for exhausting civil structures in developing neocolonial sites, where relentless transnational activity impedes economic development, allowing gender justice to slip away and become a vague memory. In considering this relationship she asks us to bear in mind that the woman who is migrating to North America cannot, as she tries to insert herself in a strange new world, respond with the "critical agency"²⁰⁵ of civil society. That is, she cannot call upon and fight her own exploitation when her subjectship is tenuous and insecure.

Thinking in knowledge producing terms, particularly in the transnational context Spivak invokes, one comes upon the issue of feminist translator as informant, for "diasporas also entail, at

²⁰³Ibid., 249.

²⁰⁴Ibid., 250.

²⁰⁵Ibid., 252.
once, a necessary loss of contact with the idiomatic indispensability of the mother tongue.\textsuperscript{206}

Translating across generational, cultural and linguistic differences need not be a betrayal. To guard against acts of treachery we must keep in mind that historical discussions of Canada's role in World War II be remembered not only as contributing to the defeat of Fascism in Europe, but also as closing its doors to Jews desperate to escape before the war and taking advantage, indeed exploiting Jewish migrant labour after the war. Furthermore, when taking stock of migrant women's lives, in the taking-stock-process we must not forget that migration begins with a forgetting, a "'loss of language' at the origin."\textsuperscript{207}

\textit{Listening For the Sounds of Silence}

Structured repressions, in language and in national texts, compound and neutralize violent difference. The embeddedness and discreteness of textual and linguistic techniques make unavailable to our subjectivity, and to our historical projects, how exclusions and differences are not only made absent, but also reconfigured into historical versions of identity. The work of Ron Shields in "The True North Strong and Free"\textsuperscript{208} offers us an example of how symbolic myths can be read as the incorporations of more than mere sentimental recollections. The space-myth of the chorus found in our national anthem, "The True North Strong and Free," has been appropriated in different ways historically and deployed as an attempt to reconcile regional differences and viewpoints, for example, through its dual construction of the wilderness and bareness of the North

\textsuperscript{206}Ibid., 259.

\textsuperscript{207}Ibid., 263.

as a counter-balance to the civilized South on the one-hand, and on the other as an Eden from all that has been spoiled by metropolitan incursions. Shields recounts that the idea of where the True North actually begins physically has been hotly contested for some time. Sociological discourses and tourism literature as well as debates that revolve around isolation allowances are but a few areas in which there is no real consensus on the truth of where the north actually begins.

Understanding how this construction has been utilized as an archetypal tool for positioning notions of 'civilized' and 'wild' is crucial to recognising how historical discussions of Northern Canada are written from specific political locations. For it is in such historical discussions, argues Shields, that notions of wildness always serve the agenda of reinforcing a priori notions of civilization. In the rewritings of Anne Frank we see how her historic voice has served many purposes: as a mnemonic tool for diminishing German culpability; as a panacea for understanding such large scale genocide; and as diminishment and distortion of female, adolescent Holocaust narratives. The Holocaust becomes depoliticized, ahistoricized and rendered static.

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak's target is the poststructuralist critique of the sovereign subject. She posits that this argument turns in on itself, that is, this discourse, rather than deconstructing any sense that there is a definitive, knowable subject, inadvertently and paradoxically reproduces the specific European "subject of knowledge" by disavowing the

209 Ibid.

210 Ibid.

international circulation of the corporate agenda, upon which Western subjectivity is founded and simultaneously builds. This disavowal of an international division of labour, upon which Western subjectivity is built, exculpates the violence in Western poststructuralists' writing about desire, interest and subjectivity. Without considering multinational power and huge inequities in the international division of labour, postmodernists produce theory about language and subjectivity, as though this divide is not a constitutive element in discourse. In calling our attention to these limits Spivak forces us to reconsider how we theorize "the unconscious" and "culture." For if the material relations of production are rendered absent, and yet concrete experience is questioned, then the intellectual's complicity in the international division of labour is hidden. Spivak posits:

that this entire overdetermined enterprise was in the interest of a dynamic economic situation requiring that interests, motives (desires), and power (of knowledge) be ruthlessly dislocated. To invoke that dislocation now as a radical discovery that should make us diagnose the economic (conditions of existence that separate out "classes" descriptively) as a piece of dated analytic machinery may well be to continue the work of that dislocation and unwittingly to help in securing "a new balance of hegemonic relations."

As we see in the Anne Frank's translations, and in the myth of the 'True North Strong and Free,' the implications for subjectivity, theorized without these political and historic considerations, risks not only a violent obfuscation, it risks reestablishing a normative account of reality that constitutes the colonial subject as Other.  

212 Ibid., 275.
213 Ibid., 280.
214 Ibid., 281.
The investigation for Spivak is not only about the paradox involved in recent critiques of the subject, it is about who can represent those without (much) power/ability to speak. Can the intellectual in their discursive relationships represent the subaltern or theorize 'the' subaltern's place in Western thought and Western capitalism? Can the diasporic second generation? Given the educational and legal colonial compounds in operation internationally, can those who lie outside -- on the far reaches of the margins, asks Spivak, "speak"²¹⁵ for themselves?

Speech and the ability to come to voice and be heard in this instance takes into consideration twentieth-century transfigurations of global capitalism. Material considerations and the heterogeneous subaltern location need to be built into how we understand speech in its political and geographical sense. From Spivak we learn that speech is political in a very broad sense: materially, discursively, linguistically, culturally, and socially. It is beyond the scope of this work to consider all dimensions, but I have tried to come to terms both with the need for survivors to bring an impossible stability to their painful subjective fragments of horror through speaking about their experiences and with the limits of that storytelling. For the stories they tell also tell us something about the limits to memory, to oral histories, to constructions of self at moments in history that make irreconcilable, leave in fragments, the defining moments of terror and pain. In the face of overwhelming horror, words are of no use.

Oral histories are indeed partial and temporal. What I am trying to make obvious is the distinction and disjuncture(s) between "rendering visible the mechanism...[from] rendering vocal the individual."²¹⁶ To make such contradictions explicit in oral histories would not make for a

²¹⁵Ibid., 283.
²¹⁶Ibid., 285.
limited historical lesson; on the contrary, it would make more evident the underlying structures through which these epistemic violences are produced. To do this would involve not only discussing the tragic experiences in those dismal, grey, unimaginable concentration camps, but would also involve discussing the forced dislocations and changes that carried such extraordinary consequences.

Principally: loss. That language equals home, that language is a home, as surely as a roof over one's head is a home, and that to be without a language, or to be between languages, is as miserable in its way as to be without bread. There are languages in which we feel our mother's heart beating; other languages in which we feel distant and safe; other languages -- jargon languages in particular -- are the language of professional ambition and achievement; others the language of pain.217

This pain cannot be appeased. But perhaps this is not the point. Perhaps through these attempts to make sense of trauma and make whole the psyche we can begin to ask how it is our losses permeate our lives; how speech and linguistic techniques further distort these losses, and how speech is profoundly reconfigured, controlled if you will, by these techniques. It may be through these reflections that we can come to partially grasp the shifting landscape that allows for our articulations.

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Chapter Four: In Conclusion

To sweep people from all Europe to a few plots in Poland took so much more than terror. Victims had to be kept deluded, bystanders inert. Half of those the Nazis liquidated -- three million persons -- had to be shipped out of sight to be killed. Deception was the strategic resource that fuelled the rolling trains and made this genocide succeed.218

There was, after all, no conceptual framework available through which to grasp genocide, so that with the exception of a few escapees, no one could believe the early stories about Auschwitz and other death camps.219 I had hoped this study would provide a framework to think through at least two theoretical schools of thought. One, how we theorize gender in the general construction of history and the history of the Holocaust in particular. In order to understand the Holocaust's subjective and gendered nature I have investigated how female survivors are reproduced in two key texts in this newly emerging field of Women and the Holocaust. Feminists have argued that the use of categories of identity, in the writing of history, often served to reproduce 'women,' for example, as a fixed and universalized appendage, as a descriptive "backcloth" to the important historical events of the day.

The second theoretical current, that of feminist poststructuralism, moves the discussion from establishing women's experience in history to addressing the underlying assumptions found in discursive structures stemming from the Enlightenment. 'Speech' and the ability to speak are predicated on structures including, but in now way limited to, language. Poststructuralists question the rules of language, in its broadest sense. Poststructuralists question the relationship

219Ibid., 191.
between our consciousness and subjectivity and the degree to which our voices are shaped through the precarious contours of memory and the the social regulation of gender.

For many feminists, the challenge has thus shifted. We are still interested in problematizing how we think about and use categories of gender to address traditional, exclusionary versions of history. But through our attempts to redress the violence of conventional history, many of us are realizing, and are equally concerned about, the dangers and limits to the knowledge production of our own work. As we have seen through the rewritings of Anne Frank's Diary and through Coco Fusco's theatrical performances, when contradictions and their connection to embedded conventions are even voiced explicitly, structures and regulatory mechanisms already in place conspire to betray these articulations.

The women I interviewed, upon arriving in Canada, experienced many prohibitions in speaking about their wrenching losses and dislocations at that point in time. These include but are in no way limited to the practical difficulties of migration. Time was needed to learn how to speak English. Time was needed to establish oneself financially. What I have argued, in other words, is that oral histories and the ability to speak are not discrete practices. Experiences about the Holocaust are told for specific reasons, under specific conditions, at particular moments in time. If, as both Spivak and Fusco point out, our Western production of knowledge is predicated both in relation to and over 'others' then feminist researchers must consider how female survivors' stories are used.

There is a trend in writing about female survivors that on the one hand seeks to respect and limit their pain, but in so doing, starts to edge toward a valourized and romanticized (even worse) 'happy' Holocaust survivor. The notion is horrid. How did this happen? This is where the
insights of Foucault, Spivak and Fusco are enormously helpful.

When we start to deconstruct these 'diaspora dreams' we begin to see more than the hell that was the Holocaust. We catch a glimpse of the subtle regulatory mechanisms in place that are producing, that is, that we are producing through our use of oral histories, more palatable realities of death camps and versions of history that may overlook larger political questions of accountability. Further, when we exclusively focus on survivors' experiences during the Holocaust, we risk reproducing an ahistoric, unchanging category of female Holocaust survivors. This essentialist trend not only leaves survivors 'fixed' in time, it regulates how these women are constructed in historical accounts such that the complexity of victimization is obscured. The result is that we get a sense of closure from the Holocaust, in that those tragic events seem over and done with, and are not continuing in less recognizable ways today. In these ways static boundaries of identity are reproduced.

What I have tried to document in this work is that there is much to be learned from hearing from voices on the margins. When we look at the lived experience of domination and oppression we learn about trauma, immense pain and the specificity of intersecting categories of difference. But what happens when we try to articulate and represent these experiences? Once we move away from the descriptions of the women's experiences of the Holocaust, we begin to see the underlying grammar of a newly emerging discourse. Then we begin to see gender constructed through Holocaust literature in forms that maintain a universal female subject, reproducing an appropriate femininity fixed within patriarchal relations, and that produce only and hence privilege, a white middle-class, heterosexual, survivor.

Hearing women's voices and using their voices in academic work can profoundly disrupt
what we considered to be the unbridled "truth." Oral histories can make history come alive and communicate and provide very moving accounts of experiences of undeniable pain and loss. However, these pieces of the puzzle, arranged one way, may leave out or diminish other pieces. I am only too aware, that to change the picture pieced together involves hard, painful work. Looking at how female Holocaust survivors are written about, particularly Anne Frank, illustrates how the picture can be rearranged in very troubling ways. In her case, to mitigate and distance the culpability of Nazis for the Holocaust.

There are many dangers to conspicuously pointing out how history is being constructed. For female Holocaust survivors, the heroism, bravery and stamina that they signify bring new dimensions to the study of the Holocaust, and new understanding of the unimaginable strengths that women ultimately can possess. However, we do not want to reproduce a limited and ahistoric version of history. Nor should we produce categories of gender that may only valorize female survivors. We must explore what does not get said about women's experiences. The picture may no longer be as palatable as the various versions of Anne Frank have become. If we leave female survivors and their narratives, like Anne Frank, as only heroes, or only mere victims, we run risks. Particularly when we think about their life after the Holocaust. We risk producing categories that truncate and objectify identity. Furthermore, to write about history in this way betrays the very reason survivors speak about their pain in the first place which is to prevent something like the Holocaust from ever happening again. For to use unexamined, undifferentiated categories which enact violent exclusions, reproduces the lack of respect for difference underlying the very racism Holocaust studies are designed to combat.

The inclusion of voices into the production of knowledge is, we are learning, no easy
matter. My own experiences during my interviews made me poignantly aware that there was a grammar to the stories the survivors told, one that was not easily dislodged. As history has shown, political, material and discursive terrains shift. By looking at female survivors' experiences, and how their voices have been used, we see through postmodern and feminist critiques that violence and conflict occur at both a metaphysical and material level. We learn that social movements are produced through real struggles that bring forth new theoretical debates.

As we try to grapple with the West's more violent histories, we must keep in mind post-colonial feminist warnings. Fusco and Spivak both teach us that to use narrations that are simplistic and reductive, serve not to dislodge racist practices; quite the contrary, they make acceptable difference by diminishing the trauma of racism and by regulating what can be heard. Furthermore, these regulations then prescribe particular versions of victimhood that make legitimate some narrations, and suppress others. Examining in this way how we produce histories that we so much want to respect and honour, forces us to see that using these voices to challenge and undo systems of racism and oppression, means evaluating how we do so. We can never bring back the millions who died at the hands of the Third Reich. Nor will bringing-to-voice lives of survivors easily explain genocide. It is important through individual stories about the Holocaust to show "the shape it gave to all their lives." But truncated accounts of survival are not enough. What may be useful now is to consider what has not been said in these oral histories, and what stories are not taken up in the writing of the Holocaust. As well, in order to understand the contradictory subject locations female Holocaust survivors currently inhabit, it may be useful

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to examine the trauma of immigration, the difficulty in befriending established Canadians, the heartache of losing one's native language. Perhaps, reflecting in this way on what 'to speak' means in the broadest sense, we can move from speaking only about the texture and trauma of individual death, to how it is we can find a place to dislocate the mechanisms of genocide.

For her own eyes she wrote, "I am going to kill myself," but she could turn and tell her audience, "I am going to live for them all." No one knows whether she'd have committed suicide if given time. And yet: The artwork committed survival.  

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221Ibid.
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