Explaining the Ambivalence: The Holocaust Etiquette and Leonard Cohen's Flowers for Hitler and Beautiful Losers

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Abstract

This thesis argues that our perceptions and representations of the Holocaust are shaped by what Terrance Des Pres calls the Holocaust Etiquette. In the initial chapter, the formation and perpetuation of the Etiquette are explored in relation to the historiography of the Holocaust. Current historical works serve as examples of the Etiquette, as well as evidence of a body of works that challenge its central tenets. The concerns of the Etiquette are then examined through the work of Leonard Cohen. The second chapter discusses how Cohen negotiates his ambivalent relationship with the Etiquette in his poetry collection Flowers for Hitler and his novel Beautiful Losers. Cohen's use of dialogue form and his stance as a "comparative mythographer" are the two main elements that shape this discussion.

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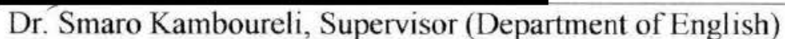

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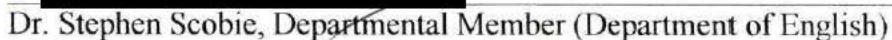

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Introduction

Roberto Benigni's film *La Vita é Bella* (Life is Beautiful) continues to receive mixed reviews concerning his use of humor in relation to the Holocaust. As a CNN movie critic remarks, "...[Benigni] creates such a glossy, back-lot version of a concentration camp, he's cheating us before he even begins dealing with the horror" (CNN Review). A similar concern is expressed by the TIME magazine critic: "In this climate, turning even a small corner of this century's central horror into feel-good popular entertainment is abhorrent. Sentimentality is a kind of fascism too, robbing us of judgment and moral acuity, and it needs to be resisted. Life Is Beautiful is a good place to start" (TIME Review). Other reviews are more forgiving in stating that "[Benigni's] humor helps prevent didacticism, but it certainly doesn't interfere with the material's [Holocaust] dignity. The only thing approached lightly here, really, is the boy's wide-eyed imagination" (Film Journal International). The common thread in these reviews is the critics' focus on humor. From a different perspective, however, the criticism stems from the issue of representing the Sho'ah.

Another work, Daniel Goldhagen's Hitler's Willing Executioners, is also criticized in regards to its representation of the Sho'ah. The controversy created by Goldhagen's book has not diminished in the years since its publication in 1996. As Norman Finkelstein and Ruth Bettina Birn argue, "the book is replete with gross misrepresentations of the secondary literature and internal contradictions"

(Comments: Internet Document).[1] One example of the allegedly erroneous nature of Goldhagen's book concerns the rise of Nazism in Germany; Goldhagen states that, "By and large, it was a peaceful revolution willingly acquiesced to by the German people. Domestically, the Nazi German revolution was, on the whole, consensual" (456). Yet, "It has been reliably estimated that the KPD [German Socialist Party] between 1933 and 1935 lost 75,000 members through imprisonment and that several thousands of them were killed. That means that about a quarter of the members registered in 1932 were lost" (North "A Critical Review"). Despite the criticism surrounding Goldhagen's historical accuracy, other critics suggest that, "Drawing on materials either unexplored or neglected by previous scholars, Professor Goldhagen marshals new, disquieting, primary evidence . . . to demonstrate that many beliefs about the killers are fallacies . . ." (West Virginia University Publicity Statement: Internet Document). While the criticism of Benigni stems from his use of humor, Goldhagen is criticized for his inaccurate factual representation. Interestingly, the criticism of both works stems from the anxiety surrounding the ways in which the Sho'ah ought to be represented. I believe that our perception and representation of the Sho'ah are regulated by assumptions about what is considered "appropriate."

As Terrance Des Pres states, "A set of fictions controls the field of Holocaust studies and requires of us a definite decorum, a sort of Holocaust etiquette that encourages some, rather than other, kinds of response" (218). These "fictions" are, firstly, that the Holocaust is a unique event or special case distinct from any event before or after it; secondly, representations of the Holocaust are to be accurate and

[1] See also Finkelstein and Birn's work, A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth (Henry Holt, 1998). Also <http://www.normanfinkelstein.com and http://www.goldhagen.com>.

faithful to the facts and conditions of it, without change or manipulation for any reason – artistic reasons included; and thirdly that the Holocaust is a solemn and sacred event, with a seriousness admitting no response that might obscure its enormity or dishonor its dead, and must be approached as such (217). The Etiquette is not a school of thought nor does it consist of an established body of works; rather, these "fictions" are a collection of ideas that mould our perception and writing concerning the Sho'ah.

While the effects of the Etiquette are obvious, the origins of it remain elusive. As I show in the first chapter, the way that the events of the Sho'ah were being written about were carefully structured even from the point of view of the perpetrators. Thus, I believe the Etiquette is bound closely to the events of the Sho'ah. Theodor Adorno's statement that I examine in this introduction was made in 1947, again showing how closely bound the Etiquette is to the actual Sho'ah. Indeed, the 'shock' of the Sho'ah may be what precipitated the creation of the Etiquette for both perpetrators and survivors.

The concern of this thesis, then, is to analyze the formation and perpetuation of the first two tenets of the Etiquette in specific texts within the historiography of the Sho'ah. In the first chapter, I explore certain historical texts to illustrate the Etiquette's formation and perpetuation as well as examine other historical works that challenge it. Yet, I am also concerned with the expression and testing of the Etiquette in other forms of discourse, specifically the Etiquette's position in Canadian Literature. Thus my second chapter is concerned with Leonard Cohen's writing. I

wish to suggest that Cohen is the first Canadian writer to challenge the Etiquette. Before I can begin, though, I must investigate the larger issues raised by the Etiquette.

Some of these issues include whether the Etiquette is demanding the impossible in the sense that some believe the Sho'ah denies the very possibility of representation; how the Etiquette is expressed and perpetuated; and, finally, who benefits from the continual use of the Etiquette or, more importantly, who benefits from its misuse. From a different perspective, the Etiquette is a vital sign alluding to the more general concerns and anxieties in our culture in that it can be seen as what Marjorie Garber calls a symptom of culture.

Garber writes that "a symptom is a kind of code, a way in which a body - or culture - signals something that lies beneath or within. For the human psyche, a symptom is precisely that: a coded or ciphered message, a withheld narrative performed by the body" (3). Considered in this light, the Etiquette signals the anxieties within our culture, and ourselves, regarding the Sho'ah; we are nervous, intimidated, scared, and horrified to different extents when confronting, or confronted with the history of the subject. The Etiquette is the cultural and personal body's answer to our anxieties. It is intended to frame our approaches to the Sho'ah in a manner that we are most comfortable with, to ease our way toward a subject that causes profound anxiety. Yet, the positing of the Sho'ah as a symptom of culture and the Etiquette itself presume that it is possible to represent the Sho'ah in its totality.

Theodor Adorno most famously summarizes the objection to this position:

> Even the most extreme awareness of the disaster is in danger of degenerating into blather. Cultural criticism

> is confronted with the final phase of the dialectic of culture and barbarism: to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric, and this also influences the realization that articulates why it became impossible to write poems today. (30)

For Adorno, to write a poem about the Sho'ah is to gain aesthetic pleasure out of artistic representation, thus doing injustice to the Holocaust victims. The very production of aesthetic objects and our perception of their value *as* objects result in pleasure derived from them. Adorno writes:

> The very moment the Holocaust is made an object of aesthetic pleasure, it is destroyed in its singularity, and the materiality and reality of the event is elevated into an aesthetic experience, whereby the barbarity of the Nazi crimes against the Jews is in some sense repeated and even legitimized. (Leventhal, "Literary Theory and Criticism")

Adorno's statement calls into question attitudes towards art and, more specifically, issues involving the trust (or lack of it) placed in language. Do art and language have the capacity to represent the Sho'ah in a way that does not demean or inaccurately portray it? George Steiner, echoing Adorno's statement, argues that "The world of Auschwitz lies outside speech as it lies outside reason" (123). For Steiner, the Sho'ah lies outside the realm of language and speech, and therefore can not be formed into an object of aesthetic pleasure.

In 1994, I attended a Holocaust Symposium in Victoria, B.C., and witnessed the failings of language and speech referred to by Adorno and Steiner. I listened as Sigmund Sobolewski tried to articulate his experiences in Auschwitz. Later in the symposium, another survivor sat in silence and wept as he tried to do the same.

I remember four years later reading Eli Mandel's poem, "On the 25th Anniversary of Auschwitz":

> of course
> that's second hand   that's told
> again   Sigmund Sherwood (Sobolewski)
> twisting himself into that sentence
> before us on the platform (231).

Mandel tried to express another attempt of Sobolewski to put his Auschwitz experience into words. The language in Mandel's poem disintegrates linguistically as the persona tries to explain both the Holocaust experience and the inability of language to come to terms with the Sho'ah. Similarly, what emerges from these examples, as well as Adorno and Steiner's statements, is the frustration and moral and aesthetic ambivalence characteristic of any attempt to represent the Sho'ah, irrespective of the medium.

The majority of critics postulate the impossibility of representing the Sho'ah. Echoing Des Pres' second precept of Holocaust Etiquette (that representations of the Holocaust are to be accurate and faithful to the facts and conditions of it) is Berel Lang's work Act and Idea of the Nazi Genocide. Lang suggests that "only a realistic, historically authentic mode of writing about the Holocaust" can do justice to the

Sho'ah's horror and complexity (Leventhal, "Literary Theory and Criticism: Internet Document"). But not all critics agree with Lang's notion. For instance, Saul Friedlander is wary of the relegation of the Holocaust to the realm of the unspeakable, for to "reduce Auschwitz to silence is to participate in another dissimulation and erasure of history" (Leventhal, "Language and Silence"). Even Friedlander's argument, however, embodies a precept of the Etiquette, as for him the Holocaust is a unique event that requires "self-reflective discourse and psycho-analysis of the very ways in which denial, displacement, and disavowal occur in our various 'discourses'" (Leventhal, "Language and Silence"). So far, I have only examined some of the larger issues raised by the Etiquette within Holocaust historiography. Yet, as I mentioned earlier, I am interested in applying the ideas raised by the Etiquette in Canadian literature as well.

For Mandel, when confronted with the Sho'ah, language disintegrates into fragments:

> a German sound made out of
>
> the gut guttural throat
>
> y scream yell   ing open
>
> voice mouth growl (2-5)

The sound referred to is the word Auschwitz, alluding to the difficulties faced in articulating the horror and ugliness of the Sho'ah. As Mandel states, "In addressing the question in art, in poetry, of the Holocaust, we are not, to begin with addressing questions like any other. It is set apart from any experience we can discuss. It exists on its own grounds of being – or rather of non-being" ("Auschwitz: Poetry of

Alienation" 215). Mandel clearly views the Sho'ah as a unique event that is "set apart" from other historical occurrences. For Mandel, the uniqueness of the Sho'ah "put enormous strains on language so that poetry of the Holocaust would have to be in a 'special language,' a new form unheard of" ("Auschwitz: Poetry of Alienation" 215). Mandel's new form would consist of:

> a series of displacements: structurally,
> grammatically, imagistically,
> psychologically. *It would be a camp poem*
> *by not being a camp poem* (217)

Realizing the difficulties in writing about the Sho'ah, Mandel resolved to continually displace the image and write around it, not directly about it. Thus, the destruction of the language in his poem represents the impossibility of directly representing the Sho'ah. Embodied in this particular poem is the Holocaust Etiquette as articulated by Des Pres. Mandel approaches the Sho'ah as a unique, distinct event in history that requires new literary techniques to address its themes.

Mandel is not the only Canadian writer to adhere to the Etiquette. Others, such as A.M. Klein, Mordecai Richler, and Miriam Waddington show similar patterns of thought. Yet, within the context of Canadian literature, Leonard Cohen stands out as the first Canadian writer to challenge the elements of Holocaust Etiquette. While Cohen follows the Etiquette, his adherence to it provides, paradoxically, the basis from which stems his questioning of it. Cohen may be the first Canadian to attempt this, but his effort has been preceded by those outside of Canada. For example, the Austrian author Jakov Lind in his collection <u>Soul of Wood</u> strongly challenges the

conventions characterized by the Etiquette as he uses humor extensively and rearranges facts to make them accord to a story.[2]

In this thesis, then, I am interested in exploring the first two aspects of the Holocaust Etiquette in regards to Cohen's work. My first chapter is concerned with an analysis of the Etiquette in contemporary historiography. Given that a critical treatment of the complete historiography of the Sho'ah would be practically impossible, I only focus on works that highlight the formation and the challenging of the Etiquette as mirrored in Cohen's writing. In the second chapter, I examine how Cohen negotiates his adherence to and challenging of the Etiquette. Specifically, I focus on his self-image as a "comparative mythographer" and on his use of the dialogue form in Flowers for Hitler and Beautiful Losers to explore his ambivalent relationship to the Etiquette.

[2] In particular, the stories "Resurrection" and "Soul of Wood."

Chapter 1

Holocaust Historiography and the Etiquette

Holocaust Etiquette and the historiography of the Sho'ah maintain a complex interrelationship. The Etiquette not only informs Holocaust historiography, but is also produced by it. Indeed, their symbiotic nature creates difficulties in establishing how one informs or constructs the other. In a broader sense, one can see the Etiquette articulated in many different works, nonfiction and fiction alike. Film, poetry, history, and other discourses transmit elements of the Etiquette through the subjects they do (or do not) deal with and the manner in which they approach them. What is important to keep in mind, though, is that not *all* writers subscribe to the Etiquette; in fact, writing can be a powerful method of challenging it. The reasons for testing the Etiquette vary greatly. As I will demonstrate in the second chapter, Cohen's writing reveals the different motivations for his treatment of Holocaust Etiquette; these motivations are based upon historical events during the period of 1930-1950 (such as antisemitic acts of violence during the 1930s in Montreal and the Holocaust itself) and the effects of these events upon Cohen, as well as Cohen's position as a "comparative mythographer." The primary concern of the present chapter, however, is to discuss the process by which Holocaust Etiquette is constructed and challenged.

Many elements of the Etiquette inform the field of Holocaust studies. Life is Beautiful and Hitler's Willing Executioners are two examples I provided in the introduction to illustrate both the ways in which the Etiquette is inscribed in these

works and its impact upon their public reception. Here, however, I wish to frame my analysis within two aspects of the Etiquette as discussed by Terrance Des Pres and exhibited and challenged in Cohen's work. Specifically, I intend to analyze certain historical works that exemplify two tenets of the Etiquette, as well as exposing certain lines of thought that challenge them. The two aspects of the Etiquette that I am concerned with are the presentation of the Sho'ah as a unique event and the demand for accurate representation.

Des Pres' first notion of Holocaust Etiquette states that "The Holocaust shall be represented, in its totality, as a unique event, as a special case and kingdom of its own, above or below or apart from history" (217). Many writers reflect this aspect in their work. For example, Eli Wiesel writes that "Auschwitz cannot be explained" because "the Holocaust transcends history" (cited in Magurshak 88). If the Sho'ah is above history for Wiesel, this is so because the "Holocaust was so immense, so incredible that it is a unique event. There can be no other event like it" (88). Similarly, Raul Hilberg argues that "among man-made disasters . . . the Holocaust is a novel event and a unique marker in history"; echoing Wiesel he goes on to assert that "The Holocaust is unique in structure" (Writing and the Holocaust 17). What I find problematic in this approach to the Sho'ah is the very notion of uniqueness. If the Sho'ah is unique, what methodology is available that will allow us to understand the moral, historical, and philosophical implications of it? Does the placement of the Sho'ah as a unique event not confound all attempts at comprehension?

One debate worth mentioning here is the *Historikerstreit* (Historians' Debate) that occurred in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1987. Historians such as Ernst

Nolte and Jürgen Habermas debated the singularity of the Holocaust and the motivation for seeking comparisons to events such as Stalin's purges and Pol Pot's dictatorship in Cambodia. Questions raised on that occasion included the uniqueness of the Sho'ah, as well as the motivations of the writers who were German historians attempting to stabilize the future by altering the Nazi past. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, the issue raised by the debate concerned whether they attempted to sanitize the past by claiming that the Sho'ah was not unique.[3] The *Historikerstreit* problematizes history as a discipline because of the questions it raises concerning the ideology and methodology of historical writing.

Albert Cook writes that "History writing is a form of literature . . . it lays claim, both rhetorically and actually, to a validity of correspondence to the public processes of the real world" (1). The history writing that Cook refers to is a process of historicization, of making an event historical through writing. Often, historians believe that to historicize an event means to contextualize it within a linear pattern of events; understanding of the past is gained through the understanding of events before and after the time in question. While contextualization is useful, it is also a serious debilitation in historical studies. Contextualization leads away from self-critical thought about the writing process as it engages past events with other past events. The events and the texts written about them are separated "as if texts were purely manipulable fragments of the imagination and not themselves historical events intricately related to other events" (LaCapra 70). The very works historians produce are historical events themselves. The *Historikerstreit* is an example where historians

[3]For more information see: Forever in the Shadow of Hitler: Original Documents of the *Historikerstreit*. ed. and trans James Knowlton and Truett Canes (New Jersey: Humanities Press,

did become self-critical of the works they were producing. The large debate surrounding their work represents a shift in ideology and methodology from purely contextualized history towards history strongly based in self-critical reflection. This shift is necessary to realize the specific ideological, cultural, sociological, and political effects of the Holocaust Etiquette. If historians engage with their works from a critical stance, connecting the past to the present, the effects of the Etiquette (such as the positing of the Sho'ah as unique) will be apparent. In a different sense, however, debates such as the *Historikerstreit* are necessitated by the fact that many works in Holocaust historiography construct the Sho'ah as a unique event.

The argument that the Sho'ah is unique is based upon several assertions, ranging from the Jewish background of the majority of victims to the methodology of genocide (state sponsored industrialized murder), and, finally, the notion that the Sho'ah represents a different type of evil from events preceding it or coming after it. The notion of the Sho'ah being more (or less) evil than other events is a morally subjective argument that cannot be proven, for what constitutes 'evil' differs from person to person and is informed by a person's culture and experiences. It is not unreasonable to suggest that a survivor of the Rwandan genocide would likely describe their experience as more evil than the Sho'ah as she or he was a first-hand witness to the atrocities, unlike their second-hand experiences concerning the Sho'ah.

Despite the subjective nature of the argument, there are still continual attempts to classify the Sho'ah as an event that is more evil than others, and therefore unique. This complex argument begins by directly equating uniqueness with types or degrees of evil (Katz 33). The Sho'ah is often compared to other events, such as the massacre

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1993).

of Armenians and American slavery, in terms of ethics, size, and intent. The differences in the comparisons translate into notions of the Sho'ah being unique. For example, the Sho'ah differs from other events in that it is the sole example of state-sponsored industrialized murder; this difference renders the Sho'ah as more evil when compared to similar atrocities. The result of this logic is the diminishment and demeaning of the suffering of those involved in such events.[4] Just because the Armenians and American Slaves were murdered in other fashions does not qualify the events to be classified as less evil.

Stemming from the notion of the Sho'ah as more evil than other events is the tendency to bind the term genocide exclusively to the Holocaust. Not only is the Sho'ah unique in terms of how the genocide of Jewish people was carried out, but because of this difference, it is offered as the *only* example of genocide. Whereas war serves as a signifier that points to several historical events, genocide, in this instance, functions as a historical signifier that has only one signified, the Sho'ah. This view of history is self-enclosed, meaning that signified and signifier constantly refer to one another, with the definition of genocide beginning and ending with the Sho'ah. All other events are excluded from any claim to the term genocide as the Sho'ah is the only instance of it. To assign the term genocide solely to the Sho'ah diminishes, again, the suffering of others and obscures the very concept of genocide (Katz 33).

In 1944, when details of the atrocities in Europe became widely known, Winston Churchill stated that the world was being confronted with a crime that has no name. A Polish bureaucrat named Raphael Lemkin developed the term "genocide" in

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[4]For more information see: Steven Katz. The Holocaust in Historical Context. Vol. 1. The Holocaust and Mass Death before the Modern Age (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

1943 to describe the systematic destruction of the Jews (Leventhal Introduction to the Holocaust). While Lemkin devised the term in reference to the Sho'ah, it does not have a single referent. Though the Armenian Massacres and complete annihilation of the Newfoundland Beothuk Indians predate the term, they are certainly instances of genocide. Contemporary events referred to by genocide include the massacres in Bosnia and Rwanda. Language itself always contains the possibility of multiple referents, and thus an argument that binds the term genocide to the Sho'ah alone will always be flawed.[5]

Other works in Holocaust historiography, such as Christopher Browning's The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution and Saul Friedlander's Nazi Germany and the Jews, also seek to explain the Sho'ah as a unique event, though they do so from different perspectives. These authors preclude the idea of more or less evil in attempting to figure the Sho'ah as a unique event. Rather, they analyze the event in detail to find how the Sho'ah differs from other forms of genocide, and thus preserve its uniqueness and subsequently adhere to the Etiquette. To focus my analysis on the construction of the uniqueness of the Sho'ah, I will discuss two of its particular aspects: its origin(s) and its perpetrators. I caution that

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[5] The United Nations legal definition of genocide was adopted in 1948 as a result of the Sho'ah. It reads: "In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group." Interestingly, the definition is not bound strictly to the Sho'ah, but is rather the result of the event. While Lemkin created the term with specific reference to the Sho'ah, the UN definition mirrors the linguistic possibility for multiple referents and adopts a broader meaning that allows for the recognition that "at all periods of history, genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity." For the complete text of General Assembly Resolution 260A (III), see: <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/p_genoci.htm>.

not all historians ascribe to the Etiquette; indeed, there is a substantial body of work that can be considered a challenge to it. My interest in the so-called challenge works is to show how they depart from the Etiquette's tenets to test notions inherent in the works of historians such as Browning and Friedlander. Significantly, these works themselves deal with the Sho'ah's origins and perpetrators, but they do so in order to *disprove* its uniqueness.

The way I phrase origin(s) of the Sho'ah illustrates the ambiguous nature of the questions I am raising. Is there one event that marks the beginning of the Sho'ah, or are there several? Where in history does one locate the event(s) that caused the Sho'ah? Questions such as these reveal the first aspect of the Etiquette and its influence on the study of the Sho'ah's origin(s). The Etiquette's demand for the Sho'ah's uniqueness results in what I call historical truncation. Holocaust scholars often do not trace the far-reaching historical precursors that contributed to the Sho'ah; instead, they focus only on the period of Hitler's life and the time of National Socialist control. This lifts the Sho'ah from a broader, contextualized view of history thereby placing it "above, or below or apart" from history (Des Pres 217).

In order to understand its origins, we must contextualize the Sho'ah within a larger view of history while remaining alert to the possible dangers implicit in the process of contextualization. It is possible to argue that authors limit their studies to provide focus to their works, but the effect of focusing exclusively on Hitler and his period of control results in detaching the Sho'ah from a broader and discursive view of history. Examples of this detached sense of history are found in the works of Browning and Friedlander; on the other hand, historians such Ronnie Landau and

Stephen Katz belong to the category of challenge works in that they follow different approaches by locating the Sho'ah in the antisemitic tradition of the West.

Christopher Browning's book The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution provides a detailed account of the events that contributed to the Final Solution.[6] Despite the fact that the title refers to an account of the events leading to genocide, Browning analyzes only actions that took place in the Nazi period of 1933-1945. Specifically, he addresses the issues of resettlement, ghettoization and the results of the failed *Barbarossa* invasion. He also contemplates the role of the Nazi bureaucracy, German doctors, and perpetrators. Regardless of the numerous aspects of Browning's analysis, the work, as a whole, is framed within the period of Nazi control. Most importantly, he states that "The Final Solution emerged from a series of decisions between the spring and fall of 1941" (xi). While Browning is partly correct in his assertion, he ignores the context that allowed the prevailing antisemitic attitude of the time to exist. Antisemitism had to be well grounded in European society, for a pre-existing foundation of antisemitism was necessary to make persecution and genocide acceptable to the majority of people in the world.[7] Browning briefly acknowledges Arno Mayer's attempt to place the Sho'ah within a wider historical context as being "perfectly valid," yet he does not attempt to do so

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[6] Browning's other works provide detailed accounts on several aspects of the Sho'ah, yet adhere to the Etiquette as well. See his The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1978) and Ordinary Men: Reserve Battalion 101: The Final Solution in Poland (New York: Harper Collins, 1992). These works also truncate the historiography and assist the presentation of the Sho'ah as a unique event by focusing on events post 1933.

[7] I say 'world' rather than 'Germany' as I do not believe the Holocaust would have happened if the Jews were allowed to emigrate from Germany. The prevailing antisemitic attitude in many countries (including Canada) prevented Jewish emigration and these countries are, therefore, partly responsible.

himself (84). Indeed, events before 1933 receive little or no attention.[8] The truncated view of historical circumstances that Browning presents leads to his adherence to the Etiquette, namely, placing the Sho'ah "above, or below or apart" from a more comprehensive view of history.

Similarly, Friedlander's book Nazi Germany and the Jews also adheres to the Etiquette by stressing the uniqueness of the Sho'ah through historical truncation. Friedlander, however, extends his analysis to cover a period dating from the beginning of the twentieth century through 1939 (and later in subsequent volumes). He finds one precursor to the Sho'ah is the "ideological radicalization – with fervent nationalism and rabid anti-Marxism (later anti-Bolshevism) as its propelling drives – that surfaced during the last decades of the nineteenth century and reached its climax after World War I" (2). He also claims that "the growing technological and bureaucratic control exerted by modern societies" contributed to the escalation from persecution to execution (2). While this challenges the Etiquette in some respects by situating the Sho'ah within a broader historical context, Friedlander does not escape its effects fully. The Holocaust, for Friedlander, would not have been possible without Hitler. Friedlander emphasizes "Hitler's role and the function of his ideology in the genesis and implementation of the Nazi regime's anti-Jewish measures" (3). He further writes that "this synthesis of a murderous rage and an 'idealistic' goal . . . led to Hitler's ultimate decision to exterminate the Jews" (3). Despite Friedlander's enlarged historical context, his focus on Hitler's role still validates the Etiquette.

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[8] Such events include the antisemitism prevalent in the second century CE development of Christianity, Medieval persecution of the Jews, and Russian pogroms.

As is the case with Browning, Friedlander's insistence on the first premise of the Etiquette reflects his intention to limit historical causality to Nazi events, thereby presenting the Sho'ah as an event "above, or below or apart" from a larger contextualized view of history. Though Friedlander does enlarge the historical context in which he locates the origins of the Sho'ah, he does not extend his analysis to events before the twentieth century. He evokes a further notion of singularity via intentionality through his notion that, without Hitler, the Sho'ah would not have occurred.[9]

Browning and Friedlander not only insist on, and exemplify, the first premise of the Etiquette, but also reify it through their writing. The very process of writing within the demands of the Holocaust Etiquette further promotes the existence of it. For Browning and Friedlander, their adherence stems from the fact that, though they locate different origins of the Sho'ah, they do not contextualize it within a larger historical frame. I mentioned earlier that historians have to become more self–critical of the works they produce and view the production of them as historical events. Perhaps if Browning and Friedlander had moved beyond the limited analysis they presented and critically engaged with their works as historical events, they would have discovered the Etiquette's influence and its demand for historical truncation.

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[9]Between 1980-1995 (approximately) scholarship focused on the *Intentionalist* versus the *Functionalist* debate surrounding the origins of the Sho'ah. The Intentionalist school of thought held that Hitler was planning the murder of the Jews even before he rose to power (as seen in his book *Mein Kampf*), and then once in power followed through with his plan. Hitler's role in the decision process is central for the Intentionalists. Functionalists believe that Hitler followed "a twisted road to Auschwitz" and that he never had extermination as his plan from the outset. Rather, they believe that Hitler's ideas escalated from persecution, resettlement, segregation, random killing and finally death camps as each separate solution for the "Jewish Problem" failed. They also stress the competitive nature of Nazi bureaucracy in making decisions. What both these schools of thought do, however, is separate the Sho'ah from history by generally not focusing on the events before Hitler's rise to power. There are some works in both schools that do explore the events prior to Hitler's rise, but, for the majority, limited contextualization through a focus on Hitler's period is the standard methodology.

The result of their limited contextualization is the perpetuation of the Etiquette along many different lines of thought. The Etiquette resembles the mythological Hydra at this point. If a historian's thesis is out of date for reasons of research or theory, other historians or readers generally dismiss it. The Etiquette, however, continues to influence other historians' works in the field, even though they may analyze the subject from a different perspective.

Not all writers ascribe so readily to the Etiquette; two historians who resist the Etiquette and its limited contextualization are Ronnie Landau and Steven Katz. Landau's book The Nazi Holocaust situates the Sho'ah within a larger, far-reaching historical context of antisemitism. Landau begins by clarifying the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. He states:

> The Christian Church . . . retained an almost obsessive interest in humiliating and winning over (i.e. converting) adherents of its religious predecessor. As a powerful expression of this hostility, Jews would come to be identified in the medieval mind as the 'killers of Christ' and even as agents of the devil. The cumulative effects of so strong a negative stereotype would have implications, many centuries later, in Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda. (Nazi Holocaust 38)

He further elaborates upon other early antisemitic events such as the early pogroms and massacres of Jews and segregation of their communities by Christians.[10] Another area that Landau analyzes is the legacy of sixteenth-century Lutheranism. Landau concludes that Martin Luther went to "greater extremes than earlier Christian Thinkers" in promoting negative stereotypes about the Jews (46).[11] Landau traces these patterns of thought and social practices into German society in general and finally into Nazi propaganda, ideology, and actions.[12]

By contextualizing the Sho'ah within a long-standing tradition of Western antisemitism, Landau treats it not as a distinct historical event, but as the pinnacle of centuries of hatred and persecution. His approach makes a clear movement away from the truncated historical analysis of Browning and Friedlander into a more thoroughly contextualized presentation of the Sho'ah. Moreover, Landau's work represents a strong challenge to the Etiquette through his awareness of his writing as a historical event.

As Landau writes, "All too often, those who approach so highly a charged theme as the Holocaust have felt obliged to narrow their focus in order to satisfy the demands of their individual discipline or of the ideological world they inhabit" (xi).

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[10] For examples, see pages 43-45. Landau specifically refers to the *Chmelnicki* Massacres of 1648 in Poland and the ghettos of Western Europe.
[11] This is an arguable conclusion: John Chrysostom, a monk born in 347 A.D. , compared Jews to demons, and used other anti-Judaic terms of reference in his sermons. See: Rosemary Radford Ruether, Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism (New York: Seabury Press, 1996).
[12] For more information on the tradition of antisemitism see Geza Vermes, Jesus and the Jews (London: Collins, 1973) ; Martin Gilbert, Jewish History Atlas (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976) ; The Jew in the Gentile World. ed. Arnold Rogow (London: Macmillan, 1961) ; Jacob Katz, Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times (New York: Schocken Books, 1962) ; Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1973) ; William Nicholls, Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate (Northvale: Jason Aronson Publishers 1993) and Rosemary Radford Ruether, Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Antisemitism (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

It is clear that Landau recognizes the existence of the Etiquette and its resultant condensed, and thus distorted, view of the Sho'ah's history. Aware of his own history-making process, Landau writes his work as a synthesis of many approaches to the Sho'ah, including psychology, political science, and history. He states that "it is the making, not the breaking of connections that will enable moral and educational lessons [of the Sho'ah] to be communicated" (15). Constructed as it is, his work is one of the first studies to combine various approaches in an effort to resist the demands for an abbreviated historical approach to the Sho'ah.

This synthesis of different schools of thought and analysis is also found in Steven Katz's work. Katz's book The Holocaust in Historical Context provides another challenge to the first precept of the Etiquette. Interestingly, Katz disputes the idea of the Sho'ah as a distinct event "above, or below or apart" from history by stating that it *is* unique, though to be proven so it must remain within historical context. Indeed, Katz deconstructs the binary opposition between unique and comparable that writers such as Browning and Friedlander have perpetuated. For Katz, the Sho'ah's unique aspects only become apparent when compared to other events, such as the massacres of the Armenians by the Turks, the Kampuchea massacres by Pol Pot's regime, and the conquest of the New World that resulted in the genocide of the indigenous population. Through these comparisons, he finds that the Sho'ah is not unique in terms of number of people murdered, percentages of Jewish loss, and other comparative categories. [13] The Sho'ah's unique aspect is revealed through comparisons of the perpetrators' intent.

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[13]Other comparisons include religious oppression and Imperial conquest. For a complete list of comparisons argued by Katz, see page 580 of his text.

As Katz writes, "The Holocaust is phenomenologically unique by the fact that never before has a state set out, as a matter of intentional principle and actualized policy, to annihilate physically every man, woman, and child belonging to a specific people" (29). He focuses purely on the phenomenon, what is perceived, and thus what can be offered to the consciousness. By focusing on the phenomenological uniqueness of the event, Katz avoids the methodological and ideological flaws of the other arguments. Firstly, his view preserves the uniqueness of the event, but does so without employing the notion that the Sho'ah is more or less evil than other events. Katz focuses on the *events* that contributed to the "intentional principal and actualized policy" of annihilation, and not the subjective qualification of these events as more or less evil. Secondly, Katz deconstructs the opposition between unique and comparable and, by doing so, avoids the pitfalls of the abbreviated history offered by Browning and Friedlander.

Like Landau, Katz is well aware of his writing process as a historical event. He remarks that, "contrary to the expressed critical views of a number of distinguished modern historians, the issue of radical distinctiveness cannot be avoided without distorting the reality under examination" (2-3). Katz acknowledges a body of work that proposes the radical distinctiveness of the Sho'ah without regard for the ramifications of such a stance. The body of work to which he alludes is strongly influenced by the Etiquette. He is aware, then, that if his work successfully confronts the Etiquette and the consequent positioning of the Sho'ah as a unique event not dependant on historical contexualization, he could change the judgment of many other aspects of historical study (such as the meaning of the term genocide, and the

theological implications of the Sho'ah). Similar to Landau, Katz recognizes the effects of the Etiquette, but is unable to explicitly name it as a controlling force in the field of Holocaust studies.

The ambiguous nature of the Etiquette problematizes the study of it. Browning and Friedlander likely did not follow the Etiquette intentionally; indeed, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to argue that they were aware of the existence of such a concept. Landau and Katz, however, reflect upon the historicity of their writing process and become aware of certain regulations that govern their work. They do not call these influences the Etiquette, yet that is precisely the controlling forces implied. Interestingly, all four historians published their work during the period of 1992 to 1994. Des Pres coined the term Holocaust Etiquette in an article in 1988. Thus, Browning, Friedlander, Landau, and Katz could have been aware of the term, yet none of them alludes to it in their works. It seems that Landau and Katz, through their self-reflective writing process, move towards such an explicit naming of the Holocaust Etiquette. Consequently, the portrayal of the Sho'ah as a unique event by Browning and Friedlander is both a demand of and a response to the Etiquette. The demand/response relationship is also revealed through the examination of the second tenet of the Etiquette, namely, that ". . . representations of the Holocaust are to be accurate and faithful to the facts and conditions of it, without change or manipulation for any reason – artistic reasons included" (Des Pres 217).

Des Pres is aware of the dominant nature of the Etiquette and the subsequent debates that it produces. For Des Pres, the medium of expression of the Sho'ah does not matter; historical works, memoirs, or art (which in no way precludes the other two

forms of discourse) are all regulated by the Etiquette. Debates surrounding the artistic representation of the Sho'ah are largely based upon the issue of aesthetic pleasure derived from works of art and the appropriateness of the pleasure response in regards to the Holocaust.[14] Aesthetic pleasure is not derived solely from a personal experience with the work, such as the reading of a "good" poem, but also from the success of the work itself. Yet, such discussions largely miss the central reason for their existence; the Etiquette's demand for accurate representation questions the accuracy of all forms of representation, not just art. Thus, the issue is not whether pleasure is gained from a piece of art representing the Sho'ah, but whether this representation is "accurate and faithful to the facts and conditions of it, without change or manipulation for any reason" (Des Pres 217). The Etiquette's demand for accurate representation is particularly strong in the discipline of history. To explore the effects of the second tenet of the Etiquette, I will now turn to the very sources that are used, or ignored, by historians in their representation of the Sho'ah. These sources are documentary evidence and survivor memoirs.

The depiction of the perpetrators as ordinary people in documentary evidence is, I suggest, a demand of, and response to, the Etiquette. Contrasting this view, though, are survivor memoirs that strongly challenge the portrayal of the perpetrators as ordinary people. I believe that the opposition in historical works between documentary evidence and survivor memoirs is a perceived one that is used by certain historians to advance their arguments. Both discourses are documents that can

[14] Theodor Adorno's statement "No poetry after Auschwitz" relies upon the refutation of artistic representation because of the aesthetic pleasure derived from art. For other information regarding the artistic representation of the Sho'ah, see Robert Leventhal, "Literary Theory and Criticism."

explain the ordinary nature of the perpetrators and the extra-ordinary nature of their crimes. Yet, the opposition between documentary evidence and memoirs exists and is revealed through close analysis of the two forms of documents.

History, as a discipline, has traditionally favored what I call documentary evidence. For the purposes of my study, documentary evidence in regards to the Sho'ah consists of the official documents of the Nazis and their Allies regarding the persecution and extermination of the Jews and other groups (such as the Sinti and Roma, homosexuals, and Russian prisoners of war). These documents are comprised of items such as official orders, evaluations of personnel, and summaries of actions against the Jews and other groups. The official nature of the documents gives historians reason to trust them more than memoirs. Even so, behind the notion of official documents is really an issue of trust ascribed to those sources by historians, or more precisely, a lack of trust in survivor memoirs.

Trust in official documents often stems from their position as factual evidence (though this trust can be confounded by forgeries that appear 'official'). Facts are considered stable, truthful pieces of information. Their stability derives from their synchronic nature: they represent single moments in time, and are assumed not to change over time. Their truth arises from the notion that facts are information assumed to be true. Indeed, one only has to consult the dictionary to find the definition of a fact as a "piece or pieces of information presented as having objective reality" (Merriam Webster Dictionary). The idea of objective reality asserts that a fact has wide support from a culture in the belief that what the fact signifies is true.

Responses to the Holocaust: A Hypermedia Archive for the Humanities, ed. Robert Leventhal <http:www.bitlink.com/~rsl/responses/litcrittheo.html>.

Yet, meaning is never stable and, as such, truth is a fluid construct. As Geoffrey Hartman writes:

> The impossibility of making truth and text coincide is what threatens all writing as it strives to transmit definitively a 'body' of knowledge. We try to prevent that body from becoming a corpse, or losing its coherence and being, scattered, dismembered, disremembered. The study of meaning, therefore, is coextensive with studies of textual embodiment and verbal incorporation. (Minor Prophecies 151)

When historians turn to documentary evidence, they are privileging a certain way in which the source embodies and incorporates information and the way in which language figures in the embodiment and incorporation. Survivor memoirs, therefore, must embody the information in ways that invite many historians to find them suspect.

Language is obviously the basis for documentary evidence and survivor memoirs. Both kinds of documents rely on language, and more specifically writing, for their construction. Writing operates on the concept of absence in that both the writer and reader can be absent, but the writing still exists. This seemingly innocuous notion holds important implications for documentary evidence and survivor memoirs. Inherent in writing is both a spatial and temporal difference between what is written

and what is signified. Spatially, both documentary evidence and survivor memoirs represent their subject at a distance; neither form of document is bound physically to the location of events described within. The temporal distance between signifier and signified, however, differs greatly in the two kinds of documents and is the primary reason for some historians distrust of memoirs.

With documentary evidence the temporal difference between the document and its subject is very small; orders, personnel reviews, and summaries of Nazi actions refer to events that occurred quite near temporally to when they were written. Survivor memoirs, however, are diachronic; they represent singular moments in time as well, but the memories of these moments are altered across time. Annette Wieviorka writes that the "historian does not trust a memory in which the past has begun to blur and which has been enriched by numerous images since the survivor's return to freedom" (24). In a sense, the survivor memoir is contaminated by the survivor's exposure to supplementary sources of information. These sources include documentary evidence, other memoirs, web pages, television programs, and other survivors. The survivor's contact with other information, or active search for supplementary knowledge, causes, for historians, the corruption of the survivor's original account. For some historians, any intervention by a person contaminates the facts of the event. The creation of a memoir, or any text, however, involves a writer's invention and intervention.

As a genre, the memoir relies on what Stephen Scobie calls "the paradox of veracity," that being the "implicit claim to give us privileged access to the 'truth' [which] must always be realized by methods which are patently *not* 'true'"

(Montparnasse 49). A survivor of the Sho'ah relies on this paradox as well; the survivor is both witness of events and translator of those events for the reader.[15] In a subsequent section, I analyze Kalmen Wewryk's memoir to show how it, like all survivor memoirs, is a "performative *engagement* between consciousness and history, a struggling act of readjustment between the integrative scope of words and the un-integrated impact of events" (Felman 114). It is during the process of "engagement between consciousness and history" that the contamination of history occurs. Historians are concerned that, while translating the events into language and writing, the survivor will draw upon supplementary materials to provide meaning to the memoir. Supplementary information that contextualizes the narrative, or adds details not previously known to the survivor, can lend meaning to a memoir by placing it within a progression of precedents and antecedents. The average reader of the memoir would be more likely to understand the narrative with the addition of supplementary information.[16] There is, however, an underlying contradiction that many historians overlook. While some historians distrust memoirs because of the nature of their construction, they are willing to trust and cite other historians' works that contain similar subjective interventions. It is useful at this point to draw upon an example of what I call the methodology of distrust, namely the flawed logic used by some historians to discredit memoirs. Such an example comes from Dori Laub.

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[15] While I specifically deal with survivor memoirs, matters become much more complicated when analyzing documentary fiction. Authors reinforce their narratives with factual authority so as to deny attempts at deeming their work as pure fiction. For more reading on this subject, see James Young. Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), especially chapter three, "Holocaust Documentary Fiction: Novel as Eyewitness" (p. 51-63).

[16] For further reading on this subject, see Geoffrey Hartman, Minor Prophecies: The Literary Essay in the Culture Wars, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

Laub discusses a female survivor's testimony regarding the Auschwitz uprising. The testimony was videotaped for the Video Archives for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University. The video was subsequently shown at a historical conference where the methodology of distrust caused the survivor's memoir to be dismissed completely. The survivor said that "All of a sudden we saw four chimneys going up in flames, exploding" (Laub 59). Laub describes the debate this caused, for, in actuality, only one chimney was blown up, not four. She states that for many of the historians at the conference, "since the memory of the testifying woman turned out to be, in this way, fallible, one could not accept – nor give credence to – her whole account of the events" (59-60). The Etiquette's demand for accurate representation caused some historians to dismiss the survivor's entire account, as it was not factually correct. I find this remarkable as the dismissal is based on one factual error. The rest of the survivor's account is accurate and remains a valuable source of information.

The memory of the survivor may indeed be fallible in the sense that she might have confused the number of chimneys blown up, or was exposed to other sources of information that inaccurately described the number of chimneys that exploded. Yet, the importance of the memoir lies not in the number of chimneys blown up, but in the psychological importance of the event for the survivor. Using psychoanalysis, Laub ascribes the importance of the survivor's testimony to a reality of unimaginable occurrence; that one chimney blew up is just as incredible as if four had for the survivor (61). The memoir provides a subjective, psychological aspect to the history of the Auschwitz uprising that should not be so readily discounted by historians.

What is apparent is that documentary evidence and memoirs are really two types of complementary history that are often falsely separated by some historians. Both documentary evidence and survivor memoirs are part of the larger historical narrative of the Sho'ah. It is through the analysis of narrative and its relation to history that the collapse of the documentary evidence/survivor memoir dichotomy occurs.

Hegel writes that history (as a discipline) "unites the objective and the subjective side, and denotes . . . not less what *happened* than the *narration* of what happened" (Felman 93). As I mentioned previously, historians rely upon contextualization as a way to understand events. Events are chronologically ordered with meaning derived from their placement within a narrative of antecedents and consequences. The Derridian theory of the trace states that, "whether written or spoken, no element can function without relating to another element which itself is not simply present" (Collins 70). Historical events are similar in that they cannot exist in isolation from other events. Thus, "history is defined by a claim to explain events through their narrativization," while "narrative is defined by a claim to establish events through history" (Felman 94). Some historians, then, need to embrace both documentary evidence and survivor memoirs as contingent elements of the narrative of the Sho'ah. Both are narratives in their own right, each telling a story from different perspectives.

That these narratives are placed in opposition to each other proves the existence of the Holocaust Etiquette and its effects. The Etiquette's call for accurate representation creates, and encourages, the anxiety that some historians feel when dealing with survivor memoirs. The anxiety leads to the false opposition between

documentary evidence and survivor memoirs, with the historians favoring the former over the latter. The result of this is the continual portrayal of the Sho'ah's perpetrators as ordinary people. Memoirs, however, challenge the Etiquette's portrayal of the perpetrators as ordinary through accounts of the atrocities committed by the perpetrators. Most important, however, is that while the portrayal of the perpetrators seems very different in the two sources, these accounts are in no way exclusive of each other. Indeed, ordinary people can commit extraordinary crimes.

The very notion of ordinary is subjective and thus differs greatly from person to person. In regards to perpetrators, the concept of ordinary is even more difficult to understand, for how could ordinary people commit mass murder? Christopher Browning outlines many elements of the ordinary nature of the perpetrators in his work Ordinary Men: Reserve Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland. In his examination of the Police Battalion, he finds that the perpetrators held "typical working-class jobs: dock workers and truck drivers . . . construction workers, machine operators, seamen and waiters" (172). Furthermore, "35 percent were lower middle class, virtually all of whom were white-collar workers. Three quarters of them were in sales of some sort; the other one quarter performed various office jobs, both in government and private sectors" (173). Finally, all were men, with the average age of 33.5, who went through their formative period in the pre-Nazi era and hence did not receive Nazi policy indoctrination as youth (172). Browning concludes that they were "certainly not a group carefully selected for their ability as mass murderers, nor were they given special training and indoctrination for the task that awaited them" (173). It seems that the only common feature that makes these men

ordinary is that there are no extraordinary features among them. Browning is only one among many historians who portray the perpetrators as ordinary. As I will now show, other works, such as Documents on the Holocaust, are much more explicit in their adherence to the Etiquette through such a portrayal.

Documents on the Holocaust is composed of chronologically ordered documents outlining actions against the Jews conducted by the Nazis and their allies.[17] The intention of the book is to let the documents speak for themselves with minimal or no interpretation from the editors.[18] The editors, Yizhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman and Abraham Margaliot, also include photocopies of several original documents in order to assign further authority to their work. Many documents relate to the perpetrators, specifically to the *Einsatzgruppen* mobile killing units that operated in Eastern Europe and Russia. The documentary evidence that is included in Documents of the Holocaust portrays the murderers as ordinary; this portrayal expresses the normal historical tendency to favor documentary evidence and also validates the Etiquette and its demands for accurate representation. Furthermore, Documents on the Holocaust perpetuates the existence of the Etiquette as it serves as a source which other historians can base their works upon, thus causing them to adhere to the Etiquette as well.

One of the documents is a translation of a 1942 report by Major Roesler regarding massacres in the Ukraine, aptly titled "Report by Wehrmacht Officer on Massacres in Ukraine." Roesler states that "a sight was revealed to us on the other

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[17] For other works that rely heavily upon documentary evidence, see Christopher Browning, The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978) ; Eichmann Interrogated: Transcripts from the Archives of the Israeli Police, ed. by Jochen von Lang and Claus Sibyll, trans. Ralph Manheim, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983).

side [of the railroad] of a horrible cruelty that was bound to shake and disgust anyone who came face to face with it unprepared" (430-431). He also writes that "I felt it was not reconcilable with our concepts of custom and decency . . . that a mass slaughter . . . should be carried out quite publicly, as on an outdoor stage" (432).

This document reveals many insights about the portrayal of the perpetrators as ordinary. Firstly, Major Roesler is a Wehrmacht soldier, an officer with the regular forces of Nazi Germany. His response of disgust and affront of his decency implies that his reactions are similar to those of ordinary individuals. Indeed, he further distinguishes himself from the others that carry out the executions in that he describes them as a "Police Commando . . . lined up with a Police Officer in command" (431). The public spectacle of the executions is the source of the Major's disgust and not the executions themselves. The Jewish victims receive no attention and remain nameless, seen only as "human corpses." Added to this is the Major's curiosity at the sight of the murder; he writes, "I stepped right up to the pit to obtain a picture that I have not been able to forget until this day" (431). The Major is a perpetrator in the sense that he did not order the Police units to stop or express any sympathy for the victims. Yet, the document portrays him as an ordinary person, complete with feelings of disgust and outrage at the spectacle of the massacres. This document explains the effects that a Nazi action against the Jews had upon the men of a Wehrmacht unit. What is more disturbing than the portrayal of the Major and his men as ordinary is the horrible backdrop upon which the Major's ordinariness is based. The victims are not the primary concern of his report, nor are they the source of his disgust. The victims, if one is to believe the Major, are he and his men; they

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[18] See preface of the book, pp. 1-3.

felt discomfort at the sight and the Major lives with the nightmares of his actions. Clearly, through the Etiquette's demand for accurate representation (and its subsequent favoring of documentary evidence), the Major is portrayed as an ordinary person. I repeat my earlier assertion that ordinary people can commit extraordinary acts of violence and cruelty. While I find this document particularly moving, it is not the most powerful example of the Etiquette; for this, I turn to Adolph Eichmann, one of the key architects of the genocide of the Jews.

Eichmann's capture in 1960 by Israeli agents was a major media event around the world. His subsequent trial in 1961 and execution in 1962 received similar extensive media coverage. My interest lies in one of the first books written about Eichmann in 1960, by John Donovan, titled Eichmann: Man of Slaughter. At the front and back of the book are reproductions of a Gestapo character assessment of Eichmann. The document contains several categories of analysis, such as "General exterior impression," "Character trends" and "Weltanschauung." Each of these categories has specific characteristics used by Gestapo members to judge Eichmann. The document reads as follows:

1. Racial picture: Nordic-dinaric.
2. Attitude: self-confident.
3. Manners and behavior on the job and off: flawlessly correct.
4. Attitude towards life and personal judgment: healthy. (1)

It is clear that the Nazi officers evaluating Eichmann were impressed by his characteristics. Thus Eichmann emerges as a dedicated professional, an ordinary person.

More interesting, however, is that the book frames itself by this document, both physically and ideologically, for it uses the document as the primary source for its conclusions. The document is placed at the beginning and end of the book. The reader is immediately confronted with Eichmann's assessment that exemplifies him as an ordinary person, which in turn frames the reader's assumptions for the rest of the book. When finished with the book, the reader is again faced with the document, thereby reinforcing the assumptions found at the beginning of the work. One chapter titled "Eichmann, the Man" is especially relevant. The author writes that Eichmann "was a good husband . . . and a devoted father" (32), and that "He was sentimental about his friends and his family [and that] he was overworked primarily because he drove himself too hard" (31). There is no mention of any extraordinary features, such as cruelty towards others, racism, or antisemitism, that provide reasons for the atrocities he committed. The very lack of any extraordinary features supports the notion that ordinary people can commit cruel acts. The lack of extraordinary qualities can be attributed to who did the initial assessment; from the point of view of the Gestapo, Eichmann would have been exemplary, yet outwardly, he appears "ordinary.". Yet, what I am concerned about is the re-casting of this perception in Donovan's text. By re-portraying Eichmann as ordinary, Donovan's use of documentary evidence is only providing a partial narrative of the Sho'ah and therefore causes the bewilderment felt when analyzing the perpetrators.

Donovan seems to want to stress this feeling of incomprehension. We expect superhuman giants or extraordinary humans that exhibit clear tendencies towards cruelty and violence. This would separate us from the crimes of the Nazis and their

allies while simultaneously providing comfort, as they would be capable of committing atrocities while we could not. We are, therefore, confused and anxious when confronted with the depiction of the perpetrators as ordinary people. If the Nazis and their allies are ordinary people who could commit such despicable acts, so could we. This is the Etiquette at work once again. Documentary evidence is the response and demand of the Etiquette's call for accurate representation. The feelings of anxiety lead back to the Etiquette's first tenet, namely the preservation of the Sho'ah as a unique event. These feelings are attributed to our complete incomprehension when trying to understand the motivations of the perpetrators. The Sho'ah must be unique if its perpetrators cause us such feelings of anxiety. While anxiety can stem from other events, the profound sense that we all have within us the potential to commit such horrendous acts that we are familiar with through film and pictures is of particular significance, and can mark the Sho'ah as a unique event. However, works such as Documents on the Holocaust and Eichmann: Man of Slaughter only provide part of the Sho'ah's narrative. Hegel calls for a unity of the objective and the subjective sides of a narrative for a complete history. A challenge to the Etiquette's demand for accurate representation (and its reliance on documentary evidence) exists in survivor memoirs. Hegel's unification of the two sides of a narrative can only be complete if survivor memoirs are valued as useful historical documents. Kalmen Wewryk's memoir "To Sobibor and Back: An Eyewitness Account" is one example of a challenge to the Etiquette.

Wewryk's memoir is particularly interesting as it reveals conditions in a death camp we know little about. Wewryk is one of only 50 people to survive the Sobibor

Death Camp located in Eastern Poland. His deportation to Sobibor took place in 1942, after living under extreme conditions in Chelm, Poland, since the beginning of the war. His family was killed immediately upon their arrival at Sobibor, but his own life was spared as the Nazis deemed him valuable for his carpentry skills. He was involved in an uprising on October 14, 1943, and subsequently escaped. Beyond the rarity of Wewryk surviving Sobibor, the revolt, together with the months of hidden existence in the wilderness, is a common story told in many survivor memoirs regarding the perpetrators.

Wewryk's memoir seemingly contradicts the second aspect of the Etiquette by portraying the perpetrators as anything but ordinary people. He writes that "The SS were shrieking like wild animals all the way from Chelm to Chrubyeshov, a distance of 15-20 kilometers," and that "There was one notoriously famous SS man . . . a creature with blond hair and a bristling red face. He was a real murderer - a wild beast" (5). Further passages continue the comparison of the perpetrators to beasts and inhuman creatures: "The SS came with dogs to 'inspect' our restricted area. They looked 12 feet high in their polished leather boots. Many Jews fainted from just looking at what seemed to be superhuman giants" (7). Interestingly, for Wewryk and the other Jews at Sobibor, there is no difference between the images they project upon the Nazis and what the Nazis actually looked liked; the Nazis were not superhuman giants in reality, but for the Jews they were threats.

Wewryk's continual labeling of the perpetrators as wild animals and superhuman giants challenges the Etiquette's demand for accurate representation. The memoir contributes to "the undoing of an illusory historical perception or

understanding" (Felman, "After the Apocalypse" 160). The perpetrators are clearly not the well-mannered individuals as portrayed in the documentary evidence that I have examined. Wewryk's memoir also gives the reader access to the psychological responses of both perpetrator and victim. The perpetrators act like the beasts they are, while the fear of the victims causes the displacement of the very idea of humanity and confers upon the perpetrators the categories of beast and giants. What is interesting, though, is that the perpetrators may still be ordinary people. Wewryk's memoir is valuable in that it provides the psychological impact of the perpetrators upon the victims while simultaneously showing the reversion of ordinary people into inhuman monsters. Thus, the Etiquette's demand for accurate representation forces the construction of the false dichotomy between documentary evidence and survivor memoirs. Neither source contradicts the other; rather, they both provide necessary parts of a more complete narrative of the Sho'ah.

The Etiquette is an ever-present force in the study of the Sho'ah. As I have shown, it subtly manipulates the position of the Sho'ah within the historical context by raising it above or separating it from the historical context. This is reinforced by the Etiquette's demand for accurate representation in the form of documentary evidence. Through this demand, the perpetrators of the Sho'ah are portrayed as ordinary people, thus reinforcing the notion of uniqueness. There are challenges to the Etiquette situated within a historical methodology and ideology. Landau and Katz's works were examples I provided to show how the Etiquette is dealt with. As I have already suggested, my own interest lies in other sources that are usually ignored by historians: writing that constructs its own powerful methods of challenging the

Etiquette. My analysis of survivor memoirs is one example of this. The Etiquette, however, does not simply limit itself to historical texts, and therefore my examination of the methods that challenge it cannot be limited strictly to historical works. In the introduction, I showed how the film Life is Beautiful both follows and defies the Etiquette. I believe that other discourses, such as poetry, offer similar alternatives to challenging the Etiquette. Leonard Cohen's work is of particular interest not only because it reflects the perspective of a Canadian writer, but also because of the dialogue form used by Cohen while testing his adherence and challenge to the Etiquette.

Chapter 2

Ambivalence Explained: Cohen's Relationship to the Holocaust Etiquette

In Various Positions, a biography of Leonard Cohen, Ira Nadel discusses the paradoxes inherent in Cohen's personality, writing, and music. Nadel writes: "The enigma of Leonard Cohen: a well-tailored bohemian, an infamous lover who lives alone, a singer whose voice resides in the basement of song, a Jew who practices Zen" (1). Cohen's ambivalent qualities extend into his relationship with the Holocaust Etiquette, as is obvious in much of his writing. A poem such as "All There Is To Know About Adolph Eichmann" both adheres to and challenges the Etiquette. My intention in this chapter is to explore Cohen's paradoxical stance towards the Etiquette by analyzing selected poems from the collection Flowers for Hitler as well as the novel Beautiful Losers. I believe that Cohen's seemingly contradictory stance towards the Etiquette, as we see it in the form and imagery of his writing, reflects the ways in which the Sho'ah is figured by Cohen as a symptom of culture.

I noted in the introduction how Garber defines a symptom as "a kind of code, a way in which a body – or a culture – signals something that lies beneath or within" (3). She also notes that the symptom is a "return of the repressed, - a way of 'saying' what the patient cannot or does not consciously wish to say" (5). The coded message or repressed sentiments cause such feelings as apprehension, sadness, and anger that are then expressed through physical action or bodily symptoms. A symptom of culture, then, exhibits tendencies similar to those of the bodily symptoms of a repression.

Garber provides a way of reading a text that does not bind it specifically to the author's psychology; she reads culture "as if it were structured like a dream, a network of representations that encodes wishes and fears, projections and identifications" (9). The notion of a "coded or ciphered message" is a useful way for discussing elements of a text that are equivalent to the return of the repressed. A symptom of culture is the cultural equivalent of a bodily symptom; the "coded messages" that contain the culture's "wishes and fears, projection and identifications" cause a culture to act out in physical action, such as riots, legislative means, or other ways. An example of a symptom of culture is found in the past debate over the wearing of turbans by Sikh members of the RCMP.

In 1994, RCMP veterans John Grant, Kenneth Riley, and Howard Davis formed the "Lethbridge R.C.M.P. Veterans' Court Challenge Committee" in opposition to the wearing of religious symbols as part of the RCMP uniform ("Grant V. Canada"). The debate centered on whether Khalsa Sikh turbans would convey an inappropriate affiliation or bias to a group of individuals and a religion. The judge eventually expressed the opinion that the "turban would operate as a demonstration and an acceptance of the present day multicultural nature of Canada" (Grant v. Canada). Yet, this incident can be viewed as being symptomatic of the racism and other cultural fears characteristic of Canadian culture; the acting out of the fear of multiculturalism took place in the courtroom rather than as a physical action. But if a physical or cultural body can act out emotions encoded in actions (such as proposed legislation or regulation as was the case with the Sikh RCMP members), can these actions be transposed upon a *textual* body? How would a text negotiate the presence

of the encoded messages that Garber discusses? How would bodily or cultural anxieties be written?

I believe that texts can represent encoded or suppressed feelings, but to determine how they do this requires a reconceptualization of the notion of representation itself. Rather than assume that the term representation means the re-presenting or mimicking of emotions, objects or ideas, I propose that it be defined for my purposes here, as the productive *making of meaning* where representation becomes an action; considered this way, representation defines a dialogue or construction of meaning rather than the standard notion of re-presenting other objects or ideas. The notion of dialogue is important in regards to Cohen's writing. For Cohen, a collection such as Flowers for Hitler expresses its encoded sentiments in a dialogue between the two different attitudes towards the Sho'ah; a narrative opposes the current adherence to the Etiquette and causes a duality or ambivalence within the text. While Cohen's texts are my primary concern, I believe that part of their duality stems from certain historical events in Cohen's past.

It is interesting to note that Montreal has produced several remarkable Jewish writers; A.M Klein, Mordecai Richler, Irving Layton, and Cohen all lived and grew up in Montreal. All responded in different ways to the Holocaust; Klein's The Second Scroll, Richler's St. Urbain's Horseman, Layton's collection Fortunate Exiles, and Cohen's Flowers for Hitler treat the Sho'ah in different thematic and formal ways. Yet, as Rachel Brenner notes, "by virtue of Canada's geographic location, they were saved from the Holocaust in Europe" (65). The antisemitic nature of Montreal, coupled with these authors' indirect involvement with the Sho'ah,

"signals that their response to Jewish plight originated in their own life story" (65) rather than in the events of the Sho'ah itself. It is obvious that the Sho'ah is an obsessive image in Cohen's work; when asked by Eli Mandel why the concentration camps figure so prominently in his writing, Cohen replied, "Well, cos [sic] I wish they'd let me out" (Ondaatje 35). This is perhaps Cohen's only confirmation of a link between his life and his work in regards to the Sho'ah; as I explain in a subsequent section of this chapter, Cohen's role as a second-hand witness to the atrocities and testimonies of survivors provides the basis for the concentration camp imagery in his work.

Born on September 21, 1934, and raised in Montreal, Cohen must have been influenced by two sets of historical events concerning the Sho'ah. The first concerns the growing strength of a fascist and antisemitic movement in Canada, while the second involves Cohen's maturation during the Second World War and learning of the atrocities in Germany from within the safety of Canada. At the time of Cohen's birth, Canada was largely antisemitic. In Quebec, writers such as Adrien Arcand were publishing antisemitic newspapers, such as *Le Patriote* (Betcherman 38-39). In September of 1933, Anatole Vanier, one of the writers for another press that represented various conservative viewpoints, *L'Action Nationale*, wrote on the benefits of depriving Jews of citizenship and political and civil rights, while also denying them immigration at a time when many Jews were trying to escape Germany (39). Members of Parliament from Quebec, specifically Wilfrid LaCroix, C.H. Leclerc and H.E. Brunelle, spoke out against Jewish immigration as well; Brunelle commented in the House of Commons that "Jews have caused great difficulties

wherever they have lived" (None is too Many Internet Document). Echoing Arcand (and the general sentiment in Canada) was Charles Blair, who wrote:

> I suggested recently to three Jewish gentlemen with whom I am well acquainted, that it might be a very good thing if they would call a conference and have a day of humiliation and prayer, which might profitably be extended for a week or more, where they would honestly try to answer the question of why they are so unpopular almost everywhere . . . I often think that instead of persecution it would be far better if we more often told them frankly why many of them are unpopular. If they would divest themselves of certain of their habits I am sure they could be just as popular in Canada as our Scandinavian friends are. (None is Too Many Internet Document)

Cohen's negotiation of his Jewish background and the antisemitic ideology prevalent in Canada at the time are played out in his early poetry and reflect his relationship to the Sho'ah.

In Cohen's first published collection, Let Us Compare Mythologies, the dialogue between his Judaism and the antisemitic sentiment prevalent in Canada appears in several poems, most notably "For Wilf and His House" (14). In the first stanza, Cohen struggles with the guilt thrust upon Jews by Christians: "When young the Christians told me / how we pinned Jesus / like a lovely butterfly against the wood" (14). Cohen's response to this incident continues through the remaining

stanzas. As Stephen Scobie writes, "In the first stanza, Cohen accepts the Jewish communal 'guilt'" (Leonard Cohen 22). In the second stanza, however, Cohen rejects the guilt thrust upon the Jews and adopts an anti-Christian and anti-antisemitic stance: "I kissed away my gentle teachers / warned my younger brothers" (Let Us Compare Mythologies 14). The obvious wordplay upon "gentle teachers" (implying gentile teachers) illustrates his rejection of Christian teachings and myths (namely, that Jews killed Christ).

Rather than adopt either of the previous positions, however, Cohen seeks a third option in the final stanza: "Raging and weeping are left on the early road" (Let Us Compare Mythologies 14). Scobie notes that the "raging" is equivalent to the second anti-Christian/ anti-antisemitic stanza while "weeping" points to the first stanza and to the inherited collective guilt of the Jews (Leonard Cohen 23). With both of these options discarded, a third appears. As Scobie writes, "There remains the neutral stance of the comparative mythographer, who can see the story of the crucifixion as an 'elaborate lie' . . . The conclusion proclaims a break away from any single or narrow religious view; Cohen believes in mythologies, but not in any one system…" (23). For the purposes of my thesis, I am interested in how Cohen's stance as a "comparative mythographer" relates to his writing concerning the Sho'ah. As I will show in a subsequent section of this chapter, the "neutral stance" that Scobie discusses appears in Cohen's ambivalent relationship to the Etiquette.

The second set of historical circumstances that I am interested in concerns how Cohen was witness to the Sho'ah. Growing up at the time he did, he was exposed to the knowledge of the atrocities in Europe. As the historian Nancy Learner

writes, "Knowledge of the Holocaust was well disseminated throughout many Jewish communities in North America soon after the failed Barbarossa invasion; in fact, knowledge of the horrors was likely well known [to the communities] before the invasion and was not public knowledge"(45).[19] After the war "many media agencies, such as newspapers and radio, were involved in the transmission of information regarding the evidence of atrocities encountered by the liberating soldiers" (88). Cohen likely learned of the details of the Sho'ah from such media sources, thus taking on the role of a witness.

As the psychoanalyst Dori Laub notes, there are three distinct levels of witnessing in regards to the Sho'ah; being witness to oneself within the experience (such as a survivor writing an autobiography); being witness to the testimonies and dialogue of others; and, finally, being witness to the process of witnessing itself (Laub 75). I believe that Cohen participated in the second form of bearing witness during the Second World War and after. As I noted, information concerning the atrocities in Europe spread throughout many North American Jewish communities while, after the war, Cohen would have encountered the stories of survivors through texts, radio, newsreels and other forms. Laub notes that "the listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience the trauma himself" (57).

I am not suggesting that Cohen adopts the role of a Survivor; rather, as Laub notes, "While overlapping, to a degree, with the experience of the victim, he [the

[19] The failure of the Barbarossa invasion into Russia marks a turning point in Nazi strategy regarding the Jews. A shift towards a systematic, industrialized program of murder, and the rapid expansion of Death Camps occurs after the invasion due to the larger population of Jews in Eastern Europe. Prior to the invasion, the process of elimination was more haphazard and involved Einsatzgruppen units,

witness] nonetheless does not become the victim – he preserves his own separate place, position and perspective; a battleground for forces raging in himself . . ." (58). Laub's statement about the preservation of a "battleground" for opposing forces is useful in regards to Cohen's writing. I suggest that these "battlegrounds" are Cohen's texts. As I will show later, much of Cohen's work regarding the Sho'ah happens in dialogue form within the text. Each side of the dialogue represents either his adherence to or challenge of the Etiquette. Cohen's "raging forces" are not limited to the pain of survivors, but extend to other topics concerning the Sho'ah. For Cohen, the text is his "own separate place," or the kind of "battleground" Laub discusses. Laub also notes that the individual preserves a unique "position and perspective." I believe that, for Cohen, this is the role of the "comparative mythographer." While previous historical circumstances can not be held completely responsible for the way Cohen writes about the Sho'ah, it is clear that they had some effect upon him. In Flowers for Hitler and the novel Beautiful Losers, Cohen adopts the stance of the "comparative mythographer" and negotiates the adherence and challenge of the Etiquette.

Cohen acknowledges a conflict in his poetic style on the back cover of the 1964 edition of Flowers for Hitler: "This book moves me from the world of the golden-boy poet into the dung pile of the front line writer. I didn't plan it this way. I loved the tender little notices Spice-Box got but they embarrassed me a little. HITLER won't get the same hospitality from the papers." As Scobie notes in his review of Spice Box of Earth, the book "contains some of his most gorgeous and

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regular army forces involved in shooting squads and gas vans among other methods. These methods, however, changed in accordance to the larger numbers of Jews.

richly romantic lyrics" (Internet Review). Yet, even in this work there appears to be the beginning of a dialogue between the encoded, Etiquette-abiding messages inherent in the Sho'ah's construction as a symptom of culture and Cohen's existing beliefs that challenge the Etiquette. As Scobie further notes, "there is also a dark underside to many of the poems, and images of death and violence form a steady counterpoint to the sensuousness of the love poetry" (Internet Review). The most evident contrast, however, exists between the two collections.

Spice Box of Earth illustrates the most accepted (and least controversial) work of Cohen; part of this collection's success may lie in the lack of references to the Sho'ah. Indeed, while poems like "Isaiah" and "Song for Abraham" show Cohen to be concerned with being Jewish, there is no poetry that addresses the Sho'ah in any way similar to poems in Flowers for Hitler (such as "All There is to Know About Adolph Eichmann"). This is an example of Cohen adhering to the first tenet of the etiquette and is reminiscent of Adorno. From Adorno's viewpoint, it is the Sho'ah's uniqueness that makes it barbaric to write poetry after the Holocaust. Yet, in Flowers for Hitler Cohen moves from his adherence to the first tenet of the Etiquette to a dialogue between the Etiquette and "encoded messages." I am interested in how the Sho'ah figures as a symptom and how the dialogue between Cohen's existing set of beliefs and the "ciphered messages" contributes to his ambivalent treatment of the Etiquette. The poems "A Migrating Dialogue" and "All There is to Know About Adolph Eichmann" provide interesting examples of these processes. Before discussing these poems, however, it is important to note the collection's brief prologue that challenges the uniqueness of the Sho'ah as well.

Cohen's prologue reads "A / while ago / this book would / have been called / SUNSHINE FOR NAPOLEON, / and earlier still it / would have been / called / WALLS FOR GHENGIS KHAN" (Flowers for Hitler 3). Napoleon and Ghengis Khan call attention to other violent events in the past. This suggests that the Sho'ah is one violent event in history that is marked by violence. Figures such as Napoleon, Ghengis Khan, and Hitler are deemed to be comparable and thus the events that they perpetrated are as well. This is an obvious challenge to the Etiquette's demand for the uniqueness of the Sho'ah. The challenge to the Etiquette continues in the poems.

Cohen's writing about the Sho'ah is affected by the Sho'ah's construction as a symptom of culture. As a symptom, the Sho'ah develops "a network of representations that encodes wishes and fears, projections and identifications" (Garber 9). For Cohen, these encoded "wishes and fears" concern the way that the Sho'ah is written about in regards to the Etiquette. In "A Migrating Dialogue," Cohen's ambivalent stance towards the Etiquette is most evident in regards to the notion that the Sho'ah is a unique event. As the title of the poem suggests, a dialogue exists between Cohen's intention to portray the Sho'ah as a unique event and his wish to explore the ramifications of defining the Sho'ah as one of many holocausts. This contradictory discourse is negotiated by Cohen's use of allusion, parody, and references to contemporary Western culture.

In her article "The Representation of the Holocaust in Leonard Cohen's Flowers for Hitler," Sandra Wynands writes that "A tight network of allusions is established [in "A Migrating Dialogue"] which makes its point far more forcefully than a graphic description of atrocities could, as more freedom is left to the reader's

imagination and a more sweeping treatment of the entire phenomenon is possible" (Intricate Preparations 206). Wynands is correct to note that allusions provide Cohen with a powerful method of approaching the Sho'ah. Allusions call upon a reader's knowledge, or supposed knowledge, of a subject or object and the cultural connotations that accompany it. For example, Cohen's line "He was wearing a black moustache and leather hair" alludes to Hitler's most well known feature and summons all the implications of his figure (such as the Sho'ah, World War II, suicide, etc). Interestingly, the allusion also touches upon another of Cohen's themes in Flowers for Hitler and the novel Beautiful Losers, namely sadomasochism, sex and fetishism. Allusions such as these can be powerful, especially in regards to the Sho'ah, as the connotations that accompany them are usually well known. Cohen's choice of literary technique is also the first sign of the dialogue between the Etiquette and the repressed in his work.

An allusion depends on an indirect reference to an unnamed subject. Cohen's oblique references to the Sho'ah imply his adherence to the first tenet of the Etiquette. Yehuda Bauer notes that the enormity and complexity of the Sho'ah is unlike any event and precludes comprehension so there is "a natural tendency to run away from it, deny it, and, mainly, try to reduce it to shapes and sizes that we can cope with" (30). Cohen's reduction comes in the form of allusion; he cannot represent the Sho'ah directly and thus uses a circuitous approach to do so. By not explicitly naming the Sho'ah, Cohen acknowledges its uniqueness. It is not only Cohen's use of allusion that marks his adherence to the Etiquette, but also his choice of what those allusions are.

Cohen often uses images that are related specifically to the period surrounding the Sho'ah. In the first chapter I noted how Browning and Friedlander locate the precursors of the Sho'ah in a narrow historical context; Browning focuses specifically upon events after 1933 while Friedlander is concerned with actions after 1900. Both historians, then, truncate their historical studies and set the Sho'ah apart from a larger historical context. This truncation implies that the Sho'ah is a unique event that floats free from the context of other historical occurrences. Several of Cohen's allusions also portray a form of adherence to the Etiquette similar to that of Browning and Friedlander.

Cohen writes:

> Captain Marvel signed the whip contract.
>
> Joe Palooka manufactured whips
>
> L'il Abner packed the whips in cases.
>
> The Katzenjammer Kids thought up experiments.
>
> ("A Migrating Dialogue" 72)

The figures that he refers to were all popular comic book characters in North America. The combination of the seriousness of the Sho'ah with the pop culture references of comic book characters implies a direct challenge to Adorno's notion that it is impossible to write poetry after Auschwitz; not only can you write poetry, but you can also write comics. Cohen is obviously questioning Adorno's assumption that the Sho'ah is unique.

More importantly, however, is that these characters, as the products of Western

pop culture, participate in the production and use of violent instruments; this implicates Western culture in the perpetration of the Sho'ah. In his book Modernity and the Holocaust, Zygmunt Bauman notes that the Sho'ah was a product of Western culture:

> The truth is that every 'ingredient' of the Holocaust - all those things that rendered it possible - was normal. . . . in the sense of being fully in keeping with everything we know about our civilization, its guiding spirit, its priorities, its immanent vision of the world. (8)

Thus the Sho'ah was not "a relapse into barbarism" (Intricate Preparations 203); rather, it was, as Bauman notes, a "legitimate resident in the house of modernity" (Modernity and the Holocaust 17). But how does the implication of Western culture in the perpetration of the Sho'ah relate to Cohen's adherence to the Etiquette?

Upon examination of the initial publishing dates of the comic books, it becomes apparent that Cohen focuses upon a narrow historical context in which he locates the precursors of the Sho'ah. Captain Marvel first appeared in 1943, Joe Palooka in 1942, L'il Abner in 1934, and the Katzenjammer Kids in 1897. As the characters appear in Cohen's poem, the historical context expands, but the origins of the Sho'ah are still located in a period post 1897. The products of Western culture (as symbolized by these comic book figures) are implicated in the perpetration of the Sho'ah; yet, the historical context in which he locates the origins (implied by the publishing dates) is still narrow. Cohen truncates his location of the Sho'ah's origins in the same fashion that Browning and Friedlander limit their historical studies. By

separating the Sho'ah from a contextualized history of its origins (and ignoring such factors as pre-CE and medieval Christian antisemitism), Cohen places it apart from other events and makes it a unique occurrence. What I find more interesting, however, is Cohen's deliberate choice of comic characters to illustrate his adherence to the Etiquette. The characters seem to narrow the historical context *too* obviously. They are easily identifiable, while Cohen's implication of Western culture in the perpetration of the Sho'ah through these characters is similarly overt. This leads me to believe that it is not his true intention to portray the Sho'ah as a unique event. Careful reading of the rest of the poem reveals a gradual emergence of Cohen's desire to challenge the uniqueness of the Sho'ah.

In the first stanza of the poem, Cohen casts doubt upon the claim of the Sho'ah's uniqueness. This doubt comes as a simple statement: "We talked about the gypsies." The gypsies, along with homosexuals, Russian prisoners, Christians, and outspoken opponents of the Nazis were also murdered in the Sho'ah. The Gypsies, or more appropriately the Sinti and Roma, are largely forgotten victims of the Sho'ah. Historians have only recently begun studying their persecution, while it was as recently as 1995 that the first German memorial dedicated to the Sinti and Roma was raised in Buchenwald (Nizkor Document). But how does Cohen's statement challenge the uniqueness of the Sho'ah?

Cohen is questioning the premise that the Sho'ah is unique in regards to it being strictly a Jewish catastrophe. The implications of Cohen's seemingly innocent allusion to the Sinti and Roma are large. As Jews were the overwhelming majority of victims, victim groups such as the Sinti and Roma are rarely the focus of historical

texts. I believe that the focus upon the Jews is necessary as they were the main targets of the Nazi extermination policies. Other groups were persecuted as well, though not to the degree that the Jews were. But is it valid to define the Sho'ah as a Jewish tragedy because of the sheer number of victims? Moreover, is it legitimate to say that the Jews suffered more than the Sinti and Roma as more of them were murdered? These questions are beyond the scope of my examination, though the impact of Cohen's statement is clear; he challenges the uniqueness of the Sho'ah by undermining the premise that it is exclusively a Jewish catastrophe.

From a broader perspective, however, Cohen is questioning the very discipline of history that has forgotten the Sinti and Roma and other victims. By questioning history, Cohen can then question those within the discipline that suggest the Sho'ah is a uniquely Jewish catastrophe. Other poems in Flowers for Hitler contribute to the ways in which "A Migrating Dialogue" critiques history. Similarly, themes developed in other poems are also used in "A Migrating Dialogue" as well. In "On Hearing a Name Long Unspoken," Cohen writes:

> History is a needle
> for putting men asleep
> anointed with the poison
> of all they want to keep (25)

"the poison / of all they want to keep" suggests that history is manipulated at will by those who write it; history operates upon the paradox of veracity, claiming to offer the truth, but doing so by methods that confound objectivity. Yet, history is also a poison in that it can also be used to question those who manipulate it. Cohen expands

upon this idea with the lines "Now a name that saved you / has a foreign taste" ("On Hearing a Name Long Unspoken" 25). I believe that "Now a name that saved you" refers to history; this form of history would have a familiar "taste" for those who manipulate it: they would feel comfortable in doing so. Yet, this familiar history is contrasted by history that has a "foreign taste." Cohen carefully chooses the word "foreign" as it alludes to notions of unfamiliarity, confusion and misunderstanding. The "foreign" taste points to the kind of history that can not only be manipulated, but also used against those who do the manipulation.

The metaphor of history as drug continues in the poem "Opium and Hitler." Here Cohen expands upon the notion of history as an easily manipulated discipline. He writes:

> The world was wax,
>
> His to mould.
>
> No! He fumbled
>
> for his history dose
>
> ("Opium and Hitler" 79)

The lines illustrate the ways in which history can be used to rationalize past actions. The persona, likely Hitler, was able to mould the world into what he wanted. Moulding implies the use of hands in a conscious activity; interestingly, the writing of history is a form of moulding as well. A person consciously forms the historical narrative and their hands write or type it. For Hitler, however, the process of manipulating history goes wrong: "One law was broken - nothing held" and "The sun came loose" (79). It seems that the "poison needle" discussed in "Upon Hearing a

Name Long Unspoken" has come back to attack Hitler. As a remedy for the return of history that has a "foreign taste," Hitler reaches for "his history dose." This dose has the effects of opium, allowing the persona to forget the conflicting "foreign" history. Once again, Cohen shows how easily history can be controlled. The paradox of veracity then renders all claims, including that of the Sho'ah's uniqueness, suspect. But Cohen does not stop his attack on the discipline of history. The drug/history metaphor as discussed in the previous two poems is expanded upon in "A Migrating Dialogue," a poem that offers Cohen's most concerted attack against history and the Holocaust Etiquette.

The fallibility of history becomes more apparent as "A Migrating Dialogue" progresses. Cohen's position as a "comparative mythographer" is most obvious in this poem. He writes both sides of his dialogue from a third-person perspective. Several lines illustrate Cohen's inner dialogue between his explicit and repressed sentiments. He still trusts history's ability to offer objective truth: "I believe with a perfect faith in the Second World War. / I am convinced that it happened" ("A Migrating Dialogue" 73). At this point of the inner dialogue, a defense of history is evident. This part of Cohen's persona is "convinced" that the Second World War occurred.

However, there is an ironic tone to the statement "I am convinced that it happened." The irony appears as a counterpoint to the attack on history. This irony can be attributed to the process of being "convinced"; it suggests that, at one point in the past, the persona did not believe in what he became convinced about; being convinced signals an action or a shift in opinion. The irony in the statement, then,

illustrates another aspect of the persona, that is, one not convinced in the veracity of history at all; this illustrates the conflict between Cohen's existing beliefs (of being perfectly convinced that World War II occurred) and his "encoded" belief in the fallibility of history. In this context, Cohen's opposition to the kind of history that adheres to the Etiquette is not so easily dismissed; it re-emerges and conflicts with his earlier belief in history.

The other aspect of Cohen's dialogue displays less certainty over history's ability to portray truth: "I am not so sure about the First World War. / The Spanish Civil war – maybe" (73). These lines show the opium-like effect of history; it confounds Cohen's memory of events and illustrates the "encoded messages" that question history's claim to offer truth. The drug-induced state surfaces in other sections of the poem as well. The line "Don't tell me we dropped fire into cribs" suggests that the Dresden Fire Bombings did not occur, while the line "Don't believe everything you see in museums" dismisses the assumptions that Western culture depends upon for preserving history (73).

Cohen's doubting of history and of its ability to offer objective truth reaches its pinnacle in a controversial statement. In the line "Peekaboo Miss Human Soap," Cohen refers to the allegation that the Nazis made soap from Jewish victims. This allusion leaves no doubt for the reader that the Sho'ah is the topic of discussion in this part of the poem. Immediately preceding this line, however, we find what I believe to be the most important, and daring, attack against history in Cohen's work. "It never happened," Cohen writes. While it is possible that Cohen is referring to the Dresden fire bombings mentioned earlier, I also believe that he is concerned with other events

of the Second World War, including the Sho'ah. The point here is not that Cohen questions whether the Sho'ah really happened, but that he uses the overstated expression "It never happened" to force the reader to critically judge the discipline of history.

A reader would likely wonder about a possible connection between Cohen's statement and deniers of the Holocaust. People such as Fred Leuchter, Ernst Zundel, and David Irving and Doug Christie (among many others) use the right of Free Speech in an attempt to refute the Sho'ah; they also believe that they engage in historical revisionism, when in actuality all they do is fabricate evidence, cite other fictitious reports in an effort to seem scholarly, and outright lie.[20] Cohen's refutation of the Sho'ah seems to link him to far-right extremists. Adding to the incredulity of the claim is, of course, the fact that Cohen is Jewish. Here, provocation is Cohen's intention. He wants to shock readers and urge them to rethink their relationship to history; more specifically, he wants them to consider how they construct their knowledge of the Sho'ah and can be certain that it took place. If history is questionable, then how can its claims, including the Sho'ah's uniqueness, be true? The dialogue between Cohen's adherence to the Etiquette (including its belief in history's ability to provide truth) and his challenge of it (casting uncertainty upon any claims offered by history) reaches its highpoint in the middle of the poem.

Cohen asks two questions that summarize his conflict between adhering to and challenging the Etiquette: "How come the buses still run? / How come they're

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[20] For more information about the individuals mentioned, or the methodology used by them, see The Nizkor Project, <http://www1.us.nizkor.org> and The Simon Wiesenthal Center, <http://www.wiesenthal.com>. See also: Deborah Lipstadt Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory, (New York: Free Press, 1993).

still making movies?" (Flowers for Hitler 73). Interestingly, these lines do not favor adherence to the Etiquette any more than they challenge it; indeed, they create a circular argument that illustrates Cohen's inner discourse and the impossibility of a resolution for him.

One way of reading the lines illustrates Cohen's belief in the uniqueness of the Sho'ah. Wynands states that "Cohen . . . expresses his incomprehension of the world's 'quick' return to business as usual; the world must somehow function differently after it allowed the Holocaust to happen" (Intricate Preparations 206). Cohen seems disgusted that the buses still run and that movies are still being made. This dislike for "business as usual" is also expressed in the line "I don't like the way you go to work every morning" (Flowers for Hitler 73), suggesting that the sheer horror of the Sho'ah makes reconciliation with contemporary society impossible.

There is a second reading of the lines, however, that portrays Cohen's challenge to the Etiquette. That the buses still run, people still make movies and go to work strongly questions the uniqueness of the Sho'ah. If the Sho'ah is unique, why are everyday events continuing? Cohen does not provide the answer for this question; perhaps if the Sho'ah were unique then the world would function in a different way and be more sensitive to notions of persecution and religious intolerance. For this reading, however, Cohen does not believe that the Sho'ah is unique; this raises implications similar to those I discussed earlier regarding the way the Sho'ah is constructed as a unique event. Specifically, undermining its uniqueness calls into question the notion that it is solely a Jewish catastrophe and seems to diminish the suffering of its victims. Again, the ramifications of Cohen's sentiments

/ Hair: .... Medium" (66), while the document reads "Racial Picture: Nordic-dinaric" and "Attitude: self-confident" (Donovan 1). Even the font of the two documents is comparable; more important, however, is the contrast between the fonts used in the initial section of the poem and the second part. In the first section, the categories of assessment are in capitals. In the rest of the poem, regular typing is present. A general rule of English orthography is that proper nouns are capitalized while informal or generic titles are not. Thus, Cohen's use of capitalized text asserts the official nature of this section of the poem. Indeed, it appears that he wants to make this part look like a document. What is more interesting, however, is what this official document concludes about Eichmann. The form and content of the poem support the notion that documentary evidence portrays the perpetrators as ordinary people.

The poem assesses Eichmann's physical and intellectual qualities. Eyes, hair, weight, distinguishing features, number of fingers and toes, and intelligence are all categorized as medium, or normal; according to the assessment, there is nothing extraordinary about him. Coupled with the form of the poem, the documentary evidence portrays the perpetrators as ordinary. It is clear, then, that Cohen's belief in the Etiquette dominates the first section of the poem. Upon closer reading, however, we notice here a subtle shift that signals Cohen's challenge of the Etiquette and its notion that the perpetrators were ordinary.

The first sign of Cohen's challenge is that the categorization of Eichmann's qualities is overtly stated as "medium." Eyes and hair are usually categorized by color, not as "medium." Furthermore, the repetition of the word "medium" stresses

the point that Eichmann was an average individual; by the second line, the reader can anticipate the nature of the assessed qualities.

The repetitive portrayal of Eichmann as a "medium" man resembles John Dryden's definition of a farce: "Farce is that in poetry which 'grotesque' is in a picture: the persons and action of a farce are all unnatural, and the manners false" (Definition of 'Farce'). Cohen's portrayal of Eichmann is "unnatural" by virtue of Eichmann's unremarkable features; his features can not be reconciled with his actions. Yet, this reading is dependent upon the desire of readers to distance themselves from Eichmann. I believe that most readers would search for some difference between themselves and Eichmann to make him unlike them; they would do this as they could not reconcile the notion that they may be able to commit such atrocities with Eichmann's "ordinariness." Other differences between the first and second sections of the poem reveal additional aspects of Cohen's challenge to the Etiquette.

The most notable differences between the two sections concern the form and presence of a narrator; the differences in form and perspective attribute memoir-like qualities to the last half of the poem. In the first section, words capitalized in their entirety are used to create the appearance of an official document. This technique is dropped in the latter half of the poem resulting in a less documentary appearance. While the first part conveys a sense of documentary authority, the second does not.

These formal differences are enhanced by the appearance of a persona in the second stanza. In the first section, there is no discernable persona. If we read the first section as a document, then the author of that document does not overtly interject

himself into its contents; in fact, the language used is so simple that the author seems omniscient and not given to emotion at all. In contrast, the second section of the poem contains a persona that asks five questions. This persona definitely expresses emotions, such as humor, as illustrated by the word play on "Oversize incisors" (66). More importantly, the introduction of the persona invites the reader to question the claims offered by that persona. As I mentioned in the first chapter, some historians are suspicious of the veracity of memoirs because of the obvious intervention of the person writing them. Whereas the first section of the poem has no obvious persona, the second stanza does; therefore the information offered in it is more likely to be questioned. The cumulative effect of the change in form and introduction of the persona is that the second section takes on the qualities of the memoir in regards to the use of descriptive language; this part of Cohen's dialogue then uses this memoir-like form to challenge the portrayal of Eichmann in the first section.

At this point, Cohen's dialogue seeks a description of Eichmann that can reconcile Eichmann's horrible actions with his ordinary appearance. Cohen asks, "What did you expect?" and then provides a list of Eichmann's possible traits such as talons, incisors, saliva or madness. This portrait is similar to descriptions offered in Wewryk's memoir. Wewryk spoke of "inhuman creatures" and "wild beasts," while Cohen's description speaks of creatures with claws or green saliva. Whereas the first section of the poem did not use adjectives, the second does. The use of descriptive language is another sign of a departure from the form of an official document. Indeed, the language in the poem and the presence of a persona imply a mimicking of the memoir form.

Eichmann's exaggerated qualities suggest that the binary structure of Cohen's poem is intended to stress the tension between Eichmann's appearance and his actions. The first three traits (talons, incisors, and green saliva) are physical. These traits represent what I call the process of difference. It is as if the traits are a checklist that Cohen's dialogue processes; as each question is asked, the answer no is rhetorically given and Cohen moves on to the next trait. Cohen's differentiation process attempts to resolve the disparity between Eichmann's image and actions, but it is unsuccessful. It is not until the final line that reconciliation between Eichmann's ordinary image and horrible actions is made.

It is not coincidental that the last line reads "Madness?" Unlike the other questions asked during this process of difference, this quality does not have a physical attribute associated to it. Thus, Eichmann's ordinary appearance is reconciled with his actions; madness is a mental quality that does not have physical attributes. The memoir form of the second section allows a persona to work through the process of difference, seeking the attribute of Eichmann that separates him from ordinary people. The result is the conclusion that Eichman is insane. Of course, this also provides comfort for the readers who can rest assured that they are not like Eichmann.

In both "A Migrating Dialogue" and "All There is to Know about Adolph Eichmann" a dialogue occurs between Cohen's set of beliefs that adhere to the Etiquette and his attitudes that challenge it. He projects upon the Sho'ah his "wishes and fears" and uses the texts as his "battleground" for presenting the dialogue between his desires and apprehensions in regards to the Sho'ah. As a "comparative mythographer," however, Cohen makes no definitive judgments about his

relationship to the Etiquette. Readers are left with a feeling of ambivalence and uncertainty toward his association with the Etiquette. Does he wish to challenge the Etiquette or is he fearful of the response he may garner if he does so? This ambivalence is not restricted to Cohen's poetry. In the novel Beautiful Losers, Cohen again presents the dialogue between his adherence and challenge to the Etiquette. Interestingly, though, this dialogue is not a sustained theme within the book. Rather, it makes a sudden appearance in one scene.

Published in 1966, two years after Flowers for Hitler, Beautiful Losers contains some of Cohen's most intensive dialogue between his adherence and challenge to the Etiquette. Interestingly, the dialogue form present in his poetry is here altered considerably; instead of the two distinct patterns of thought representing the adherence/challenge paradox, Beautiful Losers offers only one voice. The novel offers several ways to read different scenes, but lacks the clear division between Cohen's two lines of thought. Cohen provides a useful way to read his novel; he suggests in the preface of the newly released Chinese edition of Beautiful Losers that readers "Dip into it here and there. Perhaps there will be a passage, or even a page, that resonates with your curiosity" (Preface to Chinese Edition). In keeping with Cohen's suggested way of reading, I will "dip into" the book and focus on one section: the orgy scene.

In the orgy scene, the historical precursors to the Sho'ah are limited in a similar fashion to the comic book characters in "A Migrating Dialogue." The scene begins with F. and Edith in a hotel in Argentina. Cohen introduces a character to the scene who, by extensive use of allusion, is presumably Hitler: "He was wearing the

old raincoat and mustache" in reference to Hitler's well-known physical attribute (Beautiful Losers 194). As Cohen writes, "He [Hitler] washed us from head to foot, proclaiming all the while the special qualities of the soap, which as you must now understand, was derived from melted flesh" (194), thus alluding to the allegation that Nazis made soap from Jews. The scene progresses as Hitler makes F. and Edith engage in different sexual acts. A parallel can be drawn between Hitler's actions in the orgy scene and those of the real Hitler in the Sho'ah. As I will show, this parallel signals Cohen's adherence to the Etiquette for he limits the historical context of the Sho'ah's precursors.

I am not suggesting that the orgy scene as a whole should be read as an allusion to the Sho'ah. Rather, I am concerned solely with the figure of Hitler and the notion that he commands the scene. Hitler is responsible for giving the orders to F. and Edith; he makes them kiss the whip, bathe in a tub with human soap, and perform what F. calls "sordid exciting commands" (194). Hitler also provides the bar of human soap for them to use. Hitler, then, serves as the impetus for what happens in this scene; the historical circumstance that allows the scene to progress is Hitler's presence.

Some historians have argued that the Sho'ah occurred because of the presence of Hitler. As I mentioned in the first chapter, a school of historiography, called the Intentionalists, argues that Hitler was responsible for the Sho'ah: he made the decision to murder the Jews and had this idea (as noted in *Mein Kampf*) before he took control of Germany. If one follows this school of thought, the Sho'ah would not have been possible without Hitler. The historical context in which the precursors of

the Sho'ah are located is limited if Hitler is deemed to be essential to the occurrence of the Sho'ah. The historians ignore the presence of a long-standing tradition of antisemitism, the gradual radicalization of Nazi policy towards the Jews, and numerous other factors that diminish or refute the role of Hitler. In the orgy scene, Hitler occupies the same position as the impetus behind all actions. Thus in both the orgy scene and the Sho'ah itself, we see a tendency to limit the precursors to Hitler alone. This serves to remove both the orgy scene and the Sho'ah from a broader context; as I noted in the first chapter, de-contextualizing the Sho'ah is a form of Etiquette adherence in that it becomes a unique event. A different reading of the orgy scene, however, illustrates Cohen's strongest challenge to the notion of uniqueness.

Norman Ravvin offers a compelling new reading of the novel where the Sho'ah becomes "a handy metaphor that stands in for numerous other kinds of extremity and human suffering" ("Writing Around the Holocaust: Internet Version"). Cohen uses this strategy for challenging the Etiquette's truncation of the historical context. As I explained earlier, Cohen uses the idea of a "free associative chain of historical reference" in the prologue to Flowers for Hitler where Ghengis Khan and Napoleon are comparable to Hitler ("Writing Around the Holocaust: Internet Version"). In Beautiful Losers, some of the atrocities of the Sho'ah become comparable to other events, specifically the atrocities in the conflict between the Iroquois and Jesuits.

F. reminisces about the actions Hitler had him and Edith perform: "What followed was old hat. I have no intention of adding to any pain which might be remaindered to you, by a minute description of the excesses we performed"

(Beautiful Losers 194). As Ravvin writes, these lines are comparable "to an earlier scene in which F. tries to cure Edith's bodily trouble through a description of the extravagantly brutal methods used by the Iroquois to torture their Jesuit captives" ("Writing Around the Holocaust: Internet Version"). Thus the atrocities in the Sho'ah are compared to those that the Iroquois inflicted upon the Jesuits.

A stronger parallel is drawn between Edith and Catherine's actions. After F., Edith, and Hitler bathe in the tub, Hitler says, "There is more, there is the history of Catherine Tekakwitha – you shall have all of it" (194). This line serves as a connection between "freely associative" historical scenes in the novel. Specifically, in the orgy scene, Edith offers herself to Hitler as he leaves the hotel room: "Edith threw her arms about his neck, and pulled him to the dry bed, and cradled his famous head against her breasts" (195). This scene is connected to an earlier one in which Catherine wishes to give herself to the Robes-Noires: she "longed for a spring to guarantee the gift she had made of her body, she longed to kneel wet before the black robes" (85). Though not as sordid as the orgy scene, Catherine still performs the same actions of self-sacrifice and submission as Edith does. What I find interesting here is how these events challenge the Etiquette.

Both the orgy scene and Catherine's actions seem to be interchangeable events amidst the novel's "freely associative" account of history. Edith's actions can be substituted with Catherine's and vice versa. This "freely associative" type of history challenges the Etiquette's notion that the Sho'ah is unique. If one type of action can stand in for another, then perhaps one type of suffering is equivalent to

another. Moreover, perhaps one massacre of millions of people is equivalent to another.

As Ravvin notes, Cohen takes the chance that "such figurative use of the Holocaust tells us nothing about the particular event but, instead, obscures and diminishes the character of the victimization visited on the Jews of Europe by the Nazis" ("Writing Around the Holocaust: Internet Version"). As I noted in my analysis of "A Migrating Dialogue," Cohen takes similar chances with his treatment of the Etiquette when he states "It never happened" (Flowers for Hitler 73). But these risks are part of Cohen's provocative style that is meant to startle the reader and force contemplation of his statements. Yet, Ravvin also notes that Beautiful Losers is not solely "an equation of victimhood at the hands of the Nazis with victimhood before Jesuit-led colonization." The most challenging, and perhaps most insulting, statements become apparent through a different reading of the orgy scene.

According to Ravvin, F. and Edith's response to their meeting with Hitler "examines contemporary political complicity, implying that there is a tendency among even the most sensitive, socially aware people to capitulate to, or even participate in the worst extremes of political violence." Ravvin suggests that neither F. nor Edith tries to resist Hitler; rather, they seem to actively and willingly participate in the encounter. Evidence is offered in the orgy to support this assertion as F. says "Lest you should worry for us, let me say that we had, indeed, been well prepared and we hardly cared to resist his sordid exciting commands, even when he made us kiss the whip" (194).

If, as I suggested earlier, the figure in the "old raincoat and mustache" (194) represents Hitler in the orgy scene, then F. and Edith represent the perpetrators of the Sho'ah. Instead of being covered with the blood of their victims, they are covered with the soap made from the Jews. They do not resist Hitler; rather, they partake in the activities and follow his commands. Thus, the "sensitive, socially aware people" that Ravvin refers to are the ordinary perpetrators as portrayed by the documentary evidence that I examined.

A different reading of this scene relies on the dialogue between F. and Edith after Hitler leaves the room. This reading is illustrative of Cohen's challenge to the Etiquette's notion that the perpetrators were ordinary people. F. says to Edith "It doesn't matter what I've done to you, the tits, the cunt, the hydraulic buttocks failures, all my Pygmalion tampering, it means nothing, I know now. Acne and all, you were out of my reach, you were beyond my gadgetry. Who are you?" (195). These lines are interesting because of what psychologists call the "Pygmalion Effect": "the idea that one's expectations about a person can eventually lead that person to behave and achieve in ways that confirm those expectations" (Brehm 38).[21]

In the case of F. and Edith, though F. denounces the effectiveness of his "tampering," it is clear that he has succeeded in creating what Stan Dragland calls in the Afterword of the 1991 edition "superbeings with perfect bodies and open minds" (266). Edith is described as having a perfect body, comparable to Pygmalion's statue in Ovid's tale: "The room was a mess, the floor spotted with pools of fluid and suds,

[21] The name of the psychological process can be traced back to the Greek myth concerned with the King of Cyprus and his love for a statue of Aphrodite. The Roman poet Ovid rewrote this tale in his work Metamorphoses. In Ovid's text, a sculptor named Pygmalion, who despises all women, creates a statue of great beauty in an effort to keep women away; he believes that women will feel inferior to the

but she rose from it all like a lovely statue with epaulets and nipple tips of moonlight" (195). Edith's "open mind" (in regards to her willingness to do disturbing things) is obvious as she recently bathed in human soap with Hitler.

Cohen's challenge to the Etiquette becomes clearer if I apply the notion of the Pygmalion Effect to the perpetrators of the Sho'ah. If F. and Edith represent the perpetrators of the Sho'ah, then the same psychological effect in the orgy scene would have to be applicable to the actual perpetrators of the Sho'ah. I believe that the Pygmalion Effect is useful idea for understanding the actions of some of the perpetrators. Hitler, Eichmann, and other leaders of the Nazi extermination policies expected their subordinates to follow orders, and to despise and kill the Jews. These expectations eventually led to the perpetrators behaving in ways that achieved these goals. There are notable exceptions such as soldiers finding ways to not murder Jews and civilians hiding them, but the Pygmalion Effect provides an explanation for the actions of many perpetrators.

I believe that if perpetrators become monsters, as discussed in Wewryk's memoir in chapter one, they cease to be ordinary people in the sense that their responses to the Jews are conditioned by Hitler's (and other's) expectations. Interestingly, the Pygmalion Effect can also be used to explain the portrayal of the Nazis by the Survivors. The belief of Western culture, and of other Survivors, is that the Nazis were monsters; Survivors are expected to hate these monsters. The resulting depiction of the perpetrators then occurs in vitriolic, grotesque terms.

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beauty of his statue and stay away. Pygmalion, however, falls in love with his creation as he realizes it represents his ideal notion of beauty.

In Beautiful Losers, then, we see further evidence of Cohen negotiating his adherence and challenge to the Etiquette. From a broader perspective, this chapter analyzed Cohen's relationship to the Etiquette in regards to the Sho'ah's position as a symptom of culture. Cohen's role as a comparative mythographer allows him to negotiate his conflicting adherence to and challenge of the Etiquette. In "A Migrating Dialogue" and "All There is to Know about Adolph Eichmann" I showed how the conflicting beliefs form a dialogue. The result is an ambivalence in the poems that is difficult for the reader to negotiate; the reader is left unsure of Cohen's stance in regards to the Etiquette. In Beautiful Losers, the dialogue form disappears; it is replaced with scenes that lend to different readings. It is clear that the one consistent element in Cohen's work is ambivalence; this is, for some readers, the most challenging and rewarding aspect of Cohen's work. For me, Cohen's ambivalence is illustrative of the process of rethinking the historical and literary methodology concerning the way we study and write about the Sho'ah. Cohen's work is admirable as it represents the first tenuous steps taken by a Canadian writer in confronting the Etiquette and experimenting with new forms of representing the Sho'ah.

Conclusion

Stephen Scobie writes in the introduction to Intricate Preparations that "Leonard Cohen is a singer who hasn't issued a new album for seven years, a poet who hasn't published a new collection for sixteen years, and a novelist who hasn't written a new novel for thirty-four years. Yet he remains a vital presence not only in Canadian Literature, but also on the international stage…" (3). Judging by the meager amount of critical thought dedicated to Cohen, one would not think he is the "vital presence" that Scobie alludes to; indeed, Scobie himself notes the "scandalous lack of serious attention" paid to Cohen ("Counterfeiter Begs Forgiveness"). The last chapter, however, showed how Cohen's work could be read in new ways that further demonstrate his importance to Canadian literature.

My reading of Cohen's work was framed by Terrance Des Pres' notion of the Holocaust Etiquette. The Etiquette is a collection of ideas that frames our perception and analysis of the Sho'ah; it offers ways of understanding and articulating the Sho'ah within historical and literary methodology that eliminate or diminish our apprehension. Yet, my analysis raised far more questions regarding the Etiquette and Cohen's writing than it answered.

One of the questions my argument has raised concerns whether the Etiquette is a worldwide phenomenon, or if it is limited to Western historical and literary methodologies. A larger issue stemming from this question concerns how other non-Western writers approach the Sho'ah. Further, I have tried to address the development of the Etiquette: where it started, at what time, and in response to what

events. While these issues revolve around the historiography of the Sho'ah, my study has also attempted to raise questions about Canadian literature in general, and Cohen in particular.

As I noted in the second chapter, there is a well-established body of Jewish Canadian writers (most from Montreal) whose work may exemplify adherence or challenge to the Etiquette. It would be valuable to study the prevalence of Etiquette adherence in Canadian writing and contrast it with an analysis of challenge to the Etiquette. Did Cohen's work encourage other artists to approach the Sho'ah in new ways and, if so, what forms of representation did they use? Moreover, does Cohen's music adopt similar strategies for testing the Etiquette, or does it not approach the topic of the Sho'ah at all?

Cohen's ambivalent and paradoxical approaches to different subjects should be viewed as tentative steps to new forms of analysis of the Sho'ah. In true Cohen form, I end my thesis with ambivalence. Cohen's work can serve as an inspiration for those who wish to examine the Sho'ah in new ways: the realization that the Etiquette exists is the first step in the elimination of it. Yet, is the elimination of the Holocaust Etiquette necessarily beneficial to the study and representation of the Sho'ah?

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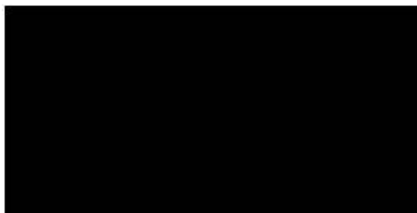
Explaining the Ambivalence: Leonard Cohen's Negotiation of the Holocaust Etiquette in Flowers for Hitler and Beautiful Losers.

Author 

Joe Hooper
January 9, 2001