

THESIS

RHETORICS OF SILENCE/LISTENING AND TEACHING TRAUMA: HOLOCAUST
TESTIMONY IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

Submitted by

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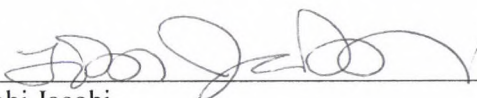
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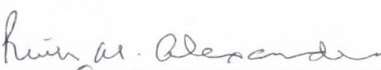
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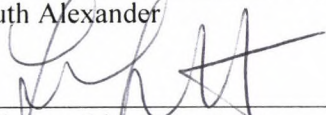
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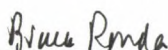
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

RHETORICS OF SILENCE/LISTENING AND TEACHING TRAUMA: HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

Many scholars and educators who have taught Holocaust testimony and literature in their classes have offered numerous pedagogical methods to outline best practices, ethical concerns, and student engagement. While some of these methodologies are particularly instructive for the first year college composition course, most do not address the gaps or *silences* found in Holocaust testimony. Other pedagogical methods tend to lack the affective component that is an unavoidable part of teaching trauma texts. In this thesis, I offer a heuristic that can be used in the composition classroom to engage with Holocaust testimony. I argue that there is a need for this heuristic because it not only attends to the affective economies that are vital and inseparable from reading and writing about Holocaust testimony, but also because it re-privileges *silence* as a powerful rhetorical act made by both survivors and secondary witnesses. It also works to destabilize and disrupt “sentimental” student responses that tend to thwart invested critical analysis and which often lead to dehumanizing depictions of victim as well as potential misappropriations of a victim’s or survivor’s words.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The transmission of a witness's story is. . . doubly complicated, first by the witness's own degree of temporal, spatial, and emotional distance from what is being documented, and second, by the listener's reactions.

Inevitably, the nature of testimonial dynamics varies as it engages with the emotional logic of different historical situations, even while displaying many of the characteristics of those delineated by [Dori] Laub: the fraught interaction of witness and listener; the quest for words commensurate with experience; the creation of metaphors to compensate for the failure of language faced with the exorbitance of the literal; the exposure of private suffering to establish modes of negotiation between the intimate and public; all of which—ideally—result in the formation of ‘an affective community’ (Hartman, Interview 220) that can encompass both witnesses and listeners. (11-12)

—Nancy K Miller and Jason Tougaw

Miller and Tougaw, in their introduction to *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community*, offer an illuminating description of the difficulties and complexities Holocaust testimonies share. The difficulties they outline include several layers of transmission between survivor and witness, the limits of language to describe specific atrocities that are outside of normal human experience, and the negotiations between the personal and public that survivors must make as they struggle to determine when to speak and when to remain silent. Such difficulties explain why so many testimonies are inherently incomplete, and why gaps, or caesura, in both the historical record and in the memory of survivors, are so prevalent. But they also explain why such testimonies create “an affective community” as witnesses to a traumatic event often empathize not only with the traumatic experience the victim had, but also with the victim's effort at putting into

words, into language, that which is ultimately unknowable for the witness. Such affective communities are important for they emphasize the co-responsibility the witness to the testimony bears. This co-responsibility brings the following questions to the fore: What are the consequences of reading survivor testimony that necessarily possesses gaps, or moments of *intentional silence*? How can the reader recognize and grapple with these gaps or silences, while maintaining an adequate deference and respect for the texts? Additionally, can one recognize these moments of silence, and perhaps find a way to interpret them, without sentimentalizing or falling into the trap of looking for an all-encompassing Truth or, as Daphne Dessler states, a “will to closure?”

These, among other, questions are vital when considering the creation of pedagogical approaches to teaching Holocaust testimonies. They indicate the ethical *precariousness* of teaching such a “limit event” that follows the more common assertion of the ethical *imperative* to teach Holocaust texts. Indeed, Holocaust testimonies offer a record of a paradigmatic event in our history that stretches our understanding of humanity and language and that challenges our narrative of progress, that insidious myth that each generation progresses towards an ideal state of humanity and technological superiority. Students who become adept at reading and writing about the gaps and silences in Holocaust testimonies are well equipped to not just read autobiography as a genre, but to critically engage with sites and sources of trauma, to work towards more complex understandings of humanity, of language, and of the rhetorical power silence can have in writing. The dangers involved in teaching Holocaust testimony, though, are many, and the potential pedagogical strategies to alleviate such dangers have been taken up by literary theorists, psychoanalytic critics, trauma theorists, and historians alike. The depth

and breadth of such literature indicates the persistent need to identify productive and useful frameworks for critiquing and analyzing Holocaust testimony.

Trauma Theory

Some of the most prominent frameworks have come from trauma theorists seeking to understand both the weightiness of Holocaust testimony and the psychoanalytic implications for Holocaust survivors. Cathy Caruth, in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, describes the struggle faced by many survivors to find meaning or logic to the incomprehensibility of life, or, as she calls it, “the enigma of trauma as both destruction *and* survival” (72). Here, Caruth represents trauma as being more than the event itself; trauma evokes the continual struggle that a survivor endures repeatedly and long after the event. Caruth describes trauma as “an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (11). The focus here on the *latency* of trauma addresses a major concern of many historians and trauma theorists alike: the gaps or ruptures that are inevitably invoked by most survivor testimonies. These gaps in the historical record, or in the memory of survivors, are often presented as a barrier to understanding, as the breaking point between survivor and re-presentation of event and between re-presentation and reader/witness.

Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer address this breaking point in their introduction to *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the Holocaust*, by posing the following question: If trauma, history, and witness come before language, while testimony and pedagogy come after, how then does a survivor of trauma use

language to convey a traumatic event? Equally important, how does a secondary witness—the reader—interpret and attempt to understand the gaps and breaking points, especially when “what you see is both much like what you know and completely alien to knowledge” (Bernard-Donals 15)? What Bernard-Donals and Glejzer are getting at here is the responsibility of the witness to attempt an understanding, despite the inherent difficulty of doing so, as well as the powerful way in which language shapes history, trauma, and witness.

Bernard-Donals and Glejzer, then, present the poignant question of how someone who is not a survivor, someone who is a secondary witness, can find a semblance of meaning or understanding in reading Holocaust testimonies. Secondary witnesses are those who are one step removed from the original site of trauma, or the witnesses to the survivors of trauma. Dominick LaCapra offers a potential answer with the strategy he terms “empathic unsettlement.” LaCapra warns against the “virtual experience” that some readers have when reading a victim’s testimony, which renders the victim’s experience their own, thus belying the inherent differences between survivor and secondary witness. This mode of empathy “gives way to vicarious victimhood” (47). Empathic unsettlement, rather, allows for an empathetic reading without taking on full identification with the victim; it manifests in a feeling of unsettlement rather than in the transmission of the actual traumatic event. Such a reading resists generalizations and totalizing narratives, and works to avoid “facile uplift, harmonization, or closure” (78) that undermine the historical specificity of traumatic events.

Caruth, concerned with our ethical and political relationship to history and historical trauma, offers another potential answer to Bernard-Donals and Glejzer. She

calls for a “new mode of reading and of listening that both the language of trauma, and the silence of its mute repetition of suffering, profoundly and imperatively demand” (9). This “new mode of reading and of listening” challenges the assumption that the gaps, caesura, or silences on the part of the survivor preclude any level of understanding on the part of the reader/witness. In fact, many trauma theorists argue that it is precisely these gaps and silences that we should be paying attention to (Caruth; Laub; Levine). As Dori Laub states in “Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening,” the responsibility of the secondary witness is to “*listen to and hear the silence*” (58, original italics). Laub explains elsewhere that it is in fact the mutual sharing of the testimony between survivor and witness that allows for a process of reconstructing an internal “thou” for the survivor, that it is through telling one’s story that a survivor is able to “*bear witness to oneself*” (“Truth and Testimony” 66, original italics). Laub states, “It is the encounter and the coming together between the survivor and the listener, which makes possible something like a repossession of the act of witnessing. This joint responsibility is the source of the reemerging truth” (“Truth and Testimony” 69). According to Caruth, Laub, Bernard-Donals and Glejzer, the gap between event and re-presentation of event is both temporal and spatial in that a survivor must confront the lapse in time and the fissure in location to create a new genre of meaning; and yet, such a gap does not disqualify transmission between survivor and witness. In fact, as Michael Levine writes in his Introduction to *The Belated Witness*, “the singularity of each act of witnessing . . . which must be performed each time, as though for the first time . . . tests—and contests—the limits of transmission” (4).

To further complicate matters, Laub addresses not only the gaps and silences found *within* testimony, but also the fact that many survivors choose silence over speech. He writes:

[T]he speakers about trauma on some level prefer silence so as to protect themselves from the fear of being listened to—and of listening to themselves.

That while silence is defeat, it serves them both as a sanctuary and as a place of bondage. Silence is for them a fated exile, yet also a home, a destination, and a binding oath. To *not* return from this silence is rule rather than exception.

(“Bearing Witness” 58)

Saul Friedlander also attends to this aspect of silence among survivors, perpetrators, and historians, and their inability to reach “redemptive closure.” Friedlander writes, “The silence did not exist within the survivor-community. It was maintained in relation to the outside world and was often imposed by shame, the shame of telling a story that must appear unbelievable and was, in any case entirely out of tune with surrounding society” (48). This predicament of silence offers another level of ethical responsibility to the reader/witness. As Bella Brodzki writes in “Teaching Trauma and Transmission,” “[S]ilence in a Holocaust text is an index of trauma. When language fails altogether, of course, there is trauma’s overlay. Thus the reader must look for traces, sometimes embodied in the trope of the mute witnesses who do not say, or cannot say, what they have seen and experienced” (128). While Laub’s focus is primarily on oral testimony, between interviewer (listener) and interviewee (survivor), and Friedlander’s focus is broader than just the survivor community, it is vital to consider how silence functions within written testimony and how such silences are especially consequential for

survivors. This becomes especially clear when the survivor's story does not seem "complete" to the reader, and even more so when the survivor's story does not entirely match our historical record. Whether a reader/witness is in conversation with the survivor, or in conversation with the text, to demand that survivors tell a story they do not wish to tell or share a moment they have chosen to be silent about is antithetical to the purpose of reading and analyzing Holocaust testimony. This endeavor, when ethically and critically enacted, should achieve mutual understandings and shared sensibilities, while respecting the limits and borders of such understandings.

Rhetoric of Silence

Given the many references made by trauma theorists, among others, to silence in connection with Holocaust testimony, the area is ripe for further analysis and discovery. It is important to recognize that the gaps between survivor and re-presentation of traumatic event and between re-presentation and secondary witness can be understood as *silences*, and that such silences must be grappled with just as the words on the page are analyzed. It is my position that there is value in reframing the gaps and caesuras inherent in Holocaust testimony as silences. Therefore, the first question that is driving my research is: What is gained from analyzing and critiquing the responses and responsibility involved in bearing/witnessing the trauma of Holocaust testimony from a rhetoric of silence and rhetorical listening framework? To answer this, I will first lay the groundwork in delineating how a rhetoric of silence and rhetorical listening are defined.

In "A 'Silver Reticence': Emily Dickinson's Rhetoric of Silence," Carla Pomarè presents the etymology of the word *silence*. She writes how both the Italian and the French, from the Latin, make a distinction between the verb *tacere*, "the action of

keeping silence,” and the noun *silentium*, “a state characterized by the lack of words” (212). Given this differentiation, silence takes on a dual quality, having (at least) two meanings. Pomarè focuses on the first sense of silence, *tacere*, recognizing that one has the ability to enact silence rather than simply be in a state of silence, and emphasizing that silence can be a choice rather than an imposition.

George Kalamaras, in *Reclaiming the Tacit Dimension: Symbolic Form in the Rhetoric of Silence*, states that his goal is “to authenticate silence as a mode of knowing and demonstrate its relevance for modern discourse theory and Western theories of composing” (12). Using the meditative traditions of the Eastern religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, Kalamaras seeks to challenge the notion that silence is an absence of speech or emptiness, especially as it is framed within poststructural theories; that is, that “gaps” and silences threaten language. Such a conception posits that language is power and to lose language is to become the disenfranchised, disempowered, and *silenced* subject (2). While Kalamaras recognizes the invaluable role *silence as void* has played in feminist theories, particularly as it seeks to expose the marginalization of minority voices (Olsen; Rich), he asserts that he is not referring to “‘the unnatural thwarting of what struggles to come into being, but cannot,’ as Olsen contests, but rather of those ‘*natural* silences’ she commends, ‘that necessary time for renewal, lying fallow, gestation, in the natural cycle of creation’” (5, original emphasis). These natural silences are not conflictive with language; rather, they “help shape it in dynamic and generative ways” (5). Kalamaras tells us that silence is not death, nor is it “an emptiness that threatens the power to make meaning” (203). Instead, Kalamaras asserts that there are aesthetic uses of silence, and that silence has generative qualities.

Building on the work of Kalamaras and others (Steiner; Dauenhauer; Picard), Cheryl Glenn defines silence as a rhetorical art. In *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, Glenn asks her readers to reconsider what silence means. Glenn states, “Given how our language works . . . speech and silence are not mutually exclusive; they are inextricably linked and often interchangeably, simultaneously meaningful. Speech and silence depend upon each other: behind all speech is silence, and silence surrounds all speech” (7). In addition to complicating the definition of silence as an absence of speech, Glenn also attributes to silence an element of power. Glenn writes, “Silence continues to be, too often, read as simple passivity in situations where it has actually taken on an expressive power and has, in fact, transformed the rhetorical situation itself” (155).

The story Glenn uses to demonstrate the power of silence is that of Protestant Reformer Anne Askew. In 1546 Askew was arrested for radical Protestantism and was subsequently interrogated for the names of others in her sect. Glenn writes that even under harsh interrogation and torture, Askew chose silence over speech, refusing to reveal anything but her Protestant faith. The importance of Anne Askew to Glenn’s rhetoric of silence cannot be understated, as Glenn herself writes, “she [Askew] shows me how recorded silence can ‘work,’ how truly powerful and empowering it can be, even as she loses her life. She demonstrates the power of silence but also its dangers” (2). Glenn argues that while silence is emptiness, emptiness is not equivalent to absence. And even though silence is regarded as absence, it is “an absence with a function, and a rhetorical one at that” (4). Glenn attempts to not just revalue silence as a powerful rhetorical function, but to also reconceptualize it as being in a reciprocal relationship with speech: speech consists of silence and silence of speech. We choose to leave some words

unspoken in order to speak other words. This choice also consists of both speech and silence. Ultimately, Glenn argues that “like speech, the meaning of silence depends on a power differential that exists in every rhetorical situation: who can speak, who must remain silent, who listens, and what those listeners can do” (9).

Similarly, Anne Ruggles Gere, in her essay “Revealing Silence: Rethinking Personal Writing” presents “an alternative to the speech-silence opposition.” She writes, “Instead of seeing silence as speech’s opposite, we can conceive of it as part of speech” (206). Gere focuses on the “productive and empowering aspect of silence, rather than its crippling and chaotic side” (209). By doing so, Gere acknowledges the aesthetic, ethical, and political dimensions of utilizing acts of silence in one’s writing. Gere argues that silence, as a means of withholding, can be a powerful tool for writers and can prevent a colonization of one’s words. Gere writes that the challenge is “to resist a voice like Freud’s that argues ‘I shall have to hear it’ when another says ‘I prefer not to tell you’” (208).

While Glenn does recognize the “paradoxical properties of silence (its powers and limitations)” (2), she does not go in depth into the long history of those who have been silenced, not by choice but by purposeful exclusion, marginalization, and oppression. As Frank Farmer reminds us in *Saying and Silence: Listening to Composition with Bakhtin*, “there is a profound difference between silence enforced and silence freely chosen” (2). Kristie Fleckenstein, in *Vision, Rhetoric, and Social Action in the Composition Classroom*, offers a compelling argument for the connection between silence and the struggle for agency, particularly in the context of social action. She argues that interlocking factors—what she terms “‘a symbiotic knot of silence’ strip[s] people of

their belief in their ability to act and . . . offer[s] them only a simulated agency that possesses little power for bringing about substantive change” (46). Fleckenstein clearly outlines in her chapter “A Knot of Silence” the insidious effects silence can have on someone who struggles against social and cultural norms that not only condone but promote silence over speech. One must tread carefully, then, into a rhetoric of silence and recognize that while silence as a rhetorical art can be powerful, it can also be limiting and has the potential to undercut one’s agency. The question we must continue to ask ourselves is this: who has the authority and power to speak, and who is encouraged, or directed, to remain silent? As Glenn writes, “the question is whether our use of silence is our choice (whether conscious or unconscious) or that of someone else” (13). Such questions inevitably broach issues of race, gender, class, and culture.¹

This long history of imposed silence is what makes it so difficult to understand silence as a powerful tool and rhetorical act. However, if we are able to reconceptualize silence as being just as meaningful as speech, we might begin to observe both the positive and negative qualities of silence, just as we do with speech. By recognizing both the necessity of silence and the rhetorical and personal power it plays in one’s writing, the reader/witness of Holocaust testimony is able to reframe the silences and gaps in a testimony, respect these silences as a vital piece to the text, and, ultimately, find a way to listen for these silences and gaps to form a more critical, reflective, and complex understanding of what is being said, as well as what is left unsaid. This redefinition of silence will become increasingly important as we begin to explore new methods for

¹ For a fuller discussion of marginalized groups who have been and continue to be silenced, see Tillie Olson’s *Silences*, Jacqueline Jones Royster’s “When the First Voice You Hear is Not Your Own”, and Pamela Hartman’s “‘Loud on the Inside’: Working Class Girls, Gender, and Literacy”.

teaching Holocaust testimony, as we must also be aware of, respect, and analyze our students' silences as they confront and write about traumatic texts.

Rhetorical Listening

Given the focus on the written text within English studies and rhetoric and composition, listening has unfairly been displaced by the reading, writing and, to a lesser extent, speaking of our literate culture. Although we do place importance on the role audience plays within rhetorical situations, we focus more on persuading our audience than on the role that listening plays within our discourse, or the strategies needed for productive listening. Additionally, listening is often seen as being synonymous with silence, rendering it—unfairly—weaker and less important than speaking, writing, and reading. Krista Ratcliffe, in *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*, works to revalue the role of listening within the field of rhetoric and composition, particularly in connection with cross-cultural and race studies. Ratcliffe defines rhetorical listening “as a trope for interpretive invention and as a code of cross-cultural conduct” (1). Rhetorical listening “signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture” (1). Having established the displaced, yet essential, nature of listening, Ratcliffe goes on to unpack her definition of rhetorical listening, which includes the following four moves:

1. Promoting an *understanding* of self and other
2. Proceeding within an *accountability* logic
3. Locating identifications across *commonalities* and *differences*
4. Analyzing *claims* as well as the *cultural logics* within which these claims function. (26, original emphasis)

While not necessarily sequential, these moves are crucial in fostering productive and critical communication. For the first move, Ratcliffe qualifies the term *understanding* by adding that “*understanding* means more than simply listening *for* a speaker/writer’s intent. It also means more than simply listening *for* our own self-interested readerly intent [. . .] Instead, understanding means listening to discourses not *for* intent but *with* intent” (28, original emphasis). The focus here is not on what the text says or what the listener thinks the text ought to say based on her background and beliefs, but rather on the listener herself. The shift here from how the text can be interpreted to how the listener approaches an interpretation is crucial. How can we ensure that we are listening to a text intently and openly, not searching for the text’s ultimate truth, but rather recognizing that what we are listening for is often “that which we do not intellectually, viscerally, or experientially know” (29)? Such a listening links understanding with the ethical and political, and requires greater engagement and awareness on the reader’s part.

Ratcliffe qualifies the second move, *accountability*, as the recognition “that none of us lives autonomous lives” (31). We are, according to Ratcliffe, all part of the same community, and therefore, we necessarily are concerned with each person’s quality of life. By recognizing our accountability to each other, we are ethically obligated “to consider how all of us are, at present, culturally implicated in effects of the past” (32). In this second move, listening helps us better understand someone else’s experience by recognizing that we have a responsibility to do so. In the third move, locating identifications across *commonalities* and *differences*, Ratcliffe focuses on the tandem goal of finding common ground while also establishing disidentification or divergences with others. This move is extremely important in connection with Holocaust testimony.

While it is important to recognize, in Ratcliffe's second move, that we are one community, and that we are *accountable* to each other, it is also crucial to recognize and understand our different experiences. Ratcliffe promotes identification as not just the converging of one's experience or beliefs with another's, but also a recognition of the divergences. Such a tandem goal has the potential to establish common ground while also being mindful to not misappropriate a speaker's text or words for one's own purposes. While finding commonalities can foster greater understanding, aiding Ratcliffe's first two moves of rhetorical listening, allowing for and establishing differences with others is the only ethical way to listen intently to the text.

Ratcliffe's last move, analyzing *claims* as well as *cultural logics*, encourages listeners to understand the cultural context(s) a speaker may be coming from even if they disagree with the speaker's claim(s). This last move allows for an understanding that even if we cannot agree with a speaker's claim, we can work to understand the cultural logic that informs such a claim. Having an awareness of these different cultural contexts also builds on Ratcliffe's first move, as the listener is able to identify her own preconceived notions and set them aside in order to listen with intent to the speaker/text.

After outlining rhetorical listening, Ratcliffe also moves on to define what she terms a rhetoric of dysfunctional silence. A rhetoric of dysfunctional silence both prevents one from speaking about difference and also from hearing the difference when it is spoken. Ultimately, it results in lost opportunities. Ratcliffe details four functions of a rhetoric of dysfunctional silence: "(1) It is driven by negatively resonating terms; (2) It proceeds via a cultural logic that masks coexisting commonalities and differences; (3) It offers interlocutors dysfunctional rhetorical stances of denial, defensiveness, and

guilt/blame; and (4) It proceeds via the interpretive trope of reading metaphorically” (85). In the first function, Ratcliffe outlines how we often accept the negative connotations words acquire without critiquing such connotations, or we reject the connotations without critique. In either case, we are performing a rhetoric of dysfunctional silence. The second function looks at how a rhetoric of dysfunctional silence prohibits both speech and listening by focusing on binary oppositions such as same/different. This focus on binaries freezes further communication and results in a deafening silence. The third function Ratcliffe outlines identifies how listeners/readers often take on the role of denier, defensive victim, and/or guilt(less) perpetrator without analyzing any other reactions or various combination(s) of reactive stances they might take instead. These defensive reactions stymie further conversation. The last function outlines the overgeneralizations, stereotypes, and/or unfair representations that result from reading metaphorically. As Ratcliffe states, “When the assumption that all members of a group are practically identical is coupled with the assumption that one’s own stance represents the only true knowledge, then the stage is set, so to speak, for the performance of denial . . . , defensiveness . . . , and guilt/blame” (92). In other words, to read metaphorically risks assuming that one speaker’s text or story is representative of the entire group the speaker symbolizes. This leads to totalizing statements such as, “*all* white women will react negatively to questions of race” (92). For our purposes, it is vital to remember that one survivor testimony is not a metaphor for the entire Holocaust atrocity, nor that one testimony is representative of all testimonies.

Ratcliffe determines, from these modes of dysfunctional silence, that we need new ways of hearing. She incites her readers to consider these new ways of hearing, as it

is our moral and cultural duty to do so. She writes, “Though individually we may each have moments when listening appears too great an effort to imagine or enact, culturally we have no such excuse. Lives and psyches, indeed fates of nations, frequently depend on such efforts” (94). Ratcliffe presents an excellent case both for why listening should be considered a rhetorical act and the social and cultural importance of this act.

Given Ratcliffe’s call for rhetorical listening, and her warning of the potential negative consequences of a rhetoric of dysfunctional silence, several questions arise in connection with reading Holocaust testimony. What specific methods of listening will help us to narrow the gaps between survivor and re-presentation of event and between re-presentation of event and reader/witness? How does one listen with *intent* when the object of study is ultimately unknowable? A question Bernard-Donals and Glejzer might pose here is how do we present rhetorical listening to our students when “in asking [them] to know (something about) the Holocaust we are asking them to do something utterly impossible, or at the very least traumatic” (258)? Despite the difficulties in such a task, we must continue to listen to and for the silences. As Laub claims, without the listener or witness, the survivor does not have an addressable you, and cannot tell her/his story.

For the purposes of this thesis, I will expand on Ratcliffe’s premise of rhetorical listening and on Glenn’s rhetoric of silence. Ratcliffe promotes the act of positioning oneself on the edge of one’s knowing in an effort to “overhear” and learn from others (105). In this way, her focus is primarily on “listening to learn” (105). The goal of the heuristic I outline in the following chapter is to expand this notion of rhetorical listening to position oneself where one can write on the borders of knowing and not knowing in

order to come to new knowledge through the production of text, or, a practice of writing to learn. I will also expand on Glenn's definition of a rhetoric of silence to include not just the author, audience, and symbol system, but also *text*. My goal here will be to provide strategies for students to not just analyze the silences they find as readers but to also enact the rhetorical power of silence in their own writing.

While trauma theorists have focused their attention primarily on the psychological effects of survivor and witness in relation to Holocaust testimony, there has been less focus on reading Holocaust testimonies rhetorically, in an attempt to understand not only what is written, but also what is *not* written, the gaps and inherent silences in such texts. In addition, while there have been many calls for a new method of listening and reading to Holocaust texts (Caruth; Levine; Miller and Tougaw), there have been few theoretical or practical attempts at defining this new mode of listening. Therefore, this thesis attempts to answer the call for a new mode of listening in the context of the composition classroom.

I will look specifically at what I outline as the four layers of complexity in the reading/witnessing of Holocaust testimony. Two of the layers have been dealt with extensively in the trauma theory literature. These first two layers are (1) the gap between event and re-presentation of event and (2) the gap between survivor and reader/witness during transmission of the event. The last two layers of the model have been under-theorized in both the trauma theory and rhetoric and composition literature. They are (3) the responsibility of the reader/witness to respond in an ethical and appropriate way and (4) the affective economies (or emotional responses and reactions) involved in listening to both the silences and the speech of testimony. By connecting this model with the

reading and writing done in composition classrooms, I hope to show how we can develop pedagogical methods or heuristics for teaching Holocaust testimony that take these complexities into consideration. The goal of such a method is to narrow the inherent gaps, destabilize and disrupt subject positions occupied by the reader/witness, and foster critical analysis. I hope the heuristic I outline in the next chapter will provide critical entry points for further research into potential pedagogical methods for teaching Holocaust literature.

Rhetorical listening seems particularly helpful in tackling the third and fourth layers of the model; for, rhetorical listening “offers one tactic for attempting to negotiate troubled identifications that haunt many rhetorical exchanges” (Ratcliffe 27). Indeed, the reading/listening of/to Holocaust testimony is an exemplar of haunting and troubled identifications. Concomitantly, a rhetoric of silence addresses the many calls trauma theorists, historians, and compositionists alike have made for more attention to the inherent gaps and silences within Holocaust testimony. Levine eloquently describes such silence and the need for a new mode of listening in the following:

It is as though these testimonies were themselves trapped at the very frontier of speech and silence, as though the “knowledge” they seek to give birth to were caught in the act of transmission, remaining somehow stuck in the throat above or suspended in the cervical opening below. Incommunicable and undeliverable as such, this traumatic knowledge is all too often left to resonate not only in the painfully congested narrows of the witnessing body . . . but also in the body of the witness to the witness . . . [I]t is therefore necessary to invent new ways of listening to this “knowledge.” (11-12)

It is the secondary witness's responsibility to not only offer a space for this trapped knowledge to find a home, but also to not pry into these narrow openings so as to not force the survivor into speech. Levine's call for a new way of listening echoes Ratcliffe's call for a stance of rhetorical listening and offers an interesting entry point for the secondary witness.

The goal of this new listening is to not only develop strategies for reading Holocaust testimony, but also to ensure that such strategies effectively deal with the pain or grief that inevitably ensues from reading trauma. According to Levine:

[T]he 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 trauma in himself . . . and . . . comes to feel the bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and conflicts that the trauma victim feels. (5)

Therefore, while it is important to not conflate the listener with the victim, it is equally important to recognize the affective responses or reactions the listener will experience. Often the "hyperemotionality" of the listener, while intended as an expression of solidarity, has the opposite effect by "retraumatiz[ing] and re-silenc[ing] the returning witness" (6). Awareness of and sensitivity to such emotions is vital in order to effectively and responsibly reach a place of critical analysis. With such awareness, the listener is able to effectively take on the responsibility of moving the testimonials of others into "social acts, into narrative memories addressed to others" (7).

In this thesis, I argue that a rhetoric of silence and rhetorical listening provide a tandem framework for a heuristic that takes into account the gaps and silences found in Holocaust testimony. Such a pedagogical endeavor must be done ethically and

responsibly as instructors must grapple with the emotioned responses many students will encounter during their reading and writing of Holocaust testimony, an awareness that will be built into the heuristic I offer. In the next chapter, I build on the previous work of compositionists to develop a heuristic for reading and writing about/of Holocaust testimony. Chapter three then applies my heuristic to Ruth Klüger's memoir *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*. In chapter four, I offer my concluding thoughts as well as additional questions for further research. The application of the heuristic in chapter three will help foster students' use of rhetorical silence in their own writing, a move which expands on Glenn's and Kalamaras's rhetoric of silence by moving it from a conversational/dialogic realm to a realm of simultaneous interpretation and text production.

Subject Position: Tensions Faced by a Non-Jewish Writer and Researcher

It is impossible to proceed at this point without first identifying my own subject position within the broad topic of the Holocaust. I must first state that I am not Jewish, although my ancestral lineage is German and I did have two great-aunts who were Jewish and who both survived the camps before immigrating to the United States and remarrying. The remove from which I am both generationally and emotionally to my great-aunts, however, makes it difficult for me to assert a familial connection to Holocaust survivors, as many children of survivors rightly claim. And yet, I do feel personally touched by this history in a way that cannot be adequately explained through ancestral lineage.

My interest in Holocaust studies stems primarily from my German language studies and from living in Bonn, Germany and Graz, Austria for short periods (a summer

spent in Germany, a year in Austria). The desperate sense of loss on the faces of the Germans and Austrians I met when the topic of the Holocaust was approached reinforces the historical legacy these people live with on a daily basis; a history that is reinforced through the government and educational system. And the discussions I have had with both Germans and Austrians is revealing in terms of the responsibility each individual bears, regardless of family history or connection to Nazism. The sentiment I have heard most often is that of a feeling of degradation towards their nationality as Germans or Austrians, a nationality which marks them in ways that being French or Italian does not, for example. There are no flags displayed in Austrian or German schools and there is not a pledge of allegiance to recite each morning. Walking through Berlin, it is difficult to not notice the empty and hollow expression on many faces, particularly the elderly women, who not only suffered through the humiliation and horridness at the hands of the Nazi Regime, but who then also suffered attacks and rapes from Russian soldiers, a story that is often left untold or is presented as a redemption story for the wrongs committed by the German nation.

When we begin talking about “perpetrators” as also being victims, or of bystanders who were not directly involved in the Nazi’s killing regime, we enter a gray area that must be dealt with if any complex and analytical understanding of the events of the Holocaust is to be met. While I do not suggest here that the perpetrator-as-victim should be included in the broad term “survivor” or “victim” of the Holocaust, I do suggest that understanding such complexities and allowing for gray areas is vital when reading Holocaust testimony. This becomes especially important when we consider to whom the Holocaust story belongs. Or, as Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes ask, in

Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust, “Who has the right to speak about the Holocaust?” (11). Some critiques, for instance, are aimed at the United States, which has arguably co-opted the Holocaust as a story of American heroism, openness, and democracy, a forging of a historical narrative which necessarily leaves out certain elements, deflecting attention away from that which would complicate the America-as-savior narrative. “Competing over the ownership of any world calamity may seem inappropriate, even obscene. And yet the question of to whom the Holocaust belongs comes up repeatedly in the public debates” (Hirsch and Kacandes 13). These debates, among others, will certainly come up in the composition classroom, and the instructor who decides to confront such debates in connection with teaching Holocaust testimony must be prepared to manage these debates and questions. I should also add that while some instructors may be faced with students who identify themselves as Holocaust deniers, I do not feel that this type of student position merits a response, nor would such a discussion work towards reaching the intended goals of critical engagement with Holocaust testimonies. Additionally, such denial typically stems from what historian Tony Kushner describes as “organized racist groupuscules” (284) and therefore represents the very fringes of the debate. As Kushner writes, “Holocaust denial has become more organized, utilizing the potential of the electronic media, but it is still no less marginal both in terms of academic respectability and of popular acceptance of its message” (284).

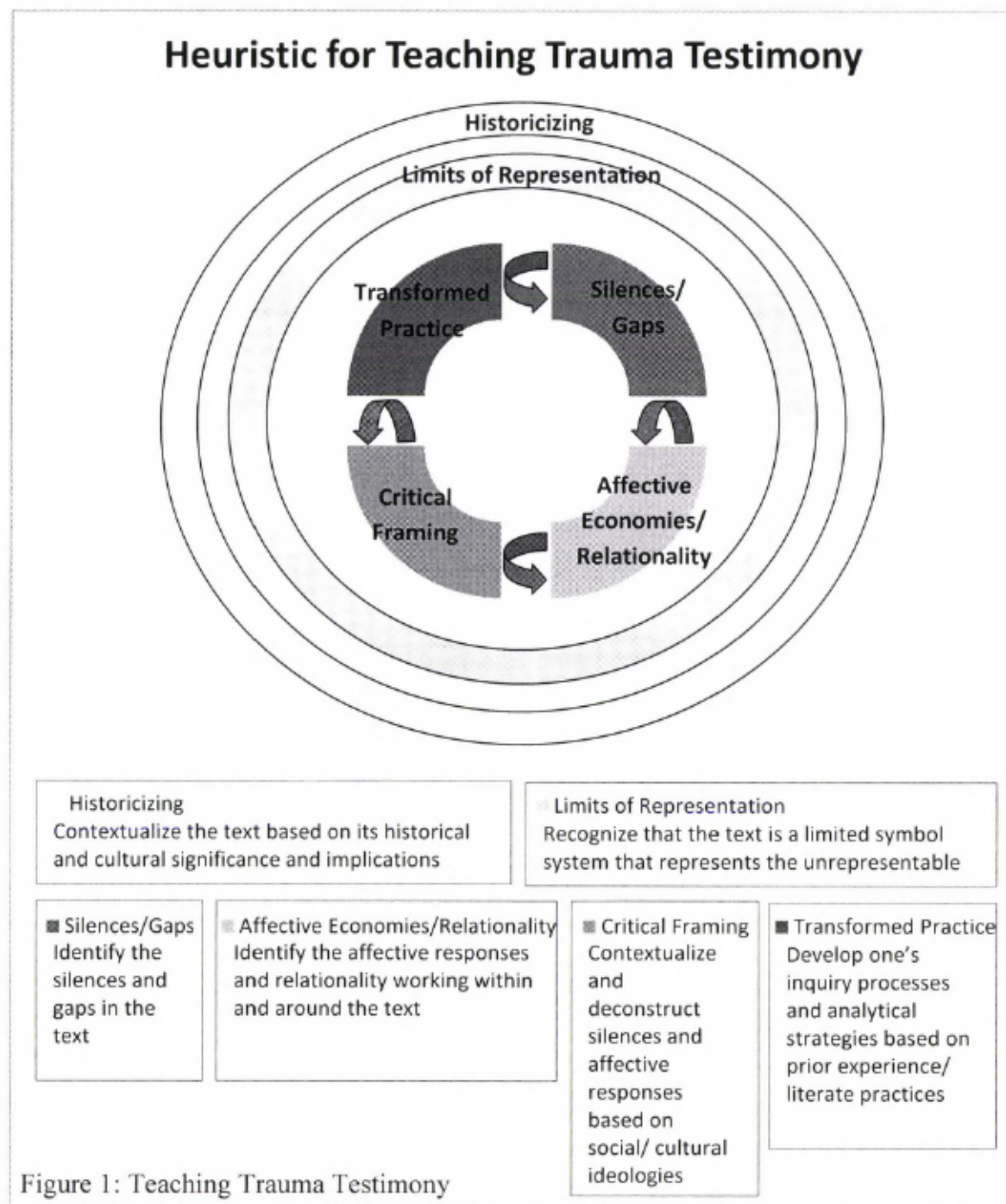
I am also influenced by my position as a first-year composition instructor. As such, I am interested in how the teaching of Holocaust testimony can work effectively in the composition classroom. In particular, I am concerned with how we can teach the

Holocaust in an ethical way. That is, I am interested in seeking methodologies that best lay the groundwork for engaging in both reverent and critical analysis of Holocaust testimony, as well as contending with the affective responses and relationalities that inevitably circulate around the reading and writing about such texts. In other words, how can we both respect the traumatic nature of the text and the survivor's experience while still engaging in critical analysis of the text? Too, how can we respond ethically to our students' potential emotioned responses to such texts? I see the composition classroom as an excellent place to engage Holocaust testimony and address these questions. As we work with students to critically analyze Holocaust texts, we can ask them to focus not just on the content of the text, or on what the text *says*, but on *how* the text says what it does and *how* it is working (or not) within its rhetorical situation. The types of meaning-making composition students are encouraged to perform also make the composition classroom well suited to contend with Holocaust testimony. Students in the composition classroom simultaneously interpret text and produce text, making meaning through both their reading and writing practices. Therefore, students will be well positioned to engage with texts that require complex analysis and rhetorical understandings as they both read and write to learn.

Additionally, as someone who continually seeks to challenge her composition students to think in more complex and less dualistic ways, my aim in the classroom is to lessen the resistance towards texts which seem to promote an "us" versus "them" mentality. There are generally, but certainly not only, three types of responses to this binary: to identify with the victim in a sentimentalized, or even dehumanizing way; to become desensitized to the trauma narrative, thus preventing any further engagement

with the text; or, to take on a position of resentment towards the victim, often to dispel the guilt such texts may provoke for the student. While these responses are problematic in different ways, the historical and geographical remove of American students from Holocaust testimonies directs my focus on the first two responses. Therefore, one of the main goals of the heuristic I outline in the following chapter is to disrupt and destabilize the sentimental student responses which often lead to dehumanizing depictions of “victim” as well as potential misappropriations of a “victim’s” words. Additionally, the heuristic is intended to provide a means for critical engagement with trauma texts, hopefully dispelling any tendencies towards a desensitized response. And finally, the heuristic I offer forces a confrontation “between the universality and particularity of trauma—a tension that is not resolved by choosing one or the other” (Zembylas 31). Indeed, by deconstructing the binary “us” and “them,” we have the opportunity in our classroom to further interrogate other problematic and essentialized categories (Zembylas 31) such as victim/perpetrator, public/private, and individuality/universality.

CHAPTER TWO: HEURISTIC FOR TEACHING HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY



Many compositionists who have faced the topic of Holocaust testimony and literature in their classes have offered numerous pedagogical methods to outline best practices, ethical concerns, and student engagement. While some of these methodologies are particularly instructive for the first year college composition course, most do not address the writing component of a composition class directly, or, if any writing is emphasized at all, it is the journal and response writing that tends to lack critical engagement with the ideas and texts central to a class on Holocaust testimony. Other pedagogical methods tend to lack the affective component that is an unavoidable part of teaching trauma texts.

All pedagogical methods for teaching Holocaust literature, though, must contend with the inevitable sentimental student responses that thwart invested critical analysis. In order to best meet my objective of disrupting and destabilizing sentimental student responses to Holocaust testimony, I utilize a rhetoric of silence/listening and emotion studies as a framework for developing a heuristic that can be used in the composition classroom.

Confronting Identification and Sentimentality

Identification is often promoted as the best means to achieve understanding among current students of Holocaust testimony. While identification with the victim can indeed bring about a level of understanding that might otherwise not be possible with, for example, historical accounts that lack an emotional appeal, there are risks to identification that must be addressed. “As a pedagogical strategy, identification with victims is both powerful and dangerous: it risks being appropriative and projective” (Hirsch and Kacandes 15). Here, aspects of surrogate victimhood, as articulated by

LaCapra, become most prominent. In an effort to empathize with the victim's experience, the reader/listener of a testimony may, whether consciously or unconsciously, ascribe the trauma to him/herself. Doing so not only risks misappropriating the victim's testimony for one's own purposes, but also endangers the reader/listener, who may experience levels of hyperemotionality or traumatization of his/her own.

The other challenge with using trauma testimony in the classroom is the risk of sentimentalizing and/or fetishizing such trauma narratives. This can occur "when [the trauma testimony] becomes commodified and fails to provide new ways that help us gain a deeper understanding of others' suffering" (Zembylas 30). First, we must recognize that there are gaps and impasses between event and testimony and between survivor and secondary witness. Second, we must be careful not to assume sameness between our suffering and the suffering of others. In other words, we must be wary of any attempt at closing off the fissure between survivor and secondary witness, of placing ourselves, as witnesses, in the subject position of the sufferer. However, Zembylas also asserts that we must attempt to narrow the gap of particularized trauma. Indeed, we have a *responsibility* to hear the pain circulating within an exclusive and, I might add, elusive testimony in order to critically analyze it. In this way, the real challenge for educators and students is to formulate a new rhetoric of listening which allows for gaps and caesura in understanding but which also allows "trauma narratives . . . to be analyzed in the realm of political action" (Zembylas 31). In order to address these challenges of surrogate victimhood and sentimentalizing of the testimony, built into the heuristic is a critical engagement with affective responses and relationality.

Such an endeavor into the affective, though, must be done ethically, a point emphasized by Sara Ahmed when she asserts, “The question of who is doing the healing and who is being healed is a troubling one” (35). Ahmed’s sentiment here is important, but I also want to emphasize the need to be careful in using the term “heal.” I am not suggesting that pedagogical methods for teaching Holocaust testimony should or even can be centered on a model of the classroom as therapy session, or that an instructor should take on the role of therapist. As Dessler reminds us, avoiding the “will to closure” and deconstructing the false dichotomy between “writing teacher as healer” and “writing teacher as political agent” are important considerations when confronting trauma in rhetorical inquiry.

Sentimental student responses vary from “implied superiority to suffering” (Klüger 94) to dehumanizing and abusive constructions of victim, and can be demonstrated in part by the following passage from Megan Boler’s *Feeling Power*. Here she offers an excerpt from a student’s response to reading the Holocaust comic strip *MAUS*, by Art Spiegelman:

A person unaccustomed to reading the kind of material presented in novels recounting the Holocaust might be more comfortable reading the easier flow of the comic-book-style used by Spiegelman. Spiegelman can ensnare readers into his book *MAUS* by sheer curiosity, and once they have begun it would be difficult to stop reading.

... By not pulling any punches, he addresses the horrors that occurred without making the reader feel as though she or he has been bombarded by feelings of rage and guilt. Often, the story of the Holocaust is told from a

standpoint of such emotional turmoil that factual information is lost. Although *MAUS* is filled with strong images and disturbing occurrences, the reader does not feel that blame and pity is being forced onto himself or herself, but rather that Spiegelman is just “telling his story.” (162)

While the emphasis of Boler’s critique to this student’s response is on the “abdication of responsibility” (163) this student takes—and feels other readers should also take—and the detached identification the animal metaphors in *MAUS* allow, I would like to focus on the student’s pronounced distinction between “emotional turmoil” and “factual information.” What leads this student to this interpretation is most likely in part due to the engrained belief that affective responses get in the way of “rational” understandings of a text. My goal, then, is to work against this notion to recognize that “emotional turmoil” is in fact an essential part of the “factual information” of the Holocaust. The heuristic I develop recognizes this. It also recognizes that there may be silences in the story of *MAUS*. What is left out becomes just as important as what is said and provides students with the tools to both critique and acknowledge the value of Holocaust testimonies. In the case of *MAUS*, whose story is it? Because *MAUS* is told from the perspective of a survivor’s son, it is certainly a different story than the one Art Spiegelman’s father would tell, for example.

I’d also like to point out that while Boler’s analysis ends up being a dual critique of both the student’s response and the book *MAUS* itself, I believe that given different strategies, this student—and others—can read *MAUS* more critically, closing the gap between “factual information” and “emotional turmoil.” Doing so may even lead students to understand both the limitations and the power of *MAUS*.

In my first admittedly awkward and nascent scholarly endeavor into the study of Holocaust texts, I too displayed moments of sentimental responses in my writing, evidenced by the following passage from a paper I wrote for an undergraduate seminar on the Holocaust. This passage comes from a response I wrote following a class visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC:

[T]hose who bear witness are able to convey much more about what happened than an exhibit or display can. The pain and anguish in the voices of the survivors was clear, indicating that the Holocaust experience is not an event in the past. It is an experience that affects us today in the present, and will continue to affect our future as well. The survivors of the Holocaust can never forget this unfathomable experience, nor can they ever “move on” from the misery of what occurred.

Ultimately, the survivors must find new ways to live around the Holocaust experience; they must find new ways to live although the pain will remain with them. And their memories will stay with us, no matter how mediated they become, for future generations.

What struck me the most after rereading this passage seven years later is my use of the inclusive term “us” and my unmediated explication of how the survivors, “they,” must feel today. It is as if I personally felt I could lay claim to the Holocaust experience, and therefore the use of “us” seemed appropriate; and yet, I distanced myself from the survivors, “they,” who “must find new ways to live around the Holocaust experience” and who can never “‘move on’ from the misery of what occurred.” While I was undoubtedly moved to feel a sense of “us” given the implicit position of ownership the US takes over the Holocaust in the Holocaust Memorial Museum, it is unsettling to read

this inclusive subject position as well as my assertions of knowing how survivors must feel today. Although this passage does not necessarily display identification with the survivor or surrogate victimhood, it does represent the type of sentimental misappropriation that can impede critical engagement with the victim's story.

While these two student excerpts are certainly not representative of all sentimental responses and reactions to Holocaust testimony, they are surely the type of reaction that Holocaust survivors warn against. Ruth Klüger, in her memoir, *Still Alive*, relays an incident when she encounters the pity of an older Christian man as a young Jewish girl wearing the yellow star on a subway car in Vienna, prior to her deportation to the camps:

[T]his man pressed something into my hand, a gift. He wanted to show his pity for me, the child with the Jew star . . . The gift was an orange. By the time we were back in daylight, I had stowed it in my bag and gratefully looked up at the stranger, who looked down on me with a benevolent smile. But my feelings were mixed . . . I didn't like the role of the *passive victim* who could be comforted with small demonstrations of kindness. (49, emphasis added)

This excerpt foreshadows the same reaction readers/listeners of Holocaust testimony often embrace today: pity for the *passive victim*; overly ostentatious displays of humanity to show their astonishment and outrage at the atrocities committed by the perpetrators and their sympathy towards the victims who had to endure these atrocities. As Klüger clearly demonstrates, however, sympathy for the victim is a fraught relationship and one not necessarily met with grateful acceptance. Indeed, the image of the passive and innocent victim is not only simplistic, but also unhelpful for the critical reading we

expect our students to do in our classes. Later in her testimony, Klüger refers to this sympathetic reaction as “sentimental rubbish . . . that depends on a false concept of suffering as a source of moral education” (52). Klüger works hard against the image of this poor, innocent, and morally good victim in an attempt to show the realities of the German occupation in Austria and her subsequent deportation to the camps.

Similarly, Klüger also critiques the “museum culture of the camp sites” (66) and offers this summation of the ultimate sympathetic reaction to the Holocaust experience, which is often felt at the memorialized camp sites of Auschwitz and Dachau:

A visitor who feels moved, even if it is only the kind of feeling that a haunted house conveys, will be proud of these stirrings of humanity. And so the visitor monitors his reactions, examines his emotions, admires his own sensibility, or in other words, turns sentimental. For sentimentality involves turning away from an ostensible object and towards the subjective observer, that is, towards oneself. It means looking into a mirror instead of reality. (66)

What Klüger so eloquently describes here is how most sentimental responses function: they shift the focus from the victim onto oneself. They turn the mirror onto oneself in order to see a reflection of humanity. What is most dangerous in this turning of the mirror is that it is often the first step one takes to misappropriating a victim’s words or stories for one’s own purposes; namely, to display oneself as the benevolent stranger who hands an orange to the “Jew girl” on the subway car, leaving feeling good about one’s own humanity and the gift of sympathy.

In the composition classroom, this turning of the mirror onto oneself and the subsequent sympathetic reaction can be dangerous for at least two reasons. For one, it

allows for sentimental identification with the victim which often leads to appropriations of the victim's suffering. This shift in focus from the victim to the secondary witness does not allow for the victim's story to stand by itself, apart from the commonalities students may see. And while (dis)similarity can be instructive, it is dangerous if such commonalities lead to isolated understandings that do not take into account the particularities of experience. For another, this turning of the mirror allows for students to claim ownership over the victim's story by projecting the story onto their own cultural and social circumstances. For example, by claiming how one would respond as victim or bystander if placed in the victim's particular situation.

An example of how this could play out in the composition classroom is the following: a student reads a Holocaust testimony that describes the beatings a survivor's father endured in the camps (a common father-son trope in Holocaust testimony). Elie Wiesel provides an instructive passage here for analysis, from his memoir *Night*:

Another time we were loading diesel motors onto freight cars under the supervision of some German soldiers. Idek was on edge, he had trouble restraining himself. Suddenly, he exploded. The victim this time was my father. . . . And he began beating him with an iron bar. At first, my father simply doubled over under the blows, but then seemed to break in two like an old tree struck by lightning.

I had watched it all happening without moving. I kept silent. In fact, I thought of stealing away in order not to suffer the blows. What's more, if I felt anger at that moment, it was not directed at the Kapo but at my father. Why couldn't he have

avoided Idek's wrath? That was what life in a concentration camp had made of me . . . (54)

Students may read this passage and feel sympathetic toward Wiesel's plight and the blows he had to watch his father endure. This sympathy, however, can also lead to judgment and projection when the mirror turns away from Wiesel and his father and onto oneself. A student may respond by stating, "That is horrible, but I would never do that. Although Wiesel was under extraordinary circumstances, I would not be able to stand by and watch my father be beaten like a dog." Such a sentimental response, which seemingly offers empathy for the victim, shifts the focus from victim to secondary witness, and indicates a spectating rather than a witnessing (Boler 184) of the event. Even more insidious is that spectating makes no effort to historicize and contextualize the events the victim experienced.

Other students, however, may respond in a much different way, especially if they have experienced or been exposed to domestic violence. In this case, students may respond with what they view to be a similar experience, and offer their own story of abuse or the witnessing of abuse. Finding commonality with the victim's story may help them empathize with the survivor's story of abuse, but one must be careful to not let this type of response lead to uncritical identification with the victim's story, or an unproductive ranking of oppressions (Boler). This ranking is particularly unhelpful as it undermines the objectives set for the course: namely, to confront and critically engage with Holocaust testimony. If we begin ranking oppressions, we not only shift the mirror from the victim's story to our stories, but we also implicitly engage in an evaluation of

suffering. Such judgments inevitably “produce guilt rather than empathy” (Boler 165) and thus interfere and inhibit sustained critical inquiry with Holocaust testimony.

Two theorists who work against these types of sentimental student responses are Megan Boler and Michalinos Zembylas. Boler makes a distinction between passive empathy and testimonial reading in her book *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education* in her chapter titled “The Risks of Empathy.” Boler states, “The primary difference between passive empathy and testimonial reading is the responsibility borne by the reader” (164). She asserts that one need not “rank oppressions” or “consume through empathetic identification” (165) in order to empathize and also situate oneself within the social forces that have constructed the opening for such suffering. For Boler:

Testimonial reading requires a self-reflective participation: an awareness first of myself as reader, positioned in a relative position of power by virtue of the safe distance provided by the mediating text. Second, I recognize that reading potentially involves a task. This task is at minimum an active reading practice that involves challenging my own assumptions and world views. (166)

On the other hand, responses that “refuse to engage” with the text and that “deny complicity” (166) lead to passive empathy and can result in sentimental readings of the text. I appreciate Boler’s attempt here at historicizing the conditions of suffering and our responses to such suffering, an important aspect to consider when developing pedagogical methods for emphasizing the power relations, responsibility, ambiguity, and historical genealogy of studying and analyzing Holocaust texts.

In his book *The Politics of Trauma in Education*, Zembylas develops a model for confronting historical trauma that he terms “critical emotional praxis.” Critical emotional

praxis “calls on educators and students to unpack their cherished beliefs and comfort zones in order to deconstruct the ways in which they have learned to see, feel, and act” (16). With a focus on *relationality* rather than understanding or universalizing, Zembylas shifts focus from an individualistic and closure-based study of historical trauma to a multi-layered, complex, and open study, in which different stories of loss and mourning can be placed alongside one another to create a contact zone of varying and yet linked individual voices. He writes:

These connections are not made as a form of fellow feeling, and they are not about feeling the other’s trauma but about the possibilities of rethinking our relations to trauma [. . .] For educators and their students, this implies learning to live with the dangers of a knowledge about others’ trauma that can interfere with its own sentimentalization. (16-17)

What is most promising about critical emotional praxis is its potential to attend to the affective nature of reading trauma testimonies, an expansion of LaCapra’s “empathic unsettlement.” LaCapra’s goal with “empathic unsettlement” is primarily to warn against the “virtual experience” of identifying fully with a victim’s story in order to work against a harmonized and closure-based reading of trauma texts. Zembylas extends this anti-sentimentalization approach to focus on the *relationality* between various trauma texts, between survivor and secondary witness, and between secondary witness’ understanding of how they have been conditioned to feel and act in response to traumatic texts and their physical and emotional responses to such texts in the moment of reading them.

By repositioning one’s own identity in relation to such trauma, students and educators have the opportunity to not only narrow gaps between re-presentation and

event and between survivor and secondary witness, but also to extend themselves beyond the routinized responses of passive empathy. Critical emotional praxis recognizes that reconfiguring new relations to trauma involves engaging in “acts of compassion, self-criticality, and resistance to homogeneity and normativity” (Zembylas 18). Clearly this approach to reading trauma texts is vital when we take into account the emotioned responses and responsibility that readers of Holocaust testimony bear. My goal is to ground critical emotional praxis into a teaching heuristic that will help students confront the affective communities and responses to trauma texts while also engaging in a critical reading of such texts.

The last pedagogical contribution I will look at comes from Peter Goggin and Maureen Goggin. They offer several important taxonomies for discussing trauma in their essay “Presence in Absence: Discourses and Teaching (In, On, and About) Trauma.” I am particularly interested in their analysis of Cope and Kalantzis’s robust pedagogical model, broken down into four tenets: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. To me, this scaffolding seems particularly promising for writing teachers engaging trauma texts in the classroom. For one, students are able to practice real-world reading and writing (situated practice), expanding on the traditional single audience of teacher. In addition, students are able to grapple with rhetorical and cultural theories (overt instruction), providing them with opportunities and strategies needed to participate in trauma discourse. Finally, students gain critical distance and discern the most effective ways to communicate in particular rhetorical situations (critical framing), as well as use strategies they are already familiar with to engage in new discourses (transformed practice). Transformed practice allows us to move away from the

assumption that students enter our classrooms as blank slates. Instead, students come with their own literate practices for reading and analyzing texts.

The last two components in this scaffolding seem particularly promising for building a heuristic to teach Holocaust testimony. However, while this scaffolding offers opportunities for real-world reading and writing as well as a working language for discussing the texts students are reading and writing, it fails to consider the affective dimension of confronting trauma in the classroom. This gap in Goggin and Goggin's scaffolding will be addressed in the following heuristic. If we take Goggin and Goggin's scaffolding and use it in connection with critical emotional praxis, we can see that there is an opportunity to provide a more robust and grounded model that not only takes into account strategies for reading and writing about Holocaust testimony, but also the affective responses that are inherently part of this process. We can also connect a rhetoric of silence and rhetorical listening framework with these pedagogical models to allow for a heuristic which addresses not only the speech of trauma survivors, but also their silences. With this, we learn to respect our students' silences and the gaps in their own writing to such trauma-laden texts.

The following heuristic provides instruction for both reading and writing and thus provides the connection between reading and writing that is so often missing from the composition classroom. Additionally, this heuristic, while modeled specifically for teaching Holocaust testimony, is flexible enough to adapt to the teaching of other traumatic texts and is intended to serve not as a delimiting model but rather as a jumping off point for students to discover their own unique inquiry process as they read/listen and write to learn. And finally, this heuristic, while divided into "phases," should not be

viewed as a linear process or as stages to reach effective analysis. Rather, it should be viewed as a recursive and non-linear process, where students will be engaged in a continual process of enacting all or some of these phases at different points throughout their reading and writing practices with the goal of “constantly reinvent[ing] new ways of becoming critical witnesses of trauma narratives” (Zembylas 33).

Heuristic

Historicizing

Prior to, during, and subsequent to the reading of trauma testimony, students should be in a continual process of historicizing the texts and events they are reading and writing about (see fig. 1). That is, students must contextualize the text(s) within their relevant historical and cultural significance and work to flesh out the implications such historicizing necessitates.

Boler offers instructive terminology to unpack this process of historicizing. She connects “an historicized ethics” with emotional selectivity. She writes, “To develop an historicized ethics depends upon recognizing the selectivity of one’s vision and emotional attention. As one learns to recognize patterns of emotional selectivity, one also learns to recognize when one ‘spectates’ vs. when one ‘bears witness’” (183). Boler offers a fascinating argument that equates spectating with privilege, identification with good and evil, and “popular history”, and bearing witness with provisional truths and historical responsibility. Boler, while focusing on racism and homophobia as two examples of how oppression is culturally manifested in “forms of bias, institutionalized discrimination, and marginalization” (183), offers important considerations for the reading of testimony. She asks, “What are the forces that bring about this ‘crisis’ [in the testimony]?” (186). Such

forces can only be identified through the process of historicizing the events we are reading and writing about.

When we ask students to historicize, we ask them to “bear witness” to both the historical specificity of event as well as the continuous, ongoing, and complex processes of social and cultural factors that both led to the event and that frame our current understanding of the event today. For Holocaust testimony, students inevitably come up against questions concerning anti-Semitism, morality, the progress of modern civilization and technology, racism, genocide, as well as the ever-pervasive question of why many Jews did not leave Austria and Germany, in particular, when they had time and advanced warning to do so (unlike the Polish and Czech Jews, for example, most of whom did not have enough warning to emigrate in time).

Susannah Heschel and Sander Gilman, in their respective Holocaust courses, address these questions by offering their students the following historical context:

[A] brief survey of Judeophobia in the Greco-Roman world . . . , a trajectory of Judeophobia through early and medieval Christianity . . . , the economic tensions and expulsions of the early modern era, and the newer forms of racial antisemitism that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century and were so significant in the Nazi movement. (86)

While such an extensive historical contextualizing may not be possible in all courses that cover Holocaust testimony, it is crucial for instructors and students to address—at minimum—how the Holocaust-as-event has changed throughout the decades and in different countries. For instance, as Caroline Schaumann writes:

[D]iscussions of the Holocaust in both Germany and the United States focus on entirely different issues than they did in earlier decades. For instance, one might think of psychiatrists' diagnoses of the "survivor syndrome" in the 1950s, of the Eichmann trial and the ensuing "banality of evil" discourse in the 1960s, of the increased attention to Holocaust studies following the TV miniseries "Holocaust" in the 1970s, of the Historians' Debate in the 1980s, of the emergence of research on women in the Holocaust in the late 1980s, of the intentionalist-functionalist dispute and the Americanization of the Holocaust in the 1990s, and of the increasing attention to second-generation Holocaust representation in the 2000s.

(328)

In addition to this shifting of meaning that the Holocaust continues to undergo for both survivors and secondary witnesses, the long history of antisemitism that is the backdrop to the events leading up to the Holocaust as well as issues of class, wealth, lack of social connections, and disbelief that prevented so many Jews from leaving Europe prior to the deportations, might also be necessary to address. Working to historicize the texts that we read and the texts that we write will help to offer provisional answers and contextualize some of the difficult questions students will be confronting.

Limits of Representation

All text is a representation of something. While this alone is an important reminder while analyzing and writing texts, we must ensure that it remains central to our analysis and writing when we are dealing with trauma testimony. It is vital to understand that what we are reading and writing about is only a model, and models are inherently limited in what they can offer us. In addition, Holocaust survivors have repeatedly made

the claim that there is no symbol system to describe the events they survived; indeed, that language seems to fail them when they need it the most. There is also an inevitable contradiction in the statements of many Holocaust survivors when they state that they want to make known that which is ultimately *unknowable*, that which cannot be re-created for those of us who were not there and who, subsequently, cannot re-enter the reality of the cattle cars, the ghettos, the camps.

We might ask the following questions here: is the need to put into words one's experience with a traumatic event essential because this witnessing creates attachments between bodies and worlds that make the experience real or generative in a way that was impossible prior to the witnessing? What type of representation best meets this need? What writing—done by the secondary witness—responds ethically to the survivor's testimony/witnessing?

In fact, there has been a significant amount of controversy about what constitutes an appropriate genre for “credible” Holocaust representations. Historians have notoriously eschewed autobiography as an unreliable text for illuminating the past, claiming that historical narratives do a better job at providing a context for understanding such events. Annette Wievorka, for example, “warns that emotion-laden firsthand accounts can obscure the importance of the historian's effort to ‘establish the facts and try to give them a meaning’ through analysis” (qtd in Popkin 21). This type of distinction between the emotional and the rational—and subsequently between narrative and historical fact—is what this heuristic works to deconstruct. And yet, Wievorka offers an important reminder that many students will enter our classrooms with this common perspective, which privileges historical accounts over firsthand testimonies.

Other historians, however, do recognize the role autobiography plays in reconstructing the past. One example is Jeremy Popkin, who states in *History, Historians, and Autobiography*, “The autobiographer can describe the past from the inside, filling in the dimension of motives and reactions that the outside observer can never fully know” (6). This “inside” perspective supports the argument that testimony places history back in the hands of its “real” authors, those who actually experienced the historical events they are writing about. In spite of, or perhaps in response to, this autobiography/historiography debate, there now exists the commonly accepted stance that all historical documentation is subjective. Taken from this view, no written representation of any past event should be read uncritically.

The search for “credible” representations of the Holocaust also raises the issue of narrative. What is the role of narrative in conveying historical events, and is this role limiting? David McCooey’s argument on the issue of narrative, as cited in Popkin, is: “The fact that both autobiographies and histories structure events in narrative form is not proof that they are distorting reality, for human reality is necessarily constituted in narrative form” (31). McCooey draws on the work of philosopher and phenomenologist David Carr, “who has argued that narrative structure is an inherent feature of all human experience” (32). Given that narrative is “inherent” in all human experience, does narrative provide an important, and perhaps the only, vehicle for survivors to tell their story? And given the vast gap between “normal” human experience and traumatic experiences such as the Holocaust, how do narrative genres act as limiting constraints rather than enabling ones, given that “narrative is by its nature selective and limiting” (Hutton 534)?

These, and other, questions are vital to address as students begin reading and writing about Holocaust testimonies, as they will be confronted with deconstructing the dichotomy between affective responses and “rational truths”, as well as confronting issues of why some survivors have chosen to remain silent while others have chosen to tell their story. And while the focus of my heuristic is on testimony, it is constructive here to question the use of this genre for understanding the Holocaust experience, especially given the heated debates over what counts as a credible Holocaust representation.

Silences/Gaps

Too often we dismiss the gaps and silences in survivor testimony as a reluctance to speak or as a break in the historical record, the latter of which reaffirms those who question a survivor testimony’s reliability. As Diana Gittens writes, “In autobiographies and life stories silences may be a sign either of deliberate exclusion or of lost memory” (46). There is also a negative perception of silence as not a choice, but rather a prescription to remain silent, or to be silenced. However, when we recognize that often these gaps and silences are results of an inability to articulate a traumatic event because there seems to be no language to describe what happened, as the secondary witnesses to such testimony we have the responsibility to critically engage these silences and determine to what rhetorical effect these silences produce in the text. This proves challenging, though, because we are conditioned from our earliest school-aged experiences to read a text by deconstructing the words on the page in order to come to a cohesive narrative of what the text *says*; therefore, we are often uncomfortable reading or writing with a goal of identifying what is left unsaid, or accepting provisional interpretations of a text. However, by repositioning ourselves as both readers and writers

who *listen to* what is *not* said, to what is *unspoken*, we place greater importance on the gaps and silences within a text, which ultimately allows for a more mediated, provisional acceptance of the text rather than a need for a closure-based position. In other words, when we allow for the silences in a text to have just as much value as the words on the page, we allow for negotiated readings and non-closure based understandings of the text.

This phase (see fig. 1) in the heuristic, then, involves providing students with the necessary strategies for listening for and identifying the gaps and silences in a text. These strategies include asking the following questions of a testimony: Are there lapses or gaps in the text? If so, how does the text negotiate these lapses? What questions does one have after reading the text? Could these unanswered questions be purposeful exclusions on the writer's part? Why/why not? This phase will become increasingly important as we begin to take a critical look at the rhetorical features of the text and how these rhetorical features are working within particular cultural/social ideologies.

Affective Economies/ Relationality

It is crucial to work as a class to develop a working language to describe, discuss, and critically engage affective responses (see fig. 1). What affective economies are working within the text? That is, what emotions can be identified between survivor and text (writing trauma), and between text and reader (reading/writing about trauma)? Identifying these affective relationalities probes students to consider any sentimental readings they may have within a framework of productive affective analysis. Here I draw heavily on Ahmed's concept that emotion is recursive. In other words, there is no beginning, middle, or end; rather, emotion exists in the space between bodies, between objects and texts, and between cultural ideologies. According to Ahmed, emotion

operates referentially. This challenges our traditional notion that emotion begins internally and is expressed outwardly. If emotions did exist internally, within the body of the survivor, to be expressed outwardly in the form of testimony, then we would remain fixed on the survivor of the trauma and the ability of the survivor to transmit the traumatic experience. However, if emotions and trauma are not individualized states, but rather exist relationally, then we, as readers/witnesses, have the *responsibility* to explore these relations and to unpack the emotional connections circulating within and around the boundaries which link inside and outside, survivor and secondary witness, event and representation of event. Further, we have the responsibility to critically engage these affective relations in order to better understand how our affective responses can be culturally and historically contextualized. What is important here is that emotions do not exist independently from their social and cultural surroundings.

While a traditional understanding of affective readings of a text may recognize that the reader will experience varying emotions due to the content or context of a text, Ahmed's theory of affective stickiness recognizes that these emotions occur in *relation* to the text, to the writer of the text, and to the reader's cultural and social context. For example, a reader of a Holocaust testimony may feel outrage at a particular explanation of brutality a survivor experienced at the hands of the Nazis. Traditional understandings of emotion suggest that this reader's outrage is an internal reaction; that is, that something externally—the explanation of brutality—triggered an internal response—outrage—that is then expressed as emotion. Affective stickiness, however, recognizes that this outrage is mediated by our cultural understandings of what type of behavior we should be outraged by and what type of behavior does not merit outrage. It also

recognizes that this outrage is mediated by the context in which the reader is in: who else is involved in the reading of this text, and what emotions are they expressing? In this phase students will work to identify the emotions they are experiencing, the writer [may] be experiencing in his or her text, and the emotions of classmates and the classroom. Students should also work to contextualize these emotions given cultural influences and contexts.

This phase, then, teaches students to recognize and accept the affective experiences they may be having while reading/writing about/of trauma rather than to follow the more common academic prescription of not allowing emotions to get in the way of a rational analysis of a text. However, this phase also allows students to reach a mediated stasis between sentimental rendering and de-emotioned critical analysis. In an effort to push students towards a more critical analysis of text, this is a necessary phase as it recognizes and attends to the emotional experiences not only of a survivor writing text or of a secondary witness reading text, but also of the emotioned and difficult nature of writing about trauma as a secondary witness, as this often involves re-living a traumatic experience that, while not one's own, can often create an experience of parallel traumatization.

This phase also provides students with both a forum and language for describing and attending to the affective economies working within a classroom that is studying trauma texts. That is, students can determine what emotions are circulating not with just themselves as individuals, but between student and student, between relations of difference. The important part of this phase is to allow students a space for the naming of affective responses.

Following Zembylas's assertion that "any attention to emotion needs to be placed within a particular social and cultural context if it is to be an effective force in understanding the ethics and politics of justice claims" (23), it is imperative that this phase also seek to contextualize affective responses students may have or the affective relationality they see working in and between the texts they are reading/writing. Questions to guide this process are: What cultural or historical norms or ideologies are working to contribute to the affective responses you are having to these texts? How might we use these responses effectively to critically analyze these texts? How can your individual emotional response to a Holocaust testimony be understood as a "collective response to specific sociopolitical conditions, both in the past and in the present" (Zembylas 23)? Also, given that the composition classroom is not a neutral space, but one marked by power relations and the dominant culture's ideology, how can you contextualize your own affective responses within the classroom/school setting?

Critical Framing

During the process of contextualizing a student's affective relations to a text, as well as understanding how affective economies are working within and around a text, it is crucial to begin denaturalizing or, as Goggin and Goggin state, "defamiliariz[ing] the familiar as a means of helping . . . [to] gain critical distance from the reading and writing activities [students] are engaged in and the social and cultural contexts in which their meaning-making occurs" (44). In this way, students are involved in a process of both contextualizing and deconstructing their experiences within particular social and cultural ideologies (see fig.1). The goal here is to take a critical look at the gaps/silences in a text that students have been in the process of identifying as well as the affective economies

they have identified, and deconstructing these silences and emotions. For example, students should ask themselves to what rhetorical effect the silences they have identified in the text serve? Further, students should ask how the emotions they have identified might be mediated or constructed through societal norms. In other words, critical framing allows students to delve into the following overarching questions: What does this Holocaust representation convey to you and what can it *not* convey? Critically frame the message that the text does convey in terms of your cultural and historical context. What culturally-sanctioned emotional responses are expected from you as you read these Holocaust testimonies? What types of writings—both genre and content— are culturally and socially accepted forms of response to these testimonies? How do the binaries “us” / “them” or “victim” / “perpetrator” limit our critical engagement with the representation? This last question is extremely important as these types of binary distinctions often lead to sentimental student responses and closure-based readings. Complicating these distinctions thwarts these responses and leads to a more mediated understanding of the text, preventing simplistic closures. The goal here is to engage these questions in order to allow for a space where students can critically analyze the texts they are reading and writing.

It must be stated here that the critical framing I am suggesting in this phase of the heuristic is different from what we commonly think of as “critical distance.”

Although Goggin and Goggin use the phrase “critical distance” in their scaffolding, such distancing should not be justification to circumvent the integrated role affect plays in critical analysis. Rather, the *critical framing* I am offering here enables students to recognize through analysis of the social and cultural implications of trauma texts and

writing about trauma texts how affective responses are viewed, approved of (or not), and (de)valued. Goggin and Goggin state in the conclusion to their scaffolding that “[students] can discover with our help . . . that there *are* questions, and that cultural, social, political, personal, and academic responses and reactions to writing about trauma—or anything—are embedded with tacit and overt values, experiences, and theories that shape the public (discourse) construction of knowledge” (45, original emphasis). The responses and reactions that Goggin and Goggin outline here inevitably encompass affective responses, including the emotions of shame, fear, and guilt, to name just a few. Too, critical framing pushes students toward a recognition of the “tacit and overt values, experiences, and theories” that not only shape construction of knowledge, but that also shape which responses are valued and which are not, which responses are accepted and which are not.

As a final note, the previous phase (affective economies and relationality) states that it is crucial to identify and contextualize the affective responses and economies that are circulating around the reading and writing about/of Holocaust testimony. This phase, then, does not suggest that we should view affect as being distinct or disparate from a “rational” critical distance. Since this heuristic is recursive, with students moving back and forth between phases and using strategies from different phases concurrently, critical framing recognizes that affect is a part of analyzing the gaps and silences in a text and also that denaturalizing and deconstructing affective responses does not diminish or decenter affect; rather, it recognizes that such responses are crucial to the reading and writing about/of trauma testimony and that when we work to critically analyze, or “defamiliarize the familiar” (44), we seek to move beyond sentimental responses to a

space where we can denaturalize affective economies in order to better understand the interconnected nature of text, writer, and reader, and how social and cultural ideologies impact all three.

Transformed Practice

This phase (see fig. 1), as Goggin and Goggin succinctly express in their scaffolding, posits that students come to our classes “with a diverse variety of conceptual and material tools that shape their literate practices and that emerge out of their past literate experiences” (44). In other words, students do not come to our classes as blank slates; rather, they come with their own ideas and understandings of how to interpret, analyze, and write about traumatic texts. The goal here is to push students towards developing their own inquiry processes and analytical strategies that will aid them in their literate practices. Specifically for Holocaust testimony, this phase recognizes that students will have different and varying preconceptions and experiences with the Holocaust-as-event, and therefore may require different and varying strategies for analysis.

Students should be well prepared to identify the analytical strategies that are working well for them because of their engagement with the other phases in the heuristic. As students continue to work to historicize texts, understand text as representation, identify gaps/silences in a text, identify affective responses/relationality, and use critical framing to engage social and cultural implications of text and reading/writing about/of text, they are in a continual and recursive process of utilizing interpretative and analytical strategies to confront the difficult questions each phase poses. Transformed practice, then, asks students to identify the strategies that are working well for them, develop these

strategies for specific reading and writing tasks, and understand how these strategies are working throughout the different phases in the heuristic. Transformed practice also recognizes that this heuristic is flexible. In other words, students can adopt best practices from the variety of strategies the heuristic offers as well as adapt the strategies to particular contexts, situations, and texts.

To illustrate transformed practice, I'll use the student response from *MAUS* outlined earlier in this chapter. A condensed version of the former student response follows:

[. . .] By not pulling any punches, [Spiegelman] addresses the horrors that occurred without making the reader feel as though she or he has been bombarded by feelings of rage and guilt. *Often, the story of the Holocaust is told from a standpoint of such emotional turmoil that factual information is lost.* (Boler 163, emphasis added)

Transformed practice recognizes that students have had previous experiences with reading or analyzing Holocaust texts or representations. This student in particular seems to have had experience with separating the “emotional turmoil” inherent to Holocaust testimony from the “factual information” of the Holocaust. This experience, while counter to the type of integrated critical engagement we expect students to conduct of the affective responses and relationality that are working within and around the trauma testimony, offers this student an invaluable starting point for deconstructing the cultural and social expectations readers of Holocaust texts must confront. This student is well positioned to take the strategies offered in the phase of critical framing— for example defamiliarizing the familiar—and applying them to his/her already existing framework

for reading and analyzing trauma texts. The integration of existing strategies with new strategies should enable students to build on previous knowledge, deconstruct social and cultural ideologies that are working within each strategy, and ultimately identify the type of analyses that are most helpful for them throughout the various phases of reading and writing about/of Holocaust testimony.

Criteria for Text Selection

The Holocaust is often understood as the twentieth century paradigmatic event of unrepresentable suffering and obliteration. Despite this, we are left with innumerable testimonies, memoirs, diaries, and literary representations of the event. It would seem, then, that there is a sort of paradox in the unrepresentable representation. And yet, despite the difficulties inherent to all representations of trauma, survivor testimonies seem to be a particularly instructive genre for analysis. As Donald Niewyk has suggested, “‘close attention to survivors’ accounts [might buy] texture and historicity at the expense of coherence,’ but he adds that ‘it is a risk we need to take if we are to grasp the complexity of the process and approach an understanding of what happened to the victims’” (qtd in Kushner 275). Similarly, Jeffrey Blutinger has stated, “Teaching from a victim-centered perspective can deepen a student’s understanding, create empathic connections with the material, and transform the way students see history and the world” (276).

Indeed, survivor testimonies challenge not only our understanding of the Holocaust-as-event, but also other traumatic events and the ensuing and consequential testimonies and witnesses they bring about. As Miller and Tougaw write, “[T]he Holocaust has produced a discourse—a set of terms and debates about the nature of trauma, testimony, witness, and community—that has affected other domains of

meditation on the forms the representation of extreme human suffering seems to engender and require” (4). The challenge, of course, is to recognize the historical specificity of the Holocaust while simultaneously adopting a “double vision” (Miller and Tougaw) or what W.E.B. Du Bois has called a “double consciousness” (qtd in Miller and Tougaw) as a way to see commonalities, overlaps, or reverberations within other contexts. An important question we should consider here is: what motivates us to turn the page, to continue reading about past violence given that we so often forget about the current violence, some of which occurs much closer to home?

The task set for compositionists who wish to teach Holocaust texts, then, is to emphasize the importance of studying Holocaust testimonies while also keeping in mind that the potential pedagogical methods to disrupt sentimental responses to Holocaust testimonies might also bring us towards a more critical analysis of other historical (and current) events as well. As Hirsch and Kacandes write in their Introduction to *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, “[W]hile arguments of the Holocaust’s incommensurability still hold a certain validity in psychoanalytic frameworks like that of trauma, our current students may be skeptical of them, from what they know of genocidal killing in Cambodia, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia” (10). Indeed, the remove that many students will feel from historical accounts of the Holocaust must be addressed in the classroom. However, there should be an overall awareness that the strategies for reading and writing about the Holocaust as a traumatic event will aid students in more complex understandings of other, potentially more recent or closer-to-home traumatic events.

I have chosen to focus solely on survivor testimony for my analysis rather than film, fiction, or historical representation. I have chosen to do so for several reasons. For one, each genre is different and it would be impossible to adequately attend to these differences in my heuristic. While the heuristic I outline may indeed have implications for these other genres, I do not profess that this heuristic will be equally effective with different representations, particularly if these representations are fictional or semi-fictional. Secondly, testimony is unique in that similar rhetorical features are often used among them, including intended audience and purpose, offering a ripe opportunity for rhetorical analysis. Thirdly, testimony is the closest we, as secondary witnesses or witnesses to the witness, can get to the actual traumatic event experienced by the victims. Even though there are still inherent gaps between survivor and representation and between representation and secondary witness, these gaps pale in comparison if we look at fictional accounts or historical accounts of the same traumatic event. And finally, as Zembylas states, trauma testimonies are arguably one of the best available means we as educators have for “approaching controversial issues such as war, cross-cultural conflict, genocide, racism, and terrorism” (19) with our students and for opening the subsequent possibilities for individual and social transformation.

The text I have chosen for my analysis is meant to serve as a potential example for application of the heuristic rather than as the text that should be required for a course that covers Holocaust testimony. I have chosen Ruth Klüger’s *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*. This text works especially well because it is not an English translation of Klüger’s original testimony written in German; rather, it is a “parallel book” (Klüger 210) written specifically for an American audience. *Still Alive* also

exemplifies the stops, starts, gaps, and silences that are so prevalent in survivor testimonies. The criteria I used for selecting this text were 1) appropriate language level for first year college students; 2) representative of the Holocaust testimony genre, including the common rhetorical features these testimonies use; 3) a victim-centered perspective of the Holocaust experience; and 4) emphasis on the unusual demands that testimony places on both writers and readers.

I selected a text from a Jewish Holocaust victim in order to maintain focus on the unique Jewish experience of the Holocaust. It is important to state here, though, that non-Jewish victims, including homosexuals, Roma Gypsies, those of different faiths such as Jehovah Witnesses, the disabled, and political and religious opponents, had countless harrowing and traumatic experiences and my choice of focus is not meant to diminish or gloss over their experiences or senseless deaths.

Methodological and Ethical Issues of Using Survivor Testimony

Many scholars have addressed the varied methodological and ethical problems with using survivor testimonies in the classroom. These problems range from the fact that survivor testimony is “atypical, because it is the account of a *survivor* [and] [m]ost of those who entered the Nazi camp system, whether gay, Jewish, Roma, or Sinti, did not survive” (Blutinger 274, original emphasis); to accusations of reliability and accuracy (particularly in response to the now well-known fabrication of Binjamin Wilkomirski’s “memoir” *Fragments*); to the constraints of representation; and to the burden such an engagement entails for both students and teachers alike (Blutinger). It is my hope that the heuristic I have outlined in this chapter will address most of these concerns, as it works to *historicize* each individual testimony, offering a space to recognize the extraordinary or

unusual circumstances that led to the individual's survival; it acknowledges the complex and imperfect nature of testimony by identifying and contextualizing the *silences* that are an inherent part of survivor testimony; it grapples with the *limitations of representation*; and, finally, it attends to the *affective responses and relationalities* that are an inexorable part of reading and writing about Holocaust testimony, offering students and teachers a means to identify, defamiliarize, and contextualize these affective responses.

In the following chapter, I will ground the heuristic offered here by applying it to Ruth Klüger's testimony *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*.

CHAPTER THREE: APPLICATION OF HEURISTIC: RUTH KLÜGER'S TESTIMONY *STILL ALIVE*

Ruth Klüger's testimony, titled *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* [for the English transition, 2001] was first written in German in 1992, over fifty years after the German occupation of Austria, the war, and Klüger's imprisonment in the death camps. This temporal remove Klüger is at while writing her memoir is noteworthy, especially when we are confronting the gaps and silences that are an inevitable part of reading and writing trauma testimony.

It should also be noted here that Klüger effectively has written two separate memoirs, as she calls the English publication of her book not a translation nor another version but a "parallel book [. . .] for my children and my American students" (210). The acclaim her testimony met with in Germany is also noteworthy, and contradictory to the "reviews better described as ambivalent than negative" (Schulte-Sasse 469) she received following her English publication *Still Alive*. Indeed, *weiter leben: eine Jugend* enjoyed much success when it was first published in Germany, climbing bestseller lists, a rare occurrence for a Holocaust testimony (Schaumann 324). Part of this success may be attributable to the year her memoir was published (1992), some forty years after the Germans had begun the process of confronting their Nazi past. It may also be attributable to the way Klüger frames her memoir. As Schaumann writes, "By addressing her readers directly, by provoking and even affronting them, Klüger included her German audience in her memoir and called on them to help with the construction of her testimony" (325).

Indeed, Klüger frequently addresses her readers in the English publication as well, with recurrent admonishments such as, “Dear reader, don’t wax sentimental” (123). These continual references to her American audience to not sentimentalize her experience create a dialogue between survivor and secondary witness that becomes increasingly important for students and instructors as we work to identify and contextualize the affective responses and relations in the classroom.

Klüger's English publication also seeks to historicize and contextualize the events of the Holocaust for an American audience. As Schaumann writes:

In contrast to dominant American representations of the Holocaust, Klüger does not idealize survival. Neither does she preach universal lessons or celebrate moral values. If scholars have denounced the "Americanization of the Holocaust" as an appropriation of the Holocaust in order to establish a contrasting American experience and American values, Klüger's version is more an embrace than an appropriation, as she uses distinctly American traumatic phenomena to explain and make relevant the Holocaust. (333)

This contextualizing on Klüger’s part, and tailoring to an American audience, should be part of the conversation as students begin to analyze her text. For part of the power of Klüger’s testimony, as well as much of the fodder for the book’s critique, is her ability to “frustrate our redemptive Holocaust paradigm with two oppositional strategies, the intermingling of a Holocaust story with personal recollections [of a mother-daughter relationship] that are too close, and with a narrative attitude that's too far away [detailing a half-century of Holocaust afterlife]” (Schulte-Sasse 474). In the end, it is the testimony’s inability to offer closure that provides the strongest imperative to readers.

“*Still Alive* cannot offer catharsis simply because it cannot find closure; the least we as readers can do is not invent closure” (Schulte-Sasse 474).

I have chosen Klüger’s testimony to ground the heuristic I offer in the previous chapter for several reasons. For one, it exemplifies the Holocaust testimony genre, demonstrating similar rhetorical features as other testimonies, including rhetorical silence and a contextualizing of affective responses of both survivor and secondary witness. For another, it offers a female perspective of the Holocaust concentration camp experience, including a mother-daughter relationship that is somewhat unique from the more often told narrative of father-son relationships. And, as Nancy K. Miller writes in her review of Klüger’s book, “*Still Alive* can’t be understood outside the knot of this mother-daughter entanglement—a relationship of ambivalence that resembles in many ways the antagonistic mother-daughter pairs in twentieth-century autobiographical writing by women” (387). And finally, it is a testimony written fifty years after the events of the Holocaust, which allows Klüger to have sustained inquiry and reflection on the events she lived through as well as an ability to narrate her experience *after* the Holocaust as a German professor in the United States. This temporal remove affords Klüger the opportunity to show her readers how the events of the Holocaust have shaped her life as she struggles with the murder of her father and brother and what it means to have survived, and to continue to survive.

I am applying this heuristic to Klüger’s testimony to illustrate how it could potentially work in a model classroom. This application, however, recognizes that all classroom dynamics are different and that a perfect classroom dynamic unfortunately does not exist. I hope to demonstrate here how instructors can utilize the heuristic I offer

in their classrooms, with the goal of showing how this heuristic works to destabilize and disrupt sentimental student responses. Through the application of this heuristic, I hope to show how students and instructors alike can move away from the duality of emotional turmoil/rational analysis and “us”/“them” and towards a sustained critical engagement with Holocaust testimony that recognizes both the limitations and opportunities such texts offer in the composition classroom.

The Composition Classroom

The space I imagine for this heuristic to function is the composition classroom, as that is the context in which I teach, and as the rhetorical analysis and response writing that the heuristic engenders would be especially constructive for composition students. The heuristic is flexible enough, however, to adapt to various contexts, and therefore could be used in courses outside of composition, such as literature, history, and women’s studies. It is also flexible in that it does not prescribe assignments, and therefore could be utilized in a first year composition class or an advanced composition class, in which teachers could adapt the heuristic to their specific class needs and develop writing assignments that would be most applicable for their students.

The group of students I imagine will come from various backgrounds: some Jewish, others not. They will be of different genders, different ethnic and geographic backgrounds, as well as varying social classes. While this type of mixed classroom is typically not the norm (depending, of course, where one teaches), for the purposes of this ideal classroom dynamic, I am imagining that both students and instructor will have to contend with varying perspectives based on class, gender, and ethnicity.

These students most likely will have had some experience with and exposure to the Holocaust-as-event, especially with the prevalence of popular culture representations of the Holocaust, such as the blockbuster film *Schindler's List*. Therefore, part of the first-day discussion with these students should entail an effort to historicize and contextualize the Holocaust, including what it means to study Holocaust testimony from an American perspective. Questions to pose to students would include: How has America co-opted the Holocaust for its own purposes (or not)? Why does the Holocaust still seem relevant today, over a half-century after the event? What genre of representation seems to provide the best understanding of the Holocaust? The objective for this first day discussion will be to orient students to the Holocaust-as-event and to identify where students are in terms of identification with the Americanized version of the Holocaust, various Holocaust genres, the well-known prescriptions such as “never forget,” and the claim made by some that the Holocaust is a specific historical event that prevents easy comparisons.

The overall objective for this course will be to introduce the heuristic for teaching trauma testimony in an effort to provide students with the necessary strategies to engage in reading and writing about/of Holocaust testimony. Such strategies will enable students to move past sentimental responses and uncritical identifications with survivors to a place where they can critically analyze their own affective responses as well as the affective relations working within and around the text and classroom; understand the rhetorical strategies—such as silence—that survivors use in their texts; and work to critically frame the social and cultural ideologies that are inherent to both the writing and reading of text as they continually historicize the representation and find new strategies for their own

transformed practice. Such an effort requires spending a significant amount of class time unpacking each phase in the heuristic, returning to it and reframing it for each text we read and for each writing prompt we are given. Ultimately, this heuristic offers what other pedagogical methods lack; namely, the integration of the rational with the affective, the re-privileging of silence as a rhetorical act, and the flexibility to adapt to various contexts.

To work through Klüger's text in the space of this model classroom, I will utilize the six-phased heuristic that I outline in Chapter 2, beginning with historicizing the social and cultural context(s) surrounding the testimony and understanding Klüger's testimony-as-representation of events, moving into an identification of silences and gaps in the text, followed by an identification of affective responses and relationality, which leads into an analysis of how to contextualize these affective responses. I will then move into the phase of critical framing, which pushes students towards a critical analysis which will allow for further engagement with the rhetorical principles working within the text. The last phase, transformed practice, will offer a brief overview of some of the ways instructors can work with the knowledge students already have prior to entering their classrooms in order to reach more applicable and relevant reading/writing strategies for students.

Heuristic

Historicizing Klüger's Testimony

This phase (see fig 1) asks that students be in a continual process of historicizing the texts and events they are reading and writing about. That is, students must contextualize the text(s) within their relevant historical and cultural significance and work to flesh out the implications such historicizing necessitates. For Klüger's text, this

involves understanding not only her position as a young Jewish girl, but as a young Jewish Austrian girl in German-occupied Vienna. Spending time understanding the historical specificity of what it meant to be Jewish in Vienna in 1941, for example, is important. Students can read Klüger's text with this aim in mind.

A frequent question students and readers of Holocaust testimony have is, "Why did the Jews not leave in time? Why would they stay in a country that had such hatred for them and did not want them there?" The following passage from Klüger's testimony offers an excellent entry point for students and instructors to begin historicizing these, and similar, questions:

The remaining children wore shabby hand-me-downs, and their language was the dialect of the outlying districts: one could see and hear that they were the children of the poor. For one could not emigrate without money. In all the countries of the world, poor Jews were even less welcome than wealthy Jews. (22)

It is important to work with students to contextualize why some Jews were able to leave and why others could not. Comparisons can—cautiously and tentatively—be made here to Hurricane Katrina victims, those who did not have the resources or ability to "get out in time." Discussions to have with students here should center on class distinctions, social connections, as well as the cultural and political acumen to seek the proper channels for emigration, and thus escape.

Additional historicizing must be done as well on this topic. For, even if one wanted to leave Austria (or Germany, Italy, France), one needed a passport. And these were increasingly difficult to come by, both because the German-occupied countries made it more and more difficult for Jewish residents to leave and because fewer and

fewer countries allowed Jewish immigrants to enter their borders. As Klüger writes, “Vienna was a city with no exit, a city that banished you and then didn’t allow you to leave” (26). Additionally, in a display of irony at its finest, there was the “*Reichsfluchtsteuer*, literally a tax for flight from the Reich. The Reich wanted to be compensated when its unwanted citizens actually left. You were either property of the state, or you were ‘stateless,’ which in turn meant that although you had unquestionably been born into the world, you were not allowed to live anywhere” (35). Although Klüger’s father was able to flee Austria for Italy (it was a common assumption that Jewish women and children were in much less danger than Jewish men), she and her mother stayed because they did not have the resources to pay the *Reichsfluchtsteuer* since Jewish property had been seized and since Jewish bank accounts could no longer be accessed (35). Klüger writes:

So Vienna became my first prison. As in all prisons, there was interminable talk about freedom and escape, meaning emigration. Our bags were always packed, we were always on the brink of moving to another country, and we were never comfortably settled, not even for the near future. (26)

Unfortunately, though, for Klüger and her mother, their chance to emigrate never solidified. Klüger does mention that she had the chance of leaving Vienna on a child transport to Palestine or England, but that her mother refused this suggestion from the young man at the Jewish Community Center, stating ““No. A child and its mother belong together”” (57).

And yet, Klüger does show the complexity of the emigration question, evidenced by the passage above as well as by the following:

And still I ask: Why didn't we get out in time? When others ask, I get irritated and answer that it's a stupid question: don't look at the émigrés who were lucky or rich or both; think of the hundreds of thousands of German and Austrian Jews (the Polish ones didn't have a chance in the first place) who perished. We happened to be among those who were pulled into that vortex. But I did ask *her* [Klüger's mother], many times, when she was still of sound mind: "Why? You had connections, you are pretty savvy, what happened to you?" (58)

Klüger makes an important point here. Perhaps the focus should be less on questioning why so many Jews *didn't* leave in time and more on questioning what events in history could possibly lead up to this disaster in our modern history; why so many "hundreds of thousands of German and Austrian Jews" (among the many other victims) perished.

Indeed, answering the difficult question, "why did this barbarity happen in a civilized country in a civilized age?" is another entry point to historicize the Holocaust-as-event. And to begin addressing this question, instructors may wish to use the following passage from Klüger's testimony:

There is a kind of intellectual game that examines every famous German of the past to determine what he may have contributed to the Holocaust: Bismarck, Nietzsche, the Romantic poets and philosophers, Luther and the Christianity of the Middle Ages [. . .] But the equation doesn't work. If it were correct, one would have to conclude that without a few, targeted old writings and artifacts in libraries and museums, the Nazis couldn't have run amok. The truth is a truism: one can't predict the future, just as one can't predict the next number on a roulette wheel. And the more "civilized" we become, the more our societies come to

resemble roulette tables, because no idea is so ludicrous that it can't be carried out where the taboos have broken down and values can be changed at a whim. (118-119)

Klüger challenges here one of the basic premises our current society likes to embrace: the maxim of continual forward moral and cultural progress. While the fact of the Holocaust alone should be evidence enough to contradict this maxim, Klüger offers an insightful observation here that civility does not equal predictability; that, in fact, civility equals unpredictability and randomness. Klüger writes later in her testimony, "Anyone may change simply by deciding to, for better or for worse. The more highly developed we are, the less predictable we become. Freedom means, among other things, unpredictability" (157). Not only does Klüger challenge us here to deconstruct the common assumption that human behavior is predictable or that free and democratic societies prevent "barbarity", she also hints at the randomness, or unpredictability, of her own escape into freedom, a survival that was partly dependent on what she calls the peculiar and unpredictable "intervention of the stranger" (108), a young woman who prompted Klüger to say she was fifteen, not twelve, at an Auschwitz selection to avoid the gas chambers and instead enter the labor camp of Christianstadt.

There is certainly a tendency when reading survivor testimony to allow for one person's unique story to stand in for the entire Holocaust experience: in Klüger's case, a survival and escape story. Klüger writes that her reader will most likely read her story and naturally assume that her life can stand in for the anonymous millions we do not hear from. She states:

[W]e start writing because we want to tell about the great catastrophe. But since by definition the survivor is alive, the reader inevitably tends to separate, or deduct, this one life, which she has come to know, from the millions who remain anonymous. You feel, even if you don't think it: well, there is a happy ending after all. Without meaning to, I find that I have written an escape story, not only in the literal but in the pejorative sense of the word. So how can I keep my readers from feeling good about the obvious drift of my story away from the gas chambers and the killing fields and towards the postwar period, where prosperity beckons? (137-138)

Perhaps this is a dilemma that all survivors face: how to tell their individual story, and yet still honor the dead by recognizing the fortunate—or chance, as many survivors describe it—circumstances of their survival or escape. What is important here for students is to not answer Klüger's question but heed her warning. Implicitly she is saying: do not let my story represent those who did not survive, who did not return. She is also warning her reader to not form a closure-based reading where we can walk away feeling happy about her life following the death camps. These implicit warnings found throughout Klüger's testimony work rhetorically as a way to address her readers indirectly and probe them to critically engage with these dilemmas she describes. And each of these warnings is a place where students and instructors should take pause and begin contextualizing her admonitions, working against sentimental responses. It is as though she is saying: "Reader, do not walk away from this story feeling good about me or my fellow survivors, or even feeling good about yourself. Remember those who did not return, and remember that my escape story is unique and circumstantial." This is an apt warning, and one that

outlines the dangers of a sentimental reading. However, because Klüger wrote her story fifty years after the war, she is able to write about a life inescapably affected by the events of the Holocaust, a life of continual confrontation with the death of her father and brother and the events she endured at the various camps and in postwar Germany. This point of view enables students and instructors to not only historicize her testimony and the events she describes, but to also begin seeing how these events have shaped the rest of her life.

As students work to historicize both text and context as they are reading and writing, they will be less likely to make the leap from individual to collective experience. Having said that, survivor testimonies do “provide an opportunity for students to make abstract and general treatments of historical topics more vivid” (Misco 14). The challenge, of course, is how to honor other survivors as well as the dead as we rescue the “individual from an anonymous pile of bodies” (Salmons, qtd in Misco 15). This challenge is never easy; however, when a classroom utilizes historicizing in conjunction with the other phases in the heuristic, there is space to both recognize the uniqueness of each testimony while also contextualizing these narratives into one’s increasingly complex understanding of the multi-layered texture of the Holocaust.

Klüger does complicate this act of historicizing individual versus collective experiences, though. She reminds us that it is not a simple task of differentiating those who survived and those who did not. That we cannot begin an act of determining degrees of victimhood or degrees of suffering, although Klüger would most likely contend that there are those separations; for, “[t]he normal fate had been death; every one of us [survivors] was an exception” (151). The goal here is to recognize that all Holocaust

testimonies are representations of the suffering so many endured at the hands of the perpetrators. Although each testimony is unique, each seeks to be representative of an experience that we, as secondary witnesses, can only imagine. Klüger's story cannot stand in for the millions of those who perished at the hands of the Nazis just as it cannot be seen as an individual success story or as an aberration of the typical Holocaust narrative.

The Limits of Representation in Klüger's Testimony

This phase (see fig 1) states that all text is a representation of something. Here, then, we must remember that what we are reading and writing about is only a model, and models are inherently limited in what they can offer us. In addition, we need to recognize the limits of language to describe the indescribable, the fact that there is no symbol system to describe the events of the Holocaust.

Indeed, there is a strong sense in Klüger's testimony that she struggles with putting into language that which we have no language to describe. As Lore Segal writes in the Foreword to *Still Alive*, "[Klüger] worries that the very act of literature betrays what was experienced in the Holocaust: don't words make 'speaking' what is not?" (11). And yet, while Klüger is suspicious of what words can relate since "familiar words, black ink on dry white paper, interfere with the mute and essentially wordless suffering—the ooze of pain, if I may so call it—they aim to communicate" (18), she does write, even while maintaining, "I can't write this down" (11). We, as readers, then, are responsible for these words; we have an ethical responsibility to handle them with care.

It is important to remember here, though, these words are mere representations of the event. And, as such, they can never fully relate to the reader what was experienced.

They can only offer a limited model, and often they can only do so through comparison and metaphor. Returning to Segal's Foreword:

When we ask what something "is like," the language uses an idiom demanding simile or metaphor. We are asking for an association of something we can't know with something recognizable, and we respond with shocks of recognition. What was fear in the camps like? Ruth Kluger answers, "the psychological equivalent of epileptic fits," "like a theater in which a fire alarm has gone off." What were the roll calls like? "Standing in rows of five, thirsty and afraid of dying," hours, above all, of boredom. "The awareness that you are a prisoner of time," she says, "is a close cousin of despair." (11)

This passage is so important to address with students in the classroom, either through discussion or writing prompts, because it references how difficult it is to describe one's suffering as well as the limited—albeit often the *only*—method for doing so: metaphor. Questions to pose to students here would be: What additional metaphors does Klüger use throughout her testimony? Do these metaphors allow for (provisional) understandings of what she experienced? Do you agree with Segal that we can "respond with shocks of recognition" (11) to a well-placed metaphor? What do these "shocks of recognition" look like for you? And, importantly, how can we respond to these associations and metaphors ethically; in other words, how can we draw these connections in an ethically appropriate way, given that comparison can never fully cross the bridge between our understanding and the survivor's understanding?

Despite evidence to the contrary—the culmination of her writings in the form of a book—Klüger continually references the limitations of language to define her experiences. And indeed, as Ahmed writes:

There is a connection between the over-representation of pain and its unrepresentability [. . .] The vocabularies that are available for describing pain, either through medical language that codifies pain . . . or through metaphor that creates relations of likeness . . . seem inadequate in the face of the feeling. (22)

The gaps between event and representation and between survivor and secondary witness are magnified by the limitations of language. As Klüger writes, “These border situations between life and death are not easily accessible to words. Human speech was not invented or meant for extremes” (148). And yet, Ahmed furthers this discussion of the inadequacy of language by stating, “I want to suggest here, cautiously, and tentatively, that an ethics of responding to pain involves being open to being affected by that which one cannot know or feel” (30). This is crucial in that the ethical responsibility of the students and instructors in the composition classroom is not precluded by the limitations of language, and, in fact, may even provide an impetus for attempting to traverse the gaps and fissures that challenge our witnessing.

Language not only seems to fail us in terms of writing about that which is ultimately unspeakable, but also in terms of the inability to *name* something, whether an experience or an event. Klüger writes:

A concept without a name is like a stray dog or a feral cat. To domesticate it, you have to call it something . . . I don’t care particularly [if we use the term *Holocaust* or *Shoah*], as long as there is a word, any word, that unambiguously

refers to what we are talking about without the need for a lengthy circumlocution to pinpoint a particular catastrophe and distinguish it from others. (181)

What Klüger is emphasizing here is that the *naming* of an event matters, that through the act of naming, an event comes into being. And although she seems to suggest here that the particular words do not matter, it is also a complicated topic because of the varying connotations each word or phrase conveys. As Klüger herself writes earlier in her testimony, “It is the absurdity of the whole thing, the senselessness and waste of those murders and deportations which we call Holocaust, Shoah, ‘Final Solution’ (in quotation marks), the Jewish catastrophe—new terms, one after the other, because the words decay even as we use them” (118). Such a decaying indicates that our affective relations to these words change over time; that a naming that seemed appropriate in the nineteen seventies may no longer be appropriate, and that a new naming seems not only urgent, but also vital to the reclaiming of the event for the victims, both those who returned and those who did not. Students and instructors should not only focus here on how the Holocaust is represented in language, but also work to historicize these terms—and others—as they work through different Holocaust testimonies. Additionally, not only does language matter, but our affective relations to these terms matter. Spending time understanding what the Holocaust, Shoah, and “Final Solution” mean to victims, bystanders, and perpetrators alike, along with the affective relationalities each term seems to have, is vital.

As students continue to historicize the texts they are reading and writing, and as they work through the silences/gaps, the affective responses and relationalities, critical framing, and transformed practice phases, they must keep in mind that the testimonies

they are reading are only representations, and that as such, they are limited in both what they can convey and in the symbol system they must use. Similarly, the texts students write in our classes are also representations, and it is important for them to keep in mind that they are also working within a limited symbol system, and that they should think carefully about the power of this symbol system, about the power of language to describe—even if only through metaphor or points of likeness—their responses to trauma testimony.

Silences/Gaps in Klüger's Testimony

This phase in the heuristic asks students to listen for and identify the gaps and silences that are an inevitable part of trauma testimony. Some of these silences/gaps are the stops and starts in a text, the lack of a chronological sequence, the survivor's stated (or implicit) silences regarding historical detail or gaps in memory, the silences a survivor meets when telling her story, the rhetorical strategy of chosen silence to prevent readers/listeners from discomfort or unease, and the gaps and silences that inevitably exist between survivor and secondary witness, an unavoidable aspect of all Holocaust representation. The following questions prove useful in this endeavor: Are there any lapses or gaps in the text? If so, how does the text negotiate these lapses? What questions does one have after reading the text? Could these unanswered questions be purposeful exclusion on the writer's part? Why/why not? These questions become increasingly important as we look at how the rhetorical features of a text are working within particular cultural/social ideologies. Additionally, as students move into writing about/of these trauma testimonies, they too will need to look at how silence can work rhetorically in their own texts.

One might ask why Klüger waited fifty years to tell her story. While the answer(s) to this question are most likely numerous and complicated, and while we are not privy to them in their entirety, Klüger does relate that she felt a sense that stories like hers had already been told, and thus “seemed to have done the job” (208). She also recounts that she did not want to publish the English version until after her mother had passed, as so much of her story outlines their fraught and complicated relationship. Therefore, the fact that Klüger waits to write her narrative illustrates a rhetorical silence that took into account her familial relationship and loyalty to her mother. But since her mother did not have any contact with “things German” (210), Klüger first published her book in German while her mother was still alive, as well as in French, Czech, and Japanese. However, despite Klüger’s best intentions, her mother did hear from a bridge partner’s cousin in Switzerland about the book, and, as Klüger writes, “found all the passages that were critical of her and was badly hurt” (210).

A notable aspect of Klüger’s memoir is her use of place names to separate and categorize the sections in her book. Instructors may want to emphasize these place names to begin talking with students about the gaps or breaks in chronological order that Klüger’s testimony exemplifies. Her testimony is broken down into four parts, inserted between a foreword and an epilogue. The four parts are: “Vienna”, “The Camps” (subdivided into “Ghetto,” “Death Camp,” and “Forced Labor Camp”), “Germany,” and “New York.” This sequence of *places in time* draws the reader’s attention to the untraversable gaps between our understanding of the Holocaust and Klüger’s experiences of the Holocaust, between our Vienna and Klüger’s Vienna, and between our New York and Klüger’s New York. It is also important to note here the use of “Ghetto,” “Death

Camp,” and “Forced Labor Camp” for the more specific terms Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, and Christianstadt. Klüger demonstrates here her choice of the general for the specific, and hints at not only how language matters, but also at how our understanding of what Auschwitz was, or our predetermined notions of Auschwitz today, is irrelevant to and disparate from her Auschwitz, which was, quite simply put, a “Death Camp.”

And yet, Klüger questions this approach to division by asking herself, “why place names, when I am a woman who has never lived anywhere for long?” (69). And she answers this question by stating, “These are not the names of present or former homes; they are more like the piers of bridges that were blown up, only we can’t be quite sure of what these bridges connected. Perhaps nothing with nothing. But if so, we have our work cut out for us, as we look out from the old piers” (69). Klüger demonstrates her fascination with place and time throughout her book, and it quickly becomes a metaphor for the traversing she must do between her memory and the present, as well as the traversing her readers must do as they work through her book. This metaphor gives the reader a sense of how important *place* is to Klüger, and how it is inextricably linked with *time*. For Klüger, place stands in for time, denoting not just chronological sequence but spatial sequence. And although there is a general chronological sequence to her book, there are breaks from this sequence throughout, indicating the difficulty in retelling a traumatic experience temporally from beginning to end. Klüger writes, “This story moves in circles, and the more of it I tell, the less it makes sense” (35). This circular sequence, which involves starts and stops, flashbacks and flash forwards, often introduced only with a phrase such as “The dawn of memory . . .” (27) is one aspect of the silence students should identify in Klüger’s testimony. Without a chronological sequence from point A to

point B, what is left out? What is Klüger focusing on, what is she refusing to write about, and why?

In addition to the overarching silences and gaps of chronological sequence, Klüger also identifies the gaps, or silences, she must contend with in order to write this memoir. Instructors and students should work together to identify and contextualize these silences, with the goal of reaching a better understanding of how silence is working rhetorically in her text. One example of what Klüger refuses to tell, of what she chooses to remain silent about, are the gruesome details and statistics that can be found in history books or other documented records. Relaying the instance of when she first finds out what had happened to her older half-brother during the war from a Princeton colleague, she writes, “He described what had happened to this particular transport from documents he had studied. We know that there are such reports—I don’t have to repeat his words for the sake of the details, which seemed remarkable to him, and which captivated me because they were about my brother” (83). Here, Klüger glosses over the details of her brother’s transport because, she says, these details are documented elsewhere.

It would be useful here to probe students to critically engage with this excerpt. If Klüger’s rationale for choosing speech over silence is that there are some stories that are as of yet undocumented, and if her rationale for choosing silence over speech is that other stories have already been told, what rhetorical moves is she making? There is a sense that she does not wish to enter into territory where routinized or sentimental responses would be the norm, as is routinely the case with the often quoted number of victims who died and the repetitive details of their untimely deaths. Given the gruesome details of the transports, such as the one Klüger’s brother was on, a question to ask students would be:

how would you respond if Klüger did repeat these details here? To what rhetorical effect would these details serve? Klüger maintains that because her reader can find these details elsewhere, the omission is a purposeful omission—a chosen silence—rather than a refusal to speak, or an imposed silence. And yet, Klüger reveals to her reader that she herself struggles with reading these documented reports of the transports. She writes, “I try to find out more about this children’s transport . . . but I can’t get over a sense that I shouldn’t. There’s an itch, a discomfort, as if I’m doing something that is improper, not kosher . . . Is there still a ban of silence governing the fate of these children?” (85).

This sentiment of purposeful exclusion is repeated again and again throughout Klüger’s testimony, with the common phrase, “and much else that is common knowledge today, can be researched in many reference books, and need not be repeated here” (99). Klüger emphasizes here such an important reaction many of us have to gruesome details and acts of unimaginable brutality. Instructors may wish to ask students whether or not they feel a degree of discomfort or unease when they read about the horrific and unimaginable details of the Holocaust. Students may be familiar with these details from films, other readings, and historical accounts. Although Klüger has remained silent about many of these details because, as she maintains, they are “common knowledge today” (99), do these silences add to or take away from her text? And does the discomfort she describes in the passage above serve a purpose?

In the following passage, Klüger references the gap in her own knowledge of events after a short but powerful description of a memory of her father:

I see my father as an authority figure in the life of a small girl. That he ended in a cramped room, naked, swallowing poison gas, most likely struggling for an exit,

makes all these memories singularly insignificant. Which doesn't solve the problem that I can't replace them or erase them. There is a gap between knowledge and memory, and I can't bridge it. (33)

The gap Klüger recognizes here forces her reader to confront the silences that come from the lack of knowledge she has not only of her father's life and death, but also of the many other events she witnesses as a young girl. The fascinating aspect here is that despite her admission that there are some gaps too wide or too significant to cross, and that she faces innumerable limitations, she continues to attempt this bridging between knowledge and lack of knowledge, between memory and reality, between past and present throughout her testimony. Klüger's attempt at this bridging helps to convince her reader that such a bridging is possible, that these silences in memory or knowledge do not make events untraversable, even if the traversing is difficult and complex. It is the "[n]othing in between" and the "connecting links" (34) which Klüger is after. As she writes, "[I]f we don't find the bridges, we'll either have to invent them or content ourselves with living in the no-man's-land between past and present" (69).

Other silences that Klüger contends with are the silences that meet her today when she tells a piece of her story, or when she admonishes someone for their sentimental response or uncritical reflection to the events of the Holocaust. An example of this unintentional silencing can be demonstrated by the following passage:

[A Ph.D. candidate in Germany] reports how in Jerusalem he made the acquaintance of an old Hungarian Jew who was a survivor of Auschwitz, and yet this man cursed the Arabs and held them all in contempt. How can someone who comes from Auschwitz talk like that? the German asks . . . What did he expect?

Auschwitz was no instructional institution . . . You learned nothing there, and least of all humanity and tolerance. Absolutely nothing good came out of the concentration camps, I hear myself saying, with my voice rising . . . They were the most useless, pointless establishments imaginable . . . No one agrees, no one contradicts me. Who wants to get into an argument with the old bag who's got that number on her arm? Germany's young intellectuals bow their heads over their soup plates and eat what's in front of them. Now I have silenced them, and that wasn't my intention. There is always a wall between the generations, but here the wall is barbed wire. Old, rusty barbed wire. (65)

This passage is instructive for two reasons: for one, it illustrates the double bind of silence. Klüger, in an attempt to foster understanding and, perhaps, correct a misinterpretation, or sentimental view, of the effect the camps had on the survivors, inadvertently silences her interlocutors. And yet, if she had let the moment pass, as she has done in other situations and will continue to do at times like these, she is the one who is silenced. Should we, then, view the silence of these Germans as a negative occurrence? While Klüger does not want to silence these German students, often silence is the only response we—as secondary witnesses to the witness—can muster or even bear. Questions to pose to students here are: Is there an appropriate response to Klüger's admonishment other than silence? Given the “[o]ld, rusty barbed wire,” is there a response other than silence? And if so, what does this response look like? This critical engagement with looking beyond what the text says to how silence functions rhetorically not only in the text, but also in the stories the text reveals, is crucial as we confront these testimonies in the classroom.

Klüger continually struggles with this double bind of silence, as recounted several times throughout her book: does she choose to speak, which will silence her companions? Or, does she choose silence, which effectively silences her own memories? Indeed, the struggle to make known what is not known becomes even more difficult when one's memories "don't fit the framework of social discourse" (92). In the following passage, Klüger demonstrates her choice of silence for an experience that indeed falls outside of everyday social discourse:

[W]hile in Germany, I visited friends and we talked about claustrophobia. People mentioned incidents where they had gotten stuck and described feelings of panic or near panic. There was talk about the Chunnel, the rail connection between Britain and France, which wasn't quite finished then, and whether the average person would be able to stand the confinement or freak out. There was a man who once couldn't get out of an elevator, and half the company remembered the air-raid shelters of their childhood. And meanwhile I had this transport to Auschwitz on my mind, but didn't contribute it, because if I had, it would have effectively shut up the rest of the company. They would have been bothered, troubled, sympathetic, and thoroughly uncomfortable. There would have been no further discussion of the way space affects us, which had been our subject. They would have resented me as a spoilsport. It had been an occasion for reminiscing, but there are limits. And so my childhood falls into a black hole. (92-93)

What is so fascinating about Klüger's choice of silence over speech here is how exceptionally *ordinary* this conversation is, and therefore, how commonplace this occurrence must be for Klüger and other survivors. And this brings us to an important

consideration to keep in mind as instructors and students working through this testimony: when we demand that others speak about their traumatic experiences, we do so with an ascribed space in mind for this re-telling. While we may not say this aloud, what we think is that we do not want to hear your sad story while we are discussing our own fears of claustrophobia or our own experiences with war, hunger, and death. And so, this willing for others to speak cannot be termed a “giving of voice” to the victim; rather, it must be termed a “prescribed giving of voice,” and therefore, a mediated gift with strings attached. The fact that Klüger chooses silence over speech in this instance displays the powerful role rhetorical silence plays in her life: it affects not only the story that becomes told, but also the story that remains untold, an untelling which preserves friendships, dignity, and a state of normalcy, even if this choice pushes her childhood memories into a “black hole”.

Students should be able to draw connections here to how survivors of trauma often use metaphor to describe what their experiences “were like” in an attempt to narrow the gap between survivor and secondary witness. Although Klüger seems to resent the “black hole” her childhood falls into in the passage above, as an instructor, I would ask students to consider here, as Klüger herself asks, “What tools are left if we don’t compare?” (94). Is being stuck in an elevator similar to the transport to Auschwitz Klüger experienced? Why and why not? We are obviously faced here again with the insidious dilemma of ranking sufferings. Clearly nobody would suggest that being trapped in an elevator is comparable to what Klüger experienced on the cattle car transport to Auschwitz. And yet, how do we attempt a semblance of understanding if we don’t make comparisons?

Klüger seems ambivalent on this subject, indicating the complex nature of such comparisons. In fact, she writes:

I am stumbling through the labyrinth of conflicting comparisons and asking the question how we can understand anything if we can't relate to it. Some comparisons work better than others, to be sure. An execution is not like a fatal car accident, though for the victim the result is the same. It's a comparison where dissimilarity is instructive. (93)

The last line of Klüger's analysis is striking: "dissimilarity is instructive." While we, as secondary witnesses, may not have had an experience that Klüger has had, comparisons can be at least instructive in terms of (dis)identification, probing us to examine how our commonalities differ in terms of historical, geographical, and cultural differences as well as in terms of degree. The danger, of course, is that such comparisons tend to value some experiences more while devaluing other experiences. Just because the fear I experienced of being trapped in an elevator is a fear that could be deemed less in degree to your experience of the transport in the cattle cars to Auschwitz does not mean that my experience of fear does not matter. The difficulty, of course, is allowing for these experiences to be expressed—to not silence them—while recognizing that every individual experience is particular to a certain historical, geographical, and cultural context. The dissimilarity Klüger advocates here must not be an exercise in determining which type of experience *matters*; rather, it should be an exercise in bridging the inevitable divide between my experience and your experience in order to reach a semblance of understanding. In other words, as Klüger writes:

[I]f there is no bridge between my memories and yours and theirs, if we can never say “our memories,” then what’s the good of writing any of this?

People who have experienced fear of death in cramped quarters have a bridge to understanding the kind of transport I have been describing. As I believe myself to have some understanding of dying in gas chambers from having lived through such a transport. (93-94)

The challenge Klüger sets up for her reader is great: the only way to cross the divide between our experiences and hers is to compare. And yet—doing so inevitably leads to dissimilarity, coupled with the dangers of identification. This is why the phases of historicizing, the limits of representation, and critical framing in the heuristic are so vital.

The questions posed here will engage students in a process of not only confronting rhetorics of silence, and the inevitable gaps between survivor and text and text and reader, but also in confronting issues of historical and cultural specificity, the limits of representation, and the ethical responsibility to contextualize and critically frame the commonalities and (dis)similarities we have in connection with the text.

Affective Economies/Relationality in Klüger's Testimony

There is an interesting parallel between the prescription that emotion is best kept silent and yet an admonition towards trauma survivors who remain silent, who choose silence over speech. And indeed, talking about emotions in the classroom has always been and will continue to be fraught with both resistance/reluctance and gushing. And yet, doing so in connection with Holocaust testimony is a vital part of deconstructing the text and understanding how affect works in relation between bodies, texts, and cultural ideologies.

This phase in the heuristic, then, asks students to identify and contextualize the affective economies that are working within the text, both between survivor and text, and between text and reader. There is an obvious connection here between the inadequateness of vocabulary for describing unfathomable, traumatic events (writing trauma) and the inadequacy to describe the affective experiences and responses a secondary witness to the trauma has during the reading and writing about/of traumatic events. The goal of this phase, then, is to work as a class to develop a working language to describe, discuss, and critically engage affective responses. This phase also probes students to consider any sentimental readings they may have in response to the text and work to contextualize these sentimental readings in order to reach effective critical analysis.

As an instructor, I would focus my class's analysis of affect in response to Klüger's text by centering the discussion on shame, fear, and disgust. These three affective responses are clearly not the only ones that are working in Klüger's text, nor are they the only ones that will likely be discussed by students in the classroom. They are, however, instructive because they are referred to at crucial moments in Klüger's testimony, and they are also common affective responses many students will be confronting as they read and write about trauma testimony. I will work through each affective response below by citing passages from Klüger's testimony that I believe serve as useful entry points for students and instructors to begin denaturalizing and contextualizing affect, a process which will further serve to destabilize and disrupt common sentimental responses students may have. I should note here that the following sections do not offer full or complete analyses of the various affective responses. Rather, they are meant to serve as examples of how to begin the process of identifying and

contextualizing affective responses/ relationalities. It is also important to state here that students will have varying and different affective responses to Klüger's testimony, from apathy and disengagement to horror and shock. These affective relations might be working in conjunction or disparately in the classroom, and instructors must be prepared to work with students experiencing a variety of emotions.

Shame

During the German occupation of Austria, and prior to Klüger's deportation, she writes about the many exclusions for Jews that were already in place in her home of Vienna. One of these exclusions was going to the movie theater. Klüger recounts how in 1940 Walt Disney's *Snow White* was playing at her local theater. She writes that, "I badly wanted to see this film, but since I was Jewish, I naturally wasn't permitted to. I groused and bitched about this unfairness, until finally my mother proposed that I should leave her alone and just go and forget about what was permitted and what wasn't" (46). Klüger was reluctant at first, but took her mother's dare and bought a ticket to the loge—assuming this would be less conspicuous than the cheaper seats—which is how she ended up sitting "next to the nineteen-year-old baker's daughter from next door with her little siblings, enthusiastic Nazis one and all" (46). The following passage reveals Klüger's analysis of the situation, fifty years after the event occurred:

The story of *Snow White* can be reduced to one question: who is entitled to live in the king's palace and who is the outsider. The baker's daughter and I followed this formula. She, in her own house, the magic mirror of her racial purity before her eyes, and I, also at home here, a native, but without permission and at this moment expelled and exposed. Even though I despised the law that excluded me,

I still felt ashamed to have been found out. For shame doesn't arise from the shameful action, but from discovery and exposure. (47)

Indeed, Klüger hits on one of the most common aspects of *shame*: it is not an internal feeling of shame, but rather a feeling of *being shamed*, which occurs in relation to another person or body. As Ahmed writes, “[S]hame feels like an exposure—another sees what I have done that is bad and hence shameful—but also involves an attempt to hide, a hiding that requires the subject turn away [*sic*] from the other and towards itself [. . .] The bind of shame is that it is intensified by being seen by others” (103).

The interesting aspect of shame here is the desire to cover over the shame, and thus to cover over oneself. Or, “one desires cover precisely because one has already been exposed to others” (104). In this way, shame is not an individualized emotion, but rather an affective relationality between the one who is shamed and the one who witnesses the act that merits shaming. Indeed, Klüger writes about this incident in terms of desiring to disappear, to not be seen, and thus avoid the feeling of being shamed. It will be important to contextualize this affective response within the cultural ideology Klüger was exposed to in Vienna in 1940, thus working to complicate and denaturalize shame. This will involve both historicizing and contextualizing Klüger's narrative. As an instructor, I would pose the following questions to my students: should Klüger have been shamed, or felt shamed for seeing this children's film? What cultural and political beliefs led to this act of shaming and feeling shame? What *normalized* perspective on shame does Klüger's narrative reveal? And, how does Klüger's emotional response to being “caught” indicate broader repercussions of hegemony working in Vienna in 1940? As Klüger writes, “The common lot of the outcast is self-contempt” (47). While it might be difficult for students

to understand this type of response, given the freedoms they have grown up with and enjoy today, it is imperative that they work to contextualize and deconstruct these affective relations in terms of geographic and cultural contexts. By doing so, they work against the common sentimental response of pity or sympathy for the “shamed victim” and instead begin to understand how affect works in relation with cultural ideologies; in this case, how shame plays a particular role in 1940s Vienna. This will also enable them to complicate their own affective responses to this passage—and others like it—as they begin to understand how they too are conditioned by their own cultural and political context to feel a certain way towards a victim who, wrongly accused, is wrongly shamed, and is thus “deserving” of our pity.

Another passage that displays shame is the following, which details the beating Klüger’s mother received in Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Klüger’s subsequent feeling of shame in connection with this memory:

At some point my mother lost her head, or to see it more positively, she stopped being a sheep and yelled back. As punishment she had to kneel on those bricks I have mentioned before, the “chimney” that divided the room. Her position became a torture after a very short while. She was in terrible condition, completely out of control, on her knees, still shouting at the woman who had done this to her. I stood next to her, helpless, witnessing something indecent: my mother being punished [. . .] The memory is connected with an overwhelming sense of shame, as if a superego had been dragged into the ditch water of the id. (110-111)

As an instructor, I would ask students here what the source of this shame that Klüger describes is. Are there other instances of this type of shame that students can refer to? As Klüger herself states, this narrative is not dissimilar to the ones that children of slaves or children of domestic abuse experience (111). And yet, how is Klüger's shame working in the context of the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, where prisoners were stripped of their dignity and humanity? Why does Klüger associate this memory with shame, and why does she find this memory so difficult to write about? She states, "This scene is perhaps my most vivid and lurid memory of Birkenau. And yet I have never talked about it. I thought, I can't write this down, and planned instead to mention that there are events that are indescribable" (111). I would ask my students, might Klüger's reluctance to write about this memory have something to do with the uncovering of a scene that would produce a second shaming, this time between her and the reader, the secondary witness to the original source of shame?

It is important here to have students both denaturalize shame and identify the affective responses they have in response to this passage. Might they experience a co-feeling of shame or guilt for Klüger's helplessness to minister to her mother's duress? Students might also feel sympathetic towards Klüger, displayed in the following possible reaction: "It is sad that Klüger was not able to help her mother. If she had, she would have faced punishment. Perhaps Klüger was so broken that she couldn't respond with bravery and courage." As students work through these affective relations, they will be able to complicate these sentimental responses. Contextualizing this scene and the subsequent shame Klüger describes will force students to confront their own affective responses, as well as the difficult question, "Would I have responded differently?" This

question approaches issues of one's own perceived sense of courage and weakness, innocence and guilt—a related but different emotion than shame. As Donald Nathanson states, “[S]hame is about some quality of the self. Guilt implies action, while shame implies that some quality of the self has been brought into question” (qtd. in Ahmed 105). Instructors might ask students here: Does this passage of Klüger’s lead us to analyze our own qualities of courage or bravery, bringing into question what a normative response would be in this type of situation, particularly since “Shame can also be experienced as *the affective cost of not following the scripts of normative existence*” (Ahmed 107, original italics)? As students work to confront both the shame that is in Klüger’s text as well as similar feelings of shame that may be elicited by the text or that students’ may have had in the past and that they use as a reference point to understand Klüger’s shame, they should begin denaturalizing shame and contextualizing it in terms of “the scripts of normative existence.” By understanding shame—and other emotions—as *relational* and *contextually-bound*, students will begin destabilizing and disrupting any simplistic and sentimental responses to Klüger’s testimony as they complicate not only the affective responses but also the image of Klüger (and her mother) as “innocent victim” being shamed. Such complications might also serve to thwart a subsequent shaming by the secondary witness, who might be moved to state the following: “Klüger should not have taken the risk to go to the movie theatre.” Or, “Klüger should have stood up for her mother.” These responses are both simplistic and sentimental and close off further critical engagement with how shame works in our specific cultural and social contexts.

Fear

The following excerpt comes from one of the last chapters in Klüger's section on the camps, and is a useful entry point for instructors who wish to work with students to denaturalize and complicate the affect fear:

There is a saying that where there is hope, there is life. Or is it the other way around: where there is life, there is hope? No matter. But if hope is the reverse of fear, I think it is fear rather than hope that can give you the impression of life, of a vibrant vitality, for fear feels like sand on your tongue and courses through your veins like an exciting drug [. . .] Come to think of it, it is odd that we weren't constantly in the grip of fear, that in a way we got used to this unholy situation. (89-90)

As an instructor, I read this passage with at least two thoughts: one is that Klüger uses two metaphors for fear (sand on your tongue and an exciting drug). The other is that Klüger makes an interesting juxtaposition between hope and fear, made even more explicit when she later writes, "Hope says, 'Now I am afraid. Later I'll be able to talk about my fear'" (98). Ahmed provides some interesting insights into these temporal associations with fear. She states that "while the lived experience of fear may be unpleasant in the present, the unpleasantness of fear also relates to the future. Fear involves an *anticipation* of hurt or injury. Fear projects us from the present into a future. But the feeling of fear presses us into that future as an intense bodily experience in the present" (65). I would work with students, then, to contextualize and deconstruct the futurity of fear that Klüger refers to here. Why might Klüger place more importance on fear as a life force than on hope? How does fear work in conjunction with hope, or as the

opposite of hope? And what cultural and historical context allows for Klüger to view fear as a “vibrant vitality,” as an emotion potentially much more useful than hope, especially considering she later writes, “I never gave up hope, and today it seems to me that the explanation is simply childish illusion and denial of death. In my case, hope was justified as it turned out—a satisfying result . . .” (90). Ahmed might provide further help here to guide students through analyzing fear as a life source. Ahmed writes, “If it is fright that ‘brings one to life’, then it does so only by announcing the possibility of death” (68). Fear of the threat of death may, paradoxically, have been a stimulus for Klüger and other survivors to hold onto life.

It is important to consider here, however, that fear functions differently for different people. As Ahmed writes, “[F]ear works to restrict some bodies through the movement or expansion of others” (69, original italics). In other words, while some bodies are restricted in their mobility because of fear (Klüger and the other camp prisoners, as well as those who were in hiding), others’ mobility is expanded through fear (in this case, the Nazis and their followers) through a sustained and culturally normalized perception of the Jews as “inappropriate others, against whom the nation must defend itself” (76). Contemporary readers might also fall into this latter category, whose mobility is expanded through their experience of reading Klüger’s fear. The threat of insecurity, of a purported threat to borders and the nation, led the Nazis to an expansion of their mobility throughout Europe, all under the pretense of a fear of the “other,” the Jew. Asking students to historicize and contextualize the fear that Klüger describes in the camps, as well as understand how fear was functioning in the broader context of the Holocaust, and between the bodies of the victims and perpetrators, is vital. This

historicizing and contextualizing will enable students to engage in more complex analyses of Klüger's testimony, as well as prevent sentimental reactions to Klüger's fear; for example, in the following potential response: "It must have been horrible to continually fear death. That is a type of fear I have never experienced myself. The fear I have experienced is not a real threat of danger." While it is important to not make easy identifications with the victim, it is also important to recognize that all fear is not an internal response to a stable object; rather, fear is created through an alignment of bodies, and functions differently for different people depending on context. Fear creates the very borders that exist between "us" and "them" (Ahmed), and perhaps the co-feeling of fear we experience when reading Klüger's testimony is not a fear of death, but a fear of the other, or a fear of becoming the other. Therefore, as students work to contextualize and historicize fear (both Klüger's and their own), they will begin to complicate the "us" versus "them" dichotomy by understanding how fear works relationally, in the gray zone between victims and perpetrators. Such understanding thwarts responses that take pity on the victim for being in a constant state of fear because it allows students to recognize both the function and futurity of fear for both victims and perpetrators.

Disgust

Students will have various affective responses while reading Klüger's testimony, and some of the most challenging sections of Klüger's text in terms of contextualizing and denaturalizing affective relations is in "Part Two: The Camps." Here, Klüger describes her imprisonment in Theresienstadt, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Christianstadt. Because this section in particular is filled with gruesome details and acts of brutality, various affective responses—from awe to empathy to *disgust* are likely.

The following passage, detailing the cattle car transport from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz-Birkenau, is especially instructive for a classroom discussion on disgust, and is useful to quote in full:

It's from this experience that I think I have an idea what it must have been like in the gas chambers. The feeling of having been abandoned, which is not the same as having been forgotten. We knew we hadn't been forgotten, because the railroad car stood on rails, had a direction, would arrive. But abandoned in the sense of discarded, separated, trashed, and tossed in an old crate, like last birthday's worn-out toys. An old woman who sat next to my mother gradually fell apart: first she cried and whimpered, and I grew impatient and angry with her, because here she was adding her private disintegration to the great evil of our collective helplessness. A defense reaction: I could not face or assimilate the reality of a grown-up losing her mind before my eyes. Finally this woman pushed herself onto my mother's lap and urinated. I still see the tense look of revulsion on my mother's face in the slanting twilight of the car, and how she gently pushed the woman from her lap. Not brutally and without malice [. . .] a humane gesture. (92)

While students will most likely be contending with various affective responses to this passage, there is an impulse to feel disgust at the image that Klüger has described. And, disgust is an affective response that may lead students to disengage with this passage or to disengage with Klüger's narrative entirely. As Ahmed writes, "[T]he limits of disgust as an affective response might be that disgust does not allow one the time to digest that which one designates as a 'bad thing' [. . .] Disgust might not allow one to get close enough to an object before one is compelled to pull away" (99). To avoid this

disengagement and “pulling away,” as an instructor, I would ask my students why we feel disgust or revulsion after reading this passage. Is there an “implied superiority to suffering” (94) that led to this reaction? It will be important here to push students beyond uncritical responses such as, “Because it’s gross” or “Because nobody should urinate on someone else.” Here, I would probe students to consider what it means to feel disgust in terms of power relations. Might this reaction of disgust involve a feeling of being “above” the “lower” object of our disgust? Or, might it “involve a fascination with the event as image, in the desire to get closer to the image as if it were a salient object in the present” (Ahmed 96)? What is important to keep in mind about affective responses such as disgust is that they often involve a simultaneous closeness—an “intimate contact that is felt on the surface of the skin” (88)—and a pulling away from the object of disgust. As an instructor I would explore these issues of proximity. How “close” does this passage allow us to be to the experience of the Auschwitz transport? Might it be the closeness in proximity that elicits our reaction of disgust? Further, does this passage and the affective response of disgust transform this experience into a “fetish object” (96), one in which we feel compelled to simultaneously turn towards and pull away from, as if it is a car accident on the side of the road?

I would also ask students to explore the cultural and historical specificity of the transport Klüger was on, a transport that many students will have some knowledge of prior to reading this testimony. I would also ask them to consider what it is about our cultural and social circumstances today that lead us to this response of revulsion or disgust. Students might explore here issues of decency and indecency, public urination, etc. And in particular, I would warn my students, as Klüger warns her readers, “Beware

of the kind of awe which easily turns into its opposite, disgust. For we like to keep the objects of both emotions at arm's length, in instinctive revulsion" (94). The awe that Klüger describes here can be associated with the fetishizing of the object of disgust which was discussed above. This fetishizing allows for momentary closeness to the object of disgust, but paradoxically blocks sustained engagement with the text both because of the "instinctive revulsion" it entails as well as a superiority—an aboveness—it engenders in the secondary witness.

Asking students to both identify and contextualize their affective responses as they read the passages outlined in this section—among others—is a useful tool in striving for a mediated stasis between affective engagement and de-emotioned critical analysis. The challenge here is to recognize that all testimonies are representations and all representations are inherently limited in what they can convey, and that sentimental responses do not necessarily honor the dead if they do not engage in critical analysis of both the affective response one has, as well as the cultural and historical contexts surrounding these affective relations.

Critical Framing in Klüger's Testimony

Critical framing asks students to contextualize and deconstruct their responses to reading and writing about/of trauma testimony. The goal is to work at "defamiliarz[ing] the familiar as a means of helping . . . [to] gain critical distance from the reading and writing activities [students] are engaged in" (Goggin and Goggin 44). What is instructive about Klüger's testimony is that she herself employs critical framing throughout her text. Students should be aware of these attempts to critically frame one's attachments and perhaps use them as a model for their own analyses and writings.

While in Theresienstadt, once categorized as a Jewish ghetto during the war but now commonly referred to as a concentration camp, Klüger and the other children who were imprisoned there engaged in games associated with the Socialist or Zionist movements. And yet, many adults criticized these games as being too similar to the games of the Hitler Youth. Writing about this later, Klüger states, “You had to ponder this disturbing charge, and you might not come to any conclusion, but it kept you awake and alert. There were stormy open discussions, a boiling kettle without a lid” (78). As an instructor, what is most interesting here to point out to students is that Klüger does not come to a conclusion about the nature of her childhood games or a determination of how good or bad these games were. She does, however, force herself—and thus her readers—to ponder the similarities, to stay “awake and alert” to the charges. It is useful here to ask students to consider the critical framing Klüger enacts. She does not feel the need to come to a definitive conclusion; rather, she states that it is necessary to attend to these charges and work to contextualize them. Students might connect the critical framing Klüger employs here with the critical framing they have been in the process of doing throughout the course. Critical framing asks students to defamiliarize the familiar. Or, in other words, to denaturalize an analysis to a passage, a response to a passage, or one’s own cultural and social context, in order to stay “awake and alert” to the varying significations these analyses, responses, or contexts may have, depending on one’s *frame of reference*.

Another instance of critical framing is displayed in the following passage, where Klüger describes her experiences watching Nazi propaganda films:

The movies I wanted to see were Nazi propaganda films, which gave me the satisfaction of a double defiance: I was thwarting both the discriminatory laws of the state and the rules of my family, who had never permitted me to listen to a speech by Hitler on the radio, in spite of my argument that we needed to know “what we were up against.” As if we don’t know, was the irrefutable answer. These films taught me the dominant ideology, which concerned me, I reasoned, and which I couldn’t just ignore because it wasn’t palatable. The attraction lay in the critical distance I had to maintain, the resistance against any temptation to identify or agree. (51)

This passage is really fascinating to consider in terms of critical framing. Klüger uses the phrase “critical distance” to describe the strategy she used to remain aware of and alert to the propagandist’s cultural message. The fact that Klüger states she had to be actively resistant to the propaganda films may prove uncomfortable or even ring false to our students. Students will undoubtedly ask, “Why would she want to see these films?” and “Why did she have to actively resist them? Wouldn’t she naturally disagree with the film’s message because it was derogatory towards her and her people?” While these are valid questions, it will be important here to work with students to critically frame this passage. Referring back to the affect of shame may prove helpful, where shame results not from an internal emotion, but rather from a stickiness between self and other; an affective relation that works between bodies, between self and text, between self and cultural ideology. It will also be useful to discuss how many victims will adopt the message of their perpetrators, even if temporarily, in order to maintain a sense of reality or normalcy. These disdainful or contemptuous identities of self may be unfamiliar to

students; however, it is vital to denaturalize their common assumption that all people, even under extraordinary measures of racism and hatred, can and will always maintain their self-respect. This is not always the case. Emotions and constructions of self do not arise in us internally. Rather, they are created in the spaces between bodies. In this case, the space between Klüger and the images on the screen, between Klüger and the words she saw every day, and everywhere: “No Jews Allowed.”

In addition to the critical framing that Klüger enacts throughout her text, she also repeatedly warns her reader to work against the types of sentimental responses that allow for uncritical identification with the victim or the victim’s liberator. She writes, “Statistics doesn’t enter into our terrors and joys. And yet all human stories are about terror and joy—mine too. All I can do is warn the reader not to invest in optimism vouchers and not to give credit, much less take credit, for the happy end of my childhood’s odyssey—if indeed simple survival can be called a happy end” (91). While students are engaged in identifying and contextualizing the affective economies circulating within and around the trauma testimony, they may easily slip into a position of identification with the victim’s story—indeed, as was shown earlier, comparison is one of the only tools we have to bridge the gap between survivor and secondary witness—and therefore, it is crucial for students to deconstruct these identifications, affective responses, and the silences and gaps that are inevitably invoked by these texts in order to reach a place where they can work to critical frame the text. In this example, students may need to begin to denaturalize the binary of “us” / “them” and “victim” / “perpetrator” in order to disrupt easy associations with either “victim” or “liberator.” As students work to critically frame these distinctions, they will see that they may have set

up a false choice for themselves: just because one is not “victim” does not mean one is the “perpetrator” (although one may be). Similarly, just because one is not “liberator” does not mean one is “perpetrator” (although one might be “bystander” or “perpetrator”). Deconstructing these binaries is another crucial step of critically framing the text.

In the following passage, Klüger writes about what is missing from the anesthetized, museum culture of the camps which have been memorialized for today’s tourists:

The missing ingredients are the odor of fear emanating from human bodies, the concentrated aggression, the reduced minds. I didn’t see the ghosts of the so-called *Muselmänner* (Muslims) who dragged themselves zombielike through the long, evil hours, having lost the energy and the will to live. Sure the signs and the documentation and the films help us to understand. But the concentration camp as a memorial site? Landscape, seascape—there should be a word like *timescape* to indicate the nature of a place in time, that is, at a certain time, neither before nor after. (67)

This powerful critique of the museum culture of the camps is revealing not only of what is missing at these sites—namely, the fear experienced by the inmates— but also of what we, those of us who were not there, are missing from the entire Holocaust experience. How can we work to critically frame *all* Holocaust representations—including Holocaust testimony—in order to narrow the gap between victim/survivor and secondary witness? One way is by recognizing the purpose of the representation and what this representation ultimately *cannot* convey to us, and by critically framing the message the text does convey in terms of our own cultural and historical context. For example, what message

does Klüger's text convey to us, as Americans, that might differ from her message to Germans/Austrians? If we do not work to contextualize and deconstruct this message, along with our affective responses to her text, identifications with victim or liberator, or the gaps that thwart our understanding of the text, we are inevitably limited in our ability to analyze and reach the critical framing necessary to effectively read and write about/of Holocaust testimony.

Transformed Practice: Developing Strategies for Reading Klüger's Testimony

The last phase in the heuristic, transformed practice, recognizes that students come to our classes "with a diverse variety of conceptual and material tools that shape their literate practices and that emerge out of their past literate experiences" (Goggin and Goggin 44). In other words, students are not blank slates but will have varying and different points of reference to critically engage with trauma testimony. In the case of Holocaust testimony, it will be useful to engage in conversations with students about previous experiences reading Holocaust testimony, about familial or other attachments to the topic of the Holocaust, and about any writing they have done on the subject.

I often employ the following tactic in my classroom to explore the inquiry processes and/or analytic strategies students have employed previously to aid them in their literate practices. In this specific case of the literate practices in connection with Holocaust testimony, I might do the following: Ask students to share as a class different strategies they have previously employed in reading/writing about trauma texts. As students share these strategies, make a list on the board. Throughout the semester, return to this list and reevaluate which strategies are working best for particular situations. A sampling of strategies students may offer in this phase are the following: to look for

commonalities between the text to current issues of racism or genocide; to evaluate who the intended audience of the text is; to look for similar rhetorical strategies in all the texts; and to seek an understanding of both the historical significance of the Holocaust-as-event as well as the historical specificity of the Holocaust.

This phase also recognizes that the heuristic we are using as a class to critically engage the trauma texts is flexible. In other words, students should be encouraged to take what they have learned and form their own inquiry processes and analytical strategies to engage with Holocaust testimony.

In the last chapter, I offer my concluding thoughts, including a call for continued research which will hopefully explore the flexibility and adaptability of the heuristic in different contexts and using different texts.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have offered a heuristic that can be used in the composition classroom to engage with Holocaust testimony. I argue that teaching trauma testimony, and specifically Holocaust testimony, is important in the composition classroom because it not only expands our understanding of the Holocaust-as-event, but also our understanding of other traumatic events and the testimonies and witnesses they bring about. There should be an overall awareness among students and instructors that the strategies for reading and writing about the Holocaust will aid them in more complex understandings of other, potentially more recent or closer-to-home traumatic events (for example, 9/11 and other genocides such as Cambodia and Rwanda). As Zembylas writes, “teaching about stories of suffering, pain, and trauma allows for learning that is emotionally, politically, and educationally significant” (19). This significance becomes clear in the classroom as students inevitably address issues of social justice, racism, genocide, and anti-Semitism, to name just a few. And despite the methodological and ethical issues involved with teaching Holocaust testimony, many scholars have called for this instruction (Kushner, Blutinger, Perl), recognizing that although such instruction can be dangerous and controversial, it is also both imperative and potentially rewarding, as it is a viable means for teaching rhetorical analysis.

The methodological and ethical issues of teaching Holocaust testimony, as Blutinger has written, range from the fact that survivor testimony is “atypical, because it is the account of a *survivor* [and] [m]ost of those who entered the Nazi camp system [. . .]

did not survive” (274) to accusations of reliability and accuracy, to the constraints of representation, and to the burden an engagement with Holocaust survivor testimony entails for both students and teachers alike (Blutinger). The heuristic I offer in this thesis addresses these concerns, as it works to *historicize* each individual testimony, offering a space to recognize the extraordinary or unusual circumstances that led to the individual’s survival; it acknowledges the complex and imperfect nature of testimony by identifying and contextualizing the *silences* that are an inherent part of survivor testimony; it grapples with the *limitations of representation*; and, finally, it attends to the *affective responses*, offering students and teachers a means to identify, defamiliarize, and contextualize these affective responses.

Indeed, many scholars have addressed the need to contend with the affective component of reading and writing about trauma testimony (Zembylas, LaCapra). Similarly, others have called for a “new method of listening” to Holocaust representations that will generate a “more ethical way of responding, a way of assuming co-responsibility for the act of bearing witness” (Levine 11). This heuristic, then, addresses both the affective economies that are an inevitable part of engaging with trauma texts as well as the gaps and *silences* that exist between survivor and text and between text and secondary witness, the secondary witness being the person who is one step removed from the original site of trauma or the witness to the survivor of trauma. I suggest that the gaps many scholars and educators have referenced in connection with Holocaust testimony can be seen as *silences*, and are an inevitable part of trauma testimony. I also suggest that the secondary witness has an ethical responsibility to critically engage these silences and determine to what rhetorical effect these silences

produce in the text. By repositioning ourselves as both readers and writers who *listen* to what is *not* said, to what is *unspoken*, we place greater importance on the gaps and silences within a text, which ultimately allows for a more mediated, provisional acceptance of the text rather than a need for a closure-based position.

I believe this approach to teaching trauma testimony is viable because it is *flexible*, in that instructors can adapt the heuristic to their particular institutions and classrooms; it accounts for students' *varied literate practices and strategies*; it provides a *reading-writing connection*, offering important considerations for both the reading and writing about/of trauma testimony; and, lastly, it respects and encourages *students' right to silence* when confronting traumatic and emotion-laden texts.

In this conclusion, I want to call attention to the further research that needs to be done in connection with teaching Holocaust testimony. I also want to consider how the heuristic I offer strengthens our understanding of how affective economies work *relationally* and *contextually* in the classroom and in our world, as well as unpack the strategies for traversing gaps, silences, and caesura that are an inseparable part of trauma testimony and that occur temporally, spatially, and geographically. Students engaging with Holocaust testimony, for example, not only contend with the historical remove from the site of trauma, but also the geographic and spatial remove from both the site of trauma and from the victim. The heuristic I offer in this thesis works to historicize the texts that students are reading and writing, offering a method to contend with these gaps in time and space. I also suggest that offering a forum and space for students to contend with the affective relations that are occurring throughout their reading and writing about/of trauma testimony is crucial. Such a forum allows students and instructors to

rethink the role affect plays in the classroom, establishing a working language to describe, discuss, and critically engage these affective responses.

Sentimental Responses

Given that engagement with the affective can be fraught with difficulty, especially considering students' range of emotions while confronting Holocaust testimony, it is crucial to critically frame, historicize, and contextualize affect. Because students might "become highly emotionalized moral spectators in the distant suffering of victims and perpetrators" (Zembylas 28), what I have been primarily concerned with throughout my research and writing about trauma testimony is how to disrupt and destabilize sentimental student responses that thwart invested critical analysis of texts, as well as how to reach a more mediated, provisional acceptance of text rather than a need for a closure-based position. I am concerned with these issues not only because of the warnings of many scholars to prevent such closures and sentimentality, but also because of my own experience in a Holocaust seminar class, where simplistic and sentimental responses seemed to be the norm. Such responses often resulted in closure-based understandings of the text, preventing more complex understandings of both "victim" and "perpetrator." These sentimental responses also tended to reinforce the binary of "us" versus "them" in which I, who am a part of "us", must feel sorry for and take pity on "them", the victims.

Sentimental student responses vary from an "implied superiority to suffering" (Klüger 94) to simplistic and closure-based readings of a text, to responses that serve to dehumanize the victim, either by taking pity on the victim or by misappropriating the victim's words—and silences—for one's own purposes. Zembylas writes the following about sentimentality:

Sentimental education takes its strength by framing normative emotional responses to all traumas; it is grounded on empty empathy and unfounded optimism, while giving the illusion of a just response.

A strict emphasis on the particularity of trauma will not remove the danger of banal sentimental responses to trauma narratives, and neither will an emphasis on trauma's supposed universality. Empathy is not a bad strategy [. . .], but it requires a future that is not drowned in a "sentimental contract" (Berlant, 2000, p. 44) with past trauma. (33)

Zembylas makes two important distinctions here. One is between the particularity and universality of trauma—and the problematic nature of both perspectives—and the other is the distinction between empathy and sentimentality. Zembylas argues that empathy is not harmful in and of itself. It is only when such empathy is empty, when it lacks any understanding of the historical, contextual, and social factors that led to the injustice of trauma, that it turns sentimental.

An example of this sentimentality can be demonstrated by the following: a student reads a particularly unsettling passage in a Holocaust testimony on a cattle car transport to Auschwitz. This transport speaks to the thirst, hunger, claustrophobia, and stench of these transports. A student might respond with horror, shock, and pity, stating something like the following: "That is horrible and shocking. I feel sorry for the victims, who were crammed into the cars, dehumanized and treated like cattle. I can't imagine having to be that crowded or smell the bodily odors and excrement." Such a sentimental response, which seemingly offers empathy for the victim, shifts the focus from victim to secondary witness, and indicates a spectating rather than a witnessing (Boler 184) of the event. Even

more insidious is that spectating makes no effort to historicize and contextualize the events the victim experienced.

Limitations of Heuristic

Despite the innumerable possibilities and potentialities of this heuristic, I must attend to its limitations. As of now, this heuristic is mostly theoretical as I have not used it in the composition classroom. Therefore, it lacks a practical application that would test its components and theoretical framework. However, the success of this heuristic is suggested by the work of other educators and scholars, whose theories and scaffolding I have built on for the heuristic. For example, Goggin and Goggin's application of their scaffolding suggests that the last two phases of the heuristic, critical framing and transformed practice, will be valuable for students and teachers engaging with Holocaust testimony in the classroom because of Goggin and Goggin's findings that through their scaffolding students "discover . . . that there *are* questions, and that cultural, social, political, personal, and academic responses and reactions to writing about trauma—or anything—are embedded with tacit and overt values, experiences, and theories that shape the public (discursive) construction of knowledge" (45, original emphasis). Indeed, these are important discoveries that students can make given the opportunity to critically frame the texts they are reading and writing and to develop their own strategies for engaging with trauma texts.

Another limitation is that I do not know how effective this heuristic would be for teaching texts other than trauma testimony, such as film or fictional representations. Similarly, I can only speculate that this heuristic is flexible enough to be translated into the teaching of trauma testimonies and other texts that deal with issues other than the

Holocaust. Because of these inherent limitations, I am making a call for further research on both the teaching of this heuristic and on the opportunities for theoretical engagement.

Call for Continued Research

Practical Application

I welcome research that will test this heuristic and its outcomes in the classroom. Case studies or ethnographies might be especially useful as I am interested in quantitative or qualitative data that will outline student *responses* to this heuristic. Do students' written or oral responses to selected trauma testimonies demonstrate a disruption of the sentimental responses I have articulated and warned against in this thesis? I am interested here in how students' subjectivity influences these potential sentimental responses and how the heuristic works (or not) to complicate these subject positions throughout the different phases of the heuristic. For example, does the heuristic thwart uncritical identifications with the victim as well as encourage a more mediated subject position which is neither knower-of-all-things nor disengaged spectator? Additionally, how would this heuristic function to historicize *affect*? If students understand that emotions exist in the spaces between bodies and objects (Ahmed), then will they also be able to contextualize affective relations and responses based on historical and geographical contexts, reframing affect as *relational* and *contextual* rather than *internal* and *inherent*?

Related to this, what role does *witnessing* play in this heuristic? As Ahmed asks, "To what extent can listening to the victim's story become a means of delivering justice?" (58). This question is extremely complicated and fraught as students may feel that the victim, having "worked through" the trauma by writing the events down, is now "healed" and has therefore found "closure." This position discounts the role that the

secondary witness plays in the *witnessing* of a trauma. Other students, however, may feel that simply reading a testimony and feeling sorry for the victim, or offering their pity, is enough. This brings up the distinction between spectating versus witnessing or passive empathy versus testimonial reading (Boler 158). What does it mean to be a spectator rather than a witness, and what ethical responsibility does witnessing entail for the reader or listener to a trauma? I am particularly interested here in how students understand their role as secondary witness, and if they might respond with apathy; or, if they might become so overwhelmed with “compassion fatigue” (Dobkowski 69), and thus feel defeated by the thought that they can’t do anything about what they are reading and writing about because the events are in the past. I would be curious to see, then, how this heuristic might function in a social justice classroom. Michael Dobkowski offers a compelling article that outlines his social justice course on the Holocaust titled “Teaching the Unteachable: Service-Learning and Engagement in the Teaching of Genocide and the Holocaust.” In Dobkowski’s course, students take what they learned in the course and apply it to their own communities. As Dobkowski writes, “Students are encouraged to design ways to share what they have learned about racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination, and so on, with the college community or with their religious communities in their home towns” (67). Students have the opportunity to interview a survivor, participate in various Holocaust awareness programs, or expand their focus beyond the Holocaust-as-event and organize on behalf of organizations such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch (67). The goal of this course, according to Dobkowski, is to help students “deal with the inevitable ‘compassion fatigue’ that most

students face at some point in the course” (68). How might a social justice classroom utilize the heuristic I offer here as a spring-board into such community involvement?

I wonder too about the potential of this heuristic to function in the “contact zone” classroom, where students confront, grapple with, and analyze destabilizing topics. Such a “contact zone” classroom may include testimonies from both victims and perpetrators alike, as well as place film or fictional representations alongside testimonies in order to provide students with potentially contradictory or clashing texts. Would this heuristic aid the analysis of such disparate texts, working to thwart the potential of such a classroom to allow for misappropriations or objectifications of others’ texts? In other words, how can this heuristic work to put different texts and representations in conversation with one another?

I am also interested in whether students will be able to find and articulate the *silences* in a testimony. Students might have difficulty understanding that silence can be a *choice* made by writers for a specific rhetorical purpose. I wonder, then, if it would be useful to have students practice using silence in their own writing. I would like to see, for example, how students might respond to the following writing prompt:

Think about an experience you have had that you feel is difficult to put into words, or to retell. How can you employ a rhetoric of silence in your own writing that honors your experience while still providing your reader with a semblance of meaning of this experience? Metaphor may be a helpful literary tool, but feel free to explore other means to achieve silence as well.

I wonder what effects reframing silence as a powerful rhetorical act may have on students in the composition classroom.

I am also attuned to the numerous difficulties teaching trauma in the classroom entails, including the unwillingness of teachers (and students) to deal with the emotions that inevitably ensue from reading and writing about traumatic events as well as the over-eagerness of teachers (and students) to share potentially dangerous or uncomfortable emotions. Therefore, I am interested in how this heuristic might enable or empower teachers to teach unfathomable, traumatic events. Given that there is an overall awareness that writing teachers must avoid the therapist role, or what Daphne Dessler terms “teacher as healer,” might this heuristic offer compositionists a means to teach traumatic or emotion-laden texts by providing them with a framework for doing so? In other words, does having a framework for teaching trauma testimony make these difficult issues less intimidating, and if so, how? I am particularly interested here in the role of affect in the composition classroom. If teachers make affect a central—or even critical—component of their teaching, they must contend with disengaged students, as well as students who wish to use the classroom as a forum for venting all of their emotions, turning the classroom into a therapy session. How does this heuristic—and other pedagogical methods that contend with emotion—work to confront affect while still maintaining critical engagement with the texts students are reading and writing? Further, does this emphasis on critical analysis or critical engagement merely serve to uphold the culturally accepted position that privileges the rational over the emotional? In other words, does this heuristic go far enough to reframe affect in the classroom? And if not, how can it be restructured or modified to further theorize the role affect plays in the classroom?

In addition to these specific questions, I am particularly hopeful that this heuristic will keep both text and event open for analysis and critique, resisting the “will to closure”

that Desser reminds us is all too prevalent in our studies of the master narratives that seek to “define, control, and limit our national discourse” (86). Therefore, I welcome research that tests the ability of this heuristic to prevent closure-based readings of text and event. An important question to ask here, then, is, does this heuristic work to both honor and critique traumatic experiences, without essentializing or closing off those experiences?

Theoretical Engagement

The possibilities of a rhetoric of silence/listening and emotion studies as theoretical frameworks for developing robust pedagogical methods to confront trauma texts seem especially promising in light of this research. Had I more time and space, I would have liked to explore how rhetorical listening can increasingly play a prominent role in the reading of trauma testimony. I am particularly interested in Ratcliffe’s definition of rhetorical listening, which she states “signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture” (1). I am especially interested here in how rhetorical listening might offer a theoretical basis for fleshing out Boler’s distinction between passive empathy and testimonial reading (164). For example, does testimonial reading happen when readers recognize that what they are listening for is often “that which [they] do not intellectually, viscerally, or experientially know” (Ratcliffe 29)? I’m also interested here in how rhetorical listening might be used to continue unpacking the ethical responsibility that the secondary witness bears. How can rhetorical listening ground further research into the gaps between event and re-presentation of event and between survivor and secondary witness?

In terms of a rhetoric of silence, how can we continue unpacking the role that silence plays in trauma testimonies? I find this question to be extremely important not

only because it offers a potential framework for narrowing the inherent gaps between survivor and secondary witness, but also because it challenges us as educators to respect and contextualize our students' silences. Silence is not always a sign of disengagement or a refusal to participate. By re-valuing the role that silence can play in a survivor's text, we are also implicitly encouraging our students to understand how they can use silence rhetorically in their own writing.

To further delve into emotion studies, I am interested in exploring affective stickiness. For example, what makes topics like the Holocaust "sticky"? In particular, what words or terms stand in for "The Holocaust" metonymically, and how do these signs/words cover over historical and political dimensions, or block other signs and values? Fleshing out some of these historical and political dimensions might provide even further incentive for historicizing Holocaust representations, particularly US Holocaust representations and the "museum culture" of the concentration camps. I am also intrigued by the similarities between lacking a vocabulary for traumatic events and lacking a vocabulary to talk about emotion in general. How is lacking a vocabulary for talking about emotions analogous or similar to lacking a vocabulary for talking about unfathomable or disruptive events? Are these two "lacks" somehow intertwined or linked, and what does this mean for the teaching of trauma? Working to flesh out the implications of this connection may prove fruitful as we continue our efforts to theorize affect and as we persist in finding new frameworks for addressing affect in the classroom.

These questions are difficult and vast, yet they are the questions that keep me "awake and alert" (Klüger) to the ever-pressing need to continue to develop better and more robust pedagogical methods for engaging trauma testimony. Such an engagement

expands not only our understanding of the event we are studying, but also opens up possibilities for complicating and reframing our understandings of (in)justice and the ethical responsibility of the witness to respond and to act.

Indeed, we still have much work to do and many areas to explore. As Hirsch and Kacandes write in their Afterword to *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, “New pedagogical materials and new relevant methodologies are still appearing, challenging us to reframe our perspectives” (492). While the heuristic I offer in this thesis is just one new methodology for teaching the Holocaust, I do hope that it will challenge our existing paradigms and encourage us to continue working to find ethical, responsible, and robust pedagogical models for teaching Holocaust texts. Such work must inevitably confront the fact that the immediacy and authenticity of Holocaust testimonies must continually be redefined and reframed for students who face even “greater historical distance from the events of World War II” (Hirsch and Kacandes 494).

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