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Kimbrilee M. Weber  
*Lehigh University*

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Kim Weber  
April 30, 2012

### Working Through Trauma: Artistic Representations of Shoah

In the closing scene of Steven Spielberg's 1993 blockbuster hit *Schindler's List*, the quotation "Whoever saves one life saves the world entire" comes to life as the audience watches the families Schindler saved walking towards the camera.<sup>1</sup> This scene honors the memory of the man whom the viewer has come to know and empathize with throughout the course of this biographical film. Oskar Schindler employed over 1000 Jews during World War Two in order to ultimately save their lives. Although the film accurately portrays him as a member of the Nazi party, it also shows his transformation as he takes many personal risks in order to save the lives of the Jewish men and women who worked for him.<sup>2</sup> The closing quotation and final scene celebrate the fact that as a result of Schindler's kindness, many people were saved. In the final scene, families travel together up a hill as the Hebrew folk song Yeroushalaim Chel Zahav (Jerusalem of Gold) plays in the background.<sup>3</sup> As the scene continues, the camera zooms in on the faces of these newly liberated families—exhaustion, apprehension, disbelief, and blank stares fill the crowd of men, women, and children. As the group continues methodically walking, the scene switches to color and the actors portraying the newly liberated Jewish men and women are joined by their real life counterparts. The drama that is conveyed as the scene moves from black and white to color furthers the message that the lives of these individuals have been saved

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<sup>1</sup> *Schindler's List*, DVD, produced by MCA Universal Home Video, (Universal City, California: Universal Home Video, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> "Oskar Schindler," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed February 2012, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005787>.

<sup>3</sup> In Israeli showings of *Schindler's List* the song "Eli, Eli" is used instead due to controversy over the content of "Jerusalem of Gold." "Jerusalem of Gold" was a national anthem for Israel and represented a triumphant time for the nation. However, composer Naomi Shemer admitted on her deathbed to having taken the song and adapted it from a Basque Lullaby. For many Israelis, this admission detracted from the meaning and power behind the song.

because of Oskar Schindler. The pairs of actors and survivors approach the grave of Schindler one by one and reverently place stones around the edge, as is customary in Jewish tradition. Some survivors affectionately touch the grave as they walk past to pay their respects. Others look lovingly at the letters of Oskar Schindler's name etched on the grave marker. Finally, the actor who plays Schindler, Liam Neeson, approaches the grave and places two roses on top, standing respectfully over it for a few moments. A dedication to the "memory of the more than six million Jews murdered" ends the film.<sup>4</sup> Although the film ends with this dedication, the closing scene focuses on a celebration of Schindler and the approximately 1000 men and women he was able to save as well.<sup>5</sup> The power of this dedication is irrefutable. The structure of the film calls for the viewer to identify with Schindler and his actions, which resulted in the saving of many innocent lives. Although the film may cause a viewer to think about those who have not survived, if he or she follows the narrative of the film, it is Schindler who will be celebrated. *Schindler's List* has undeniably done an excellent job of bringing mass awareness to one of the most horrific instances of violence the world has ever seen. Spielberg's work allows the public to connect to this historic violence in such a way that has captivated many and allowed the film to remain extremely famous years after its release. The viewer is left with an overwhelming sense of hope in the fact that Schindler really has "saved the world entire," as the film's tagline quotation contends. While a celebration of Schindler is certainly warranted, the film raises questions about how to reach out to those who were not saved due to one man's exceptional actions. How does this film address the rote and commonplace slaughter that was much more common than the story of triumph it celebrates? Is there a place for the ethical remembering and

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<sup>4</sup> *Schindler's List*, DVD.

<sup>5</sup> Various sources have discrepancies between the number of Jewish men and women that were saved by Schindler. Most numbers are between 900 and 1300, and for the purposes of this paper, I will use the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's number of 1000. In my work, the exact number is not as important as the impact of Schindler's actions on viewers.

celebration of these lost lives in the film as well? Can other artistic representations of Shoah represent these lives more fully than *Schindler's List*?

Hollywood's depictions of tragedies like the Holocaust often contain emotional scenes like the closing scene of *Schindler's List*. These films are big box office hits. They have been recognized by the public, as well as critics, as important documentations of trauma. The evidence of this success seems especially true among American viewers, where films like Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, Roman Polanski's *The Pianist*, and Tim Blake Nelson's *The Grey Zone* have been devoured by audiences and praised by critics alike. *Schindler's List* is perhaps the most quintessential example of this success, grossing over 96 million dollars in the U.S. alone and winning seven Academy Awards, three Golden Globe Awards, one Grammy Award, international film awards, critics' choice awards, and smaller film festival awards.<sup>6</sup> In the American market especially, it seems that Holocaust narratives are big sellers. In addition to films, works like *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* and *Night* have become staple representations of Shoah that almost every American child will read in school and many will reread as adults. Plays, specials on the history channel, and Holocaust Studies Departments or majors in many national universities all demonstrate our preoccupation with Shoah.

The most compelling aspect of filmic representations of Shoah is the way they can engage with these varying ways to represent trauma, which differs from the approach of the legal system. Hollywood films like *Schindler's List* are often characterized by feel good endings, which allow the viewer to focus on a positive aspect of a tragedy. They have relatable and likable characters, which the audience comes to know and care for throughout the course of the film. They provide a focus on one or a few significant characters while trying to tell a story on

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<sup>6</sup> "Awards for Schindler's List," IMDb, accessed February 2012, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108052/awards>.

behalf of millions who lived through the experience. Finally, these films create a straightforward narrative through time that allows the audience to understand the story as it belongs in history, rather than bringing the history of Shoah back to life. The strategies of Hollywood bestsellers stand in stark contrast to less conventional films about the Holocaust. This strategy in which directors turn such a devastating event into small anecdotes of hope and triumph—the Schindlers who stand out amongst the millions who were recklessly slaughtered—despite overwhelming loss is what I argue makes these Hollywood representations of the Holocaust so popular. It is easy to focus on the exemplary heroes and stories of hope that came out of the mass genocide of over six million innocent victims, as opposed to focusing on the much more prevalent stories of horror, loss, and death. However, it is necessary to know this horror and trauma through experiencing the loss of the six million in order to recognize similar instances of loss in our contemporary world and prevent such an atrocity from reoccurring. Beyond mainstream film studies, documentary films and visual art have addressed Shoah in different ways than Hollywood blockbusters. Films and artwork which call audiences to be active witnesses to the trauma they are viewing do something important that films which conform to Hollywood's neatly packaged ideals and bestseller tricks of the trade can overlook. These alternative forms of representation give voice to victims of Shoah, which can be lost or drowned out through the formal trial process. The highly emotional and thought provoking nature of the works evokes responses in survivors and those trying to witness that are unique to these forms of representation. Survivors are allowed to express themselves more fully through this process, and witnesses are called to more actively engage with historical tragedy.

Some artistic representations of Shoah are very successful at bringing this horror and trauma to light in a way different from Hollywood films like *Schindler's List*. Documentary

filmmakers like Claude Lanzmann and artists like Judy Chicago and Zoran Music all address the trauma of Shoah in their works. These works differ from Hollywood films because they call viewers to be much more active in their engagement with the trauma of Shoah. These artistic representations have received much less mass attention than mainstream films like *Schindler's List*, which have to a degree become synonymous with Shoah in our culture. Yet these unconventional representations contribute something very important to the legacy of Shoah, which films made to be consumed by mass audiences cannot. This discrepancy in different types of traumatic representation begs the question of what is at stake in these varying mediums.

Like Lanzmann's film, some artwork can call a viewer to actively witness Shoah through the way it moves viewers.<sup>7</sup> I will consider the ways in which these types of artwork are also important contributions to the ongoing conversation about Shoah. I will analyze works by Judy Chicago and Zoran Music in order to demonstrate that they have similar functions to Lanzmann's *Shoah* because they force the reader to experience the trauma of Shoah.<sup>8</sup> I will consider how artistic representations take the viewer back to a setting, place, or event and shatters the complacency a viewer has when experiencing a feel-good film. These types of works cause viewers to feel ruptured by the horror of history, if only for a moment. This art causes a viewer to reevaluate his or her position as a viewer of the violence. Additionally, I reflect on how artistic representations give voice to those who are no longer able to speak for

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<sup>7</sup> I have chosen the term "actively witness" as a way to articulate my understanding of the strengths of films like *Shoah* and the artwork that I discuss. Actively witnessing is interacting with a piece in a way more involved than merely sitting back and watching or observing passively and walking away wholly unaffected. For a viewer to actively witness, he or she will be moved to act based on the profound effect the work had on him or her. Compelling viewers to actively witness is a strength of the types of works I will detail throughout this paper.

<sup>8</sup> Please note I use the term experience with the full knowledge that those who were not directly involved or implicated by Shoah firsthand will only have the ability to "experience" to a certain extent. My use of the word experience is intended to mean a more in depth experiencing of trauma than the first exposure to Shoah that many individuals have—a passive, historic and factual representation of what happened. This experiencing calls viewers to push past this topical understanding of the trauma of Shoah and move towards empathy and more active witnessing.

themselves. Artistic representation also serves as a medium for moments and events that escape language. Many survivors have not been able to speak about the horrors they witnessed, and art gives voice to these moments, which have otherwise been rendered unintelligible due to their atrocity. Finally, these representations serve as a reminder to viewers and often challenge viewers to consider issues of Shoah in contemporary contexts. I will consider various filmic and artistic strategies for representing Shoah. In particular, I am interested in how artistic readings of atrocity address trauma. While Hollywood films and other artworks fill a gap left after trials have concluded, their strategies differ.

Because of this focus on representations of Shoah, my research is indebted to trauma theory, specifically the works of Elaine Scarry, Cathy Caruth, and Shoshana Felman. Like these theorists, I am interested in responses to trauma and why extralegal responses to trauma are necessary in the contemporary world. The concept of extralegal responses is what Shoshana Felman focuses on in her book *The Juridical Unconscious* (2002).<sup>9</sup> She contends that although the legal system is imperfect, it is the best form of formal recompense the world currently has available. I agree with Felman's argument that trials are an important way to hold perpetrators accountable; however, I am also intrigued by the desire of survivors and witnesses to return to the sites of their injuries years after trials have concluded. Felman discusses the problems with the impersonal form of a trial procedure and considers how witnesses are very restricted as they are being evaluated during a trial. Yet, despite the fact that witnesses are often restricted through yes or no and leading questions, their testimonies are of integral importance for the trial process. The trial is fractured and literally cannot go on without the witness. Felman's assertions regarding the imperfections of the legal system and the importance of the witness demonstrate

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<sup>9</sup> Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002).

that we must value additional ways to understand the trauma of witnesses of Shoah. What do these supplementary forms of representations offer that the legal system cannot? Artistic representations put this interpretative power back into the hands of the witness. Instead of being asked leading questions in a high stress environment or being influenced as a viewer by the effect of these leading questions on a trial process, artistic forms are much more open to the process of working through that the witness undergoes. The process of artistic representation is very different because it empowers, instead of restricts, the role of the witness in the representing of Shoah.

Further, what are the stakes of a non legal form of representation which is not a feel good Hollywood film? What can these forms of representation do to or for a victim or someone trying to actively witness? Also, what can these works do to viewers and artists like Judy Chicago who are not survivors of Shoah? Elaine Scarry argues in *The Body in Pain* (1985) that these sorts of representations force the victim to recall the trauma from his or her past without being able to articulate this pain in an emotional and nonfactual manner. Because trials call for detailed hard facts—names, dates, places—they make it very difficult for a witness or victim to discuss an experience that has caused the loss of such details. Further, Scarry acknowledges that for the tortured, the pain he or she feels is the absolute reality. The pain from Shoah is difficult to capture coherently in historical narratives or recollections of experiences.<sup>10</sup> This line of understanding can be complicated through a trial procedure. When a witness is being questioned, the lines between reality and perceived pain and trauma can be blurred, despite their legitimacy in the mind of the victim. A trial has no way to account for these discrepancies between the literal facts of what happened and the victim's perception or view of the trauma

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<sup>10</sup> Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

perceived and the emotional damage that has been wrought on him or her. Art is valuable because it can get at something that the trial process misses. Artistic renderings of trauma do not focus on exact dates, times, or descriptions of injuries and scenes. Instead, these renderings bring an emotional aspect into the experiencing of trauma, while working toward shaking the viewer from his or her apathy towards the trauma and sharing a small part of the historic violence. This is vitally important for victims because, as Scarry notes, “physical pain . . . is language destroying.”<sup>11</sup> Continual questioning of a victim causes trauma to become more and more real, and this experience can cause the victim to be seen as less credible in the eyes of the court if he or she is unable to articulate the exact and factual account of his or her experience in a way that will be legitimate in the eyes of a court.

In her critique of this repetition of trauma, Scarry has highlighted an important aspect of artistic representation, which can also be a benefit. In repetitively re-experiencing the trauma of Shoah, as one does when watching the nine and a half hour documentary *Shoah*, the viewer attempting to actively witness begins to get a better sense of the magnitude of catastrophe surrounding this event. This is especially important in our contemporary world, as the number of living survivors dwindles and Shoah begins to slip slowly into the recesses of history for the general public. It is in the re-experiencing of the banality and randomness of the violence, a re-experiencing that can be more fully understood after viewing Lanzmann’s nine and a half hour documentary detailing multitudes of horrifying stories, that the viewer begins to see Shoah’s far reaching and disastrous effects. This insight provides the viewer with a reminder that can serve to prevent future atrocities and motivate him or her to be more involved in actively witnessing what he or she is viewing.

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<sup>11</sup> Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 19.

Artistic representations are an integral part of the legacy of Shoah in our contemporary world. They do not merely provide moments of triumph, allowing a viewer to walk away unaffected. The inability to celebrate what one is witnessing in a documentary film or a piece of artwork calls viewers to consider how this horrible memory is still living. Unfortunately, Shoah was not an isolated example of human hate. This kind of violence lives on today. We must never forget the voices of the six million who were senselessly killed due to human anger and indifference. Lanzmann, Chicago, and Music among others whose works call viewers to actively witness Shoah, do something unique and extremely important in their works. They do not allow viewers to turn away and forget the six million and the inhumane reality these innocent victims endured day after day. Instead, they challenge us to look the violence and horror straight in the face and remember the legacy of the lost lives and the survivors, calling us to work to actively prevent atrocities like Shoah from ever being repeated.

I will explore the strengths of these various mediums of nontraditional representations of trauma throughout this paper. First, I will consider the work of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* in contrast to Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*. Next, I will analyze the works of Judy Chicago and Zoran Music, in order to demonstrate the ways non-filmic works can also call viewers to actively witness Shoah. I will compare and contrast these works to consider the different goals of the artists and the effects of these decisions on the viewers.

## **II. Filmic Representations**

I have already spent time listing the integral differences between Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* and Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*. Lanzmann's nine and a half hour documentary avoids the straightforward narrative strategies of Hollywood blockbusters like *Schindler's List*.

Additionally, the documentary avoids focus on one single protagonist and rejects a finite, often “feel good” conclusion, unlike the blockbuster genre. Instead, Lanzmann’s documentary uses a multitude of different settings and perspectives to fashion a living narrative, which spans time, countries, and opinions in such an incredibly far reaching event in history. *Shoah* also provides narratives from survivors, victims, bystanders, and perpetrators to create a web of narrative, as opposed to relying strictly on one protagonist and supporting roles. The sheer length of the documentary gives the viewer an indication of the multitude of individuals who were implicated in this attempted genocide. The number of voices and narrators challenges the reader to consider the issue in the broader context of many anecdotes. The documentary also features interviews, which are conducted in the present day, which remind the viewer that *Shoah* is not merely an event of the past, but something that continues to be relived and experienced in the lives of many who were involved, both directly and indirectly. Further, *Shoah* has an unsettling and open-ended conclusion, which calls viewers to actively consider what they have witnessed long after they have finished viewing the documentary. *Shoah* simply does not allow a viewer to ignore the present day implications and call to witness the Holocaust because of the way its powerful message is conveyed. This forces the viewer to join the contemporary conversation on preserving the memory of Shoah, the survivors, and those who have been lost, and on consideration of how to ethically engage with its legacy and to educate and inform future generations. In the following pages, I will discuss the value of *Schindler’s List*, while also pointing out the ways *Shoah* is more successful in its pursuit of calling viewers to actively engage with the history of Shoah.

*Schindler’s List* is successful in its beautiful portrayal of one extraordinary man’s transformation in the midst of a terrible communal tragedy. Though it starts in the general

backdrop of Nazi Poland, a shift to focus on specific details and individuals advances the ultimate story to further the focus on the individual and allow the film's plot and message to come full circle by the ending. However, *Schindler's List*, instead of bearing witness for the dead and portraying a larger communal message, focuses predominantly on Oskar Schindler's transformation and his individual growth. The viewer walks out of the theatre considering what an awful villain SS Lieutenant Amon Goeth was, or how tragic the little girl in the red dress's death was, not the multitude of SS soldiers and innocent children these characters represented. Further, the focus on individual character development encourages a linear narrative structure. Schindler follows a logical character development—beginning as the evil villain, experiencing a changing throughout the middle of the film, and climaxing with repentance for his behavior by the end of the film. This logical narrative flow provides the viewer with an expected trajectory that is easy to follow and allows the viewer to walk out of the theater feeling good about Schindler's transformation.

This is not to say that I am entirely critical of *Schindler's List* like Bert Cardullo, who indicts the film as a cutout of Spielberg's "crackerjack formula for entertaining the masses."<sup>12</sup> Cardullo's view of the film is too polarized, and despite the fact that *Schindler's List* does not call viewers to witness in the same way as *Shoah*, there are valuable moments in the film. *Schindler's List* still contains moments which are important to consider in regards to how viewers witness Shoah that can be understood through an analysis of the individual players in the film, the meaning of the ending of the film, and filmic conventions used throughout the film.

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<sup>12</sup> Bert Cardullo, "Schindler's Miss," *The Hudson Review* Vol. 48, No. 1 (1995): 122, accessed May 9, 2011, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3852069>.

Conversely, Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* works to begin with specific testimonies of survivors and moves outward to build on these individual testimonies in order to depict the larger communal trauma of Shoah. He chooses to include a multitude of voices to represent the groups in his film—many survivors are interviewed, multiple former Nazis or Nazi supporters are interviewed, and different groups of bystanders or witnesses who were not direct victims are also interviewed. This multitude of voices is what creates for the viewer the larger picture of the environment and historical backdrop where Shoah took place. It is through understanding the utter apathy of the Poles or the rationalizations of the Nazi soldiers that one can gain a fuller understanding of how and why such horrific acts took place. Lanzmann also uses his film to showcase community spaces—as individuals are being interviewed about specific experiences, Lanzmann pans to a scene of a gas chamber or the entrance to a concentration camp, in order to acknowledge not just the individual's story, but also the larger mass of individuals who experienced similar stories at a similar place. The focus of *Shoah*, unlike *Schindler's List* is to mobilize the community to bear witness through action. The ending does not come full circle as in *Schindler's List* and the viewer is forced to contemplate what he will do as a result of what he has seen. This is exactly what Lanzmann intends. His outreach to the larger community through the accounts of individuals provides a call to those who want to bear witness—we've got to keep contemplating Shoah; we cannot walk away from this film unchanged and unthinking. Further, Lanzmann crafts a web of narratives that lack a linear narrative structure like that of *Schindler's List*. Lanzmann is constantly panning to new interviewees and settings, and he layers multiple stories together to show the impact of Shoah. The viewer does not leave with the happy, neatly packaged ending that he gets in *Schindler's List*.

The broad web of narratives seen in *Shoah* differs from Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, where the main focus is on the trajectory of individual characters. A focus on the story of the individual is a powerful force throughout the film. One of the most prevalent examples of this strategy is seen in the use of the little girl in the red coat throughout the ghetto liquidation scene one hour and eight minutes into the film. Although the entire film is in black and white, this little girl's coat is colored, and this detail makes her the prominent focus of the scene. While Schindler is watching the liquidation of the ghetto from atop a hill on horseback, the little girl is first seen walking across a crowded and chaotic street. She is very small, probably five or six, and her hair is curled and long. At first, it is easy to miss her presence because she appears without any sort of introduction. The little girl continues to walk through the streets amidst running, screaming, chaos, and killing. Eventually, she is ushered into a line of women and children by an SS officer. A close up of her face shows that she is confused and lost, but entirely compliant with the officers. She does not seem upset, and she appears blissfully unaware of her fate. While Schindler watches from atop the hill, his perspective is focused on the little girl.

The importance of the focus on the little girl in the red coat is in the change she produces in Schindler. Her innocence and naivety affect Schindler, and the audience, in an emotional way unlike a large group scene.<sup>13</sup> Spielberg has chosen to try to connect viewers to Shoah through an identification with one little girl. The audience is forced to focus on the little girl because her red jacket makes her a focal point in the scene of black and white. Additionally, her innocent demeanor, furthered through details like her naive facial expressions and long curled hair, makes it easy to become emotionally attached to her. The fact that the little girl is led by the SS officer

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<sup>13</sup> The little girl's innocence and naivety seems to me to be what produces this response. The audience would not become attached to a larger group of faceless individuals in the same way that they connect to this little girl during this scene.

into the line of Jews being carried away demonstrates her vulnerability; she does not realize that she is being led by someone who plans to have her killed. The audience is also attracted to the little girl because they know what her fate will be, and they desire to help her since no one is there to be her protector.

Eventually, the little girl is carried off in a wagon amongst bodies, covered with filth. Although her death is not shown on film, the audience is left to assume that she has succumbed to death, which she witnessed while walking through the ghetto. The red coat in the wagon shocks the audience because the little girl had managed to hide under a bed earlier in the scene. Spielberg's use of the color red to highlight one individual child's story is effective because it forces the audience to relate to her and become emotionally attached. Further, because the little girl is eventually carried away toward death, Spielberg demonstrates the cruelty and inescapable death, which surrounded the Jews as the ghettos were being liquidated. Despite what the emotional connection the audience felt towards the little girl, they could do nothing to save her. Spielberg chooses to let the audience develop an emotional relationship with one specific child to become the example for what happened to many children, instead of showing the same scene with a multitude of children. This focus on the individual makes the importance of each person more prominent. The little girl in the red coat is a representative of the masses of others who were killed in the liquidation of ghettos.<sup>14</sup> Yet, the audience has become so attached to the little girl, it is hard to extrapolate this larger community message from her death. Instead of panning outward and connecting one child's story to other examples of trauma and violence, the film limits the audience's ability to connect the little girl to others like her. Her single story takes the place for the stories of others.

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<sup>14</sup> Even though the little girl is a representative for a larger ideal, I hold that it is difficult for the audience to think outwardly to this larger message because they have become so attached to the little girl throughout the film.

Just as Spielberg focuses on the little girl in the red coat to evoke an emotional response in the viewer, he focuses on Amon Goeth to produce the character of the Nazi villain. Amon Goeth becomes a representative of the mass of Nazi's who massacred Jews, and the focus on his horrific actions throughout the film make it easy for the viewer to focus hate and resentment on his individual character. Throughout the film, Spielberg highlights the randomness of violence committed by Goeth—he is filmed shooting victims from his balcony as a cigarette hangs from his mouth. Additionally, Goeth is pictured in another scene shooting a random Jewish man in the back of the head as he walks by a lineup of men. He has no shown remorse or contemplation behind any of his actions and he finds enjoyment in his killings. The lack of emotion behind his violent actions causes the viewer to become extremely angered by the nature of his actions; however, the focus on him as an individual forces the viewer to remember his violence as an individual, as opposed to the overall violence of the Nazis. Like the focus on the little girl as a representative victim, this focus on one exemplary Nazi limits the ability of viewers to understand the widespread, institutionalized violence of the entire Nazi regime. The viewer is called to identify the evil of the Nazis through one man.

The creation of Goeth as the ultimate villain is furthered by the scene in which he is seen violating his mistress in the cellar. Goeth is not only mentally abusive to his mistress, but he physically abuses her as well. This scene is important because it shows that Goeth is so purely evil, he has no problems hurting those who he is close to in his life. Although his mistress is Jewish as well, they develop a relationship over the course of the film. Yet, this relationship means nothing to Goeth. This scene brings the viewer to the realization that no one is safe from Goeth and he commits violence arbitrarily, irrespective of his relationships with others. The continued dehumanization of this character throughout the film makes it easier to focus on his

individual personality as the main source of villainy in the film, rather than looking the widespread Nazi violence.

Oskar Schindler is the third example of the focus on the individual in *Schindler's List*. Throughout the film, Schindler undergoes an extraordinary conversion and changes from wanting to exploit the Jews to make money to hysterically uttering that he could have done more to save the Jews from extermination.<sup>15</sup> The focus on Schindler's extraordinary transformation is crucial because viewers are removed from the horror of Shoah. Viewers can contemplate what a wonderful man Schindler was instead of focusing on what a terrible event prompted Schindler's story. The personal relationship that the reader develops with Schindler as he undergoes his conversion makes it easier to empathize with him. Although he was a Nazi, the knowledge imparted throughout the film of Schindler's personal story allows the viewer to focus on the good things that he did, despite the bad that was going on around him. The viewer focuses on details such as Schindler's witnessing of the little girl in the red coat and Schindler's emotional speech at the end of the film about wanting to save more Jews. These details create a mental image for the viewer of a wonderful man who stood out during a time of horrific occurrences.

The focus on individuals throughout *Schindler's List* is representative of a strategy to depict horrific atrocity through audience connection with individual characters. If the film instead focused on networks of children, Nazi members, and extraordinary heroes, it would be easier to consider the general implications these people stood for as opposed to their individual stories. The viewer is able to feel emotions for certain people instead of the network of individuals who were affected as a result of the network of characters Spielberg creates. The viewer is able to finish the film considering how tragic the little girl's death was, what an awful

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<sup>15</sup> *Shoah*, DVD, Claude Lanzmann (New Yorker Films, 1985).

man Amon Goeth was, and what an unlikely hero Oskar Schindler was, as opposed to what the ultimate implications of these individuals were in the overall setting of Shoah. While getting lost in the details of the individual characters, the viewer loses the magnitude and prevalence of similar cases of horror, evil, and tragedy that make up the fuller history of Shoah.

Unlike *Schindler's List*, Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* places an emphasis on the community as opposed to the individual. Throughout the film, various languages are used to create the story that is being told. The numerous languages used represent all the different groups of people who were affected by Shoah. It is not enough to convey this in one language, which would require compromising some of the interviews from their original forms through translation. Instead, throughout the film, English, Polish, German, Hebrew, Yiddish, and French are used.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, differing locations and perspectives are considered. Lanzmann provides testimony from numerous survivors, as well as Nazis and relatives of Nazis, and witnesses to Shoah who were not directly involved. This multitude of voices with varying perspectives is important because it demonstrates the variety of personal experiences, which come together to provide an overall story. Although the viewer remembers specific anecdotes from various interviewees, he is forced to also contemplate the overall magnitude of the situation through the synthesis of these different accounts. Further, this creation of a web of narratives gives a voice to the dead in a way that single individual accounts cannot. It is only through the accounts of many individuals that stories can come together to create a picture of what the dead experienced, which allows the viewer to experience the magnitude of Shoah and attempt to empathize. This richness and depth

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<sup>16</sup> Gabriela Stoicea, "The Difficulties of Verbalizing Trauma: Translation and the Economy of Loss in Claude Lanzmann's 'Shoah'," *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* Vol. 39, No. 2 (Fall 2006): 45, accessed May 7, 2011, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20464186>.

of a multitude of accounts provides an awareness and understanding that a story with fewer accounts lacks.

In *Shoah*, various villains are also portrayed. Like the variety of perspectives, this provides the viewer with a better understanding of the depth of the evil surrounding Shoah. It is not only one Nazi that viewers of *Shoah* get to know; rather, violence is presented through many vehicles. Franz Suchomel provides accounts of his working as a SS soldier. He remembers that “people fell out of gas chambers like old potatoes.”<sup>17</sup> This widespread daily violence is rivaled by the apathy towards tragedy of the Polish peasants who remember watching the Jews being carried off in trains and making motions of death by pretending to slit their throats with their fingers. As if this were not enough, the viewer also sees apathy towards extreme violence in the form of a woman, Frau Michelson. Her husband was a Nazi schoolteacher, and her ignorance to the evil around her becomes evident as she admits that she could not remember if it was 40,000 or 400,000 people killed near her.<sup>18</sup> The multiplicity of accounts of violence and terror in Lanzmann’s film provides the sense of the inescapability of this institutionalized violence during Shoah. It is not one villain, which can be demonized as in *Schindler’s List*, but rather a network of perpetrators and bystanders that enveloped the victims of Shoah and now envelops the viewers of *Shoah*. The diverse accounts of violence demonstrate that almost everyone was affected in some way.

Like *Shoah*’s varying accounts of testimony, Lanzmann incorporates various representations of community spaces throughout the film. While certain interviewees are speaking, Lanzmann strategically pans to community spaces. For example, while one survivor

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<sup>17</sup> *Shoah*, DVD.

<sup>18</sup> *Shoah*, DVD.

speaks of the death he witnessed working in the gas chambers, Lanzmann pans to a shot of a gas chamber.<sup>19</sup> This technique is effective because it forces the viewer to contemplate the larger implications of the testimony of the individual. Though the individual's account is important, the viewer automatically thinks of the multitude of individuals who were also affected in similar situations. Seeing the violent spaces also allows the viewer to more fully contemplate the violence. In addition to hearing about violence, the violence is shown directly to the viewer. This is important because it provides a more complete vision of violence than anyone who did not experience Shoah could imagine on his own. The visual representation of this violence is crucial because it provides evidence of something that is so horrific that many viewers could not imagine it alone. With individual testimony and a focus on community space, a clearer picture can be created for a viewer attempting to understand and bear witness to Shoah. This clearer picture allows the viewer to connect to the larger story of death and to feel the magnitude of the atrocity.

Group representation is so important because it gives the viewer a fuller picture of the magnitude of violence committed during Shoah. Although it is emotionally powerful to consider stories of individuals, a more complete understanding of the larger picture is needed to attempt to bear witness to Shoah. Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* provides a beautiful depiction of the multitude of voices which come together to present a rich and full account of testimonies experienced during Shoah. Without this complexity and depth of voice, the viewer focuses merely on the individual and cannot contemplate the larger issues at stake in witnessing.

Additionally, the strength of *Shoah's* nontraditional narrative is best understood in a scene with Abraham Bomba. In this scene, Bomba discusses his work in the gas chambers as a

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<sup>19</sup> *Shoah*, DVD.

barber. As Jews would unknowingly prepare to be exterminated, Bomba was the one who would give them a haircut. Victims would approach Bomba looking at him for support or information on where they were headed, and Bomba would have to lie and tell the Jews they were alright, despite the fact that he was fully aware of the gruesome fate that awaited each individual.

Bomba is in his barber shop cutting hair in the present day as Lanzmann interviews him about his memories of his work in the gas chambers. Bomba is forced to re-experience and remember the trauma he underwent during Shoah in his daily life through the action of cutting hair. This action has become something bigger for him because of his experiences. Lanzmann chooses to shoot this scene as Bomba is in his barber shop cutting hair to highlight the daily trauma and remembering that Bomba encounters as a result of Shoah.

The power of bringing Bomba's example back to the present day through a nonlinear narrative structure can be better understood through an analysis of Elaine Scarry's work. In *The Body in Pain* (1985), Scarry discusses the same concept I have highlighted with Bomba through an analysis of the pain that comes along with memories of random objects which have taken part in one's past trauma. She argues that "to attach any name, any word to the willful infliction of this bodily agony is to make language and civilization participate in their own destruction; the specific names chosen merely make this subversion more overt."<sup>20</sup> This is seen in Bomba's experience as he is moved to tears while being interviewed about his work in the gas chambers and simultaneously cutting hair. This physical act of cutting hair has become a closely intertwined part of his memories of his experiences, and the viewer comes to the troubling and ironic realization that Mr. Bomba must remember this trauma each time he cuts hair, an act that is and was his livelihood, now and during Shoah.

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<sup>20</sup> Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 43.

*Shoah*'s unconventional narrative structure also provides a more holistic understanding of the culture, which led to a society that largely watched the destruction of millions of Jews. This understanding is conveyed more effectively in *Shoah* than in narratives with a singular focus or more formalized court procedures, which focus on specific facts and figures. In *Shoah*, Lanzmann conveys the hatred and apathy that plagued groups like the Poles during Shoah. One example of this concept is as a train car rolls past a neighborhood on its way to a concentration camp. There is a fence closing the tracks off from the surrounding town, and young children are standing at the fence, on the side of the town, watching the train car go by. As the car rolls by, the children drag their fingers across their necks to make a symbol of death. Although the Polish children and the entire neighborhood knew of the inevitable death that awaited the Jews on the train cars rolling by, they did nothing to stop what was going on around them. The tacit participation that the children embody in this scene allows the viewer to understand the communal commitment to violence outside of the Nazi concentration camps.

*Shoah* is able to highlight things like the Polish children that would never be admissible in a formal trial. As far as the law is concerned, these children did nothing wrong. They would not come up in a trial or be charged for their actions. Yet, it was these sorts of actions, which enabled the Nazis and slowly ebbed away at the hope of Jewish families. These actions played a part in Shoah, and it is important to know their role in the overall trauma as well. Lanzmann's film effectively demonstrates that even those groups who will never be formally charged with any crimes participated in the destruction of the six million Jews. Scenes like the children at the fence provide Lanzmann's answer to the often asked question of how such an atrocity could happen as the world stood by.

Once the differences between focus on the individual and focus on the larger picture and linear versus nonlinear narratives are established in *Schindler's List* and *Shoah*, it is important to consider the implications of these differences. These implications become most salient in an analysis of the endings of both films. The endings provide good places to analyze the larger messages that each film attempts to provide. In *Schindler's List*, the ending is a beautiful tribute to the survivors and Oskar Schindler. The ending is a product of Schindler's actions, and it is because of his heroism that the survivors pictured are alive. This ending produces closure and a triumph of sorts for the viewer. It is more comfortable to celebrate Schindler's heroism and consider all the lives he saved, as opposed to considering the multitude of lives, which were lost and could not be saved. This sort of ending makes it difficult to call the viewer to make change in the world. The viewer is provided with a clean ending which gives closure, and he can walk out of the film feeling moved and uplifted by what Schindler has done. Although this feeling of triumph among horror is important, it creates disconnect between the atrocities committed in *Shoah* and what the viewer is witnessing. In this case, *Shoah* is depicted as something in the past that the viewer does not need to connect with, as opposed to an ever present evil that the viewer must go out and work to remedy. Unfortunately, Oskar Schindler represented the extraordinary. His story was one of heroism, but there were many more stories of tragedy and loss. Only focusing on the heroism does not call the viewer to actively respond to what he has witnessed.

In Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, the viewer is called to actively engage with the trauma still being inflicted as the train cars roll by in the closing scene. The viewer is directly involved and implicated in this scene. The film moves the viewer and he is back on the tracks, still heading towards a destination. As the film ends, the viewer is still watching a moving train. The lack of closure that Lanzmann ends *Shoah* with is the crucial part of his call to viewers. It calls for a

response; the community of witnesses that the viewer has watched is now waiting for what the viewer will do with his knowledge. In order to get off the train, the viewer must do something with the vast amount of knowledge he has acquired. It is not enough to passively witness Shoah; Lanzmann's film calls for active viewing, even after it is through. In order to evoke change, more witnesses must view Shoah. This sort of extralegal response, which calls for witnessing and action, is what is needed to give voice to the dead. It will take viewers actively responding to what they have seen on a large scale in order to generate change in the world. Although focusing on the power of the individual is important in contemplating Shoah, an active call to action is needed in order to bear witness as a viewer, and this call is exactly what Lanzmann provides in his unresolved ending.

This analysis does not intend to portray one film as good and the other as bad; rather, each film provides viewers with a way to contemplate the horrific violence committed during Shoah. *Schindler's List*, without a doubt, raised consciousness of Shoah that has been unprecedented on a mass media scale. Many who knew little or nothing of Shoah became viewers, even if only at a topical level. However, *Shoah's* focus on the larger community and unfinished ending provides a call to witnesses in a way that the individual, uplifting message in *Schindler's List* cannot. It goes deeper in an effort to witness than *Schindler's List* does and it also calls for a more active viewer. From this point, witnesses of Shoah must work to answer the call that Lanzmann makes in his closing scene. This call Lanzmann's film makes is unlike other representations of Shoah, which allow the viewer to walk out of the film feeling contented. In *Shoah*, the horror of Shoah is not something which can ever be forgotten or disregarded as one walks out of a theatre. Instead, it is something which must be actively considered and combated in our contemporary world. An understanding of the gravity of the situation and the magnitude

of the violence allows the viewer to consider this situation in a way that will produce change for the future. This change gives a vehicle and a voice for the dead, so that their legacy will live on through the witnesses who attempt to make their stories known and prevent Shoah from ever reoccurring.

### III. Artwork

Like Lanzmann's *Shoah*, some artistic representations call viewers to do more than just view and move on. Artwork that is thought provoking and challenging is successful because it calls readers to contemplate Shoah long after looking at the piece. Judy Chicago and Zoran Music have both created works that are good examples of this concept. I argue that the works of Chicago and Music have three very important functions. First, Chicago's *Bones of Treblinka* and Music's *Corpses in Coffins* work to memorialize and remember the lives that were lost as a result of Shoah. In each of these works, the artist makes conscious stylistic choices to restore dignity to the lives that were lost to Nazi violence. Second, I demonstrate how Chicago's *Wall of Indifference* and *Banality of Evil/Struthof* both work to show institutionalized violence and the multitude of participants in this violence. Additionally, I analyze how *Banality of Evil/Struthof* critiques the dailyness of evil and reminds viewers that the Nazis were average people who had families and went home to daily lives beyond the concentration camp walls. Finally, I will consider the implications for the future of active witnessing and genocidal violence through an analysis of drawings from Music's exhibition *We are not the Last*. Although Music uses the backdrop of his experiences during Shoah as the basis for his exhibition, his work carries an important message for the present and the future.

#### A. Memorialization

Both Judy Chicago's *Bones of Treblinka* and Zoran Music's *Corpses in Coffins* focus on memorialization. Both artists strive to give integrity and meaning to the memory of the victims that Nazi soldiers attempted to degrade during Shoah. Simultaneously, both works are realistic in their portrayal of the victims of Shoah. They do not gloss over or avoid the terrible horror that was the norm for most of the victims.

Judy Chicago uses a specific technique that adds additional meaning to her work *Bones of Treblinka*. The piece combines painting and photography, superimposing portions of photographs into Chicago's paintings.<sup>21</sup> In Chicago's *Bones of Treblinka*, she combines a photograph of stone grave markers from the memorial at Treblinka in Poland with her representation of the bodies beneath reaching upward. She also adds the names of towns and cities that were destroyed onto the stone monuments in order to preserve the memory of each community that was lost.<sup>22</sup> A large portion of the image is of the bodies and the bones and fragments to which they have been reduced. The middle of the work represents chaos in the mass grave, which Chicago depicts below the monument. Bodies are intertwined and bones appear to have become a part of the earth. Above this chaos, the names of individual communities that Chicago adds to the stones above give respect to each community that has been torn apart. The top and bottom of the piece are bordered with red. This is the only color besides black and white used in the work, and it serves as a constant reminder to the reader of the blood, which has been shed by those that the monument honors. The color also serves as a stain, which hangs over the monument. It is impossible to celebrate the memory, which the monument honors without also considering all the innocent blood that was shed during Shoah.

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<sup>21</sup> Judy Chicago, *Holocaust Project: From Darkness Into Light* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 100.

<sup>22</sup> Chicago, *Holocaust Project*, 95.

Chicago has added her own artwork of the victim's bodies under the memorial in *Bones of Treblinka*, which demonstrates that a cleansed memorial or monument alone does not do enough. The artwork represents Chicago's challenge to the cleansing of the dead that takes place in some kinds of memorials. When looking at the gravestones standing above the place where the victims are buried, we forget their longing faces and desperation to be heard. Chicago's insertion of these victims serves to remind us of the horror that stands beyond the memorials we depict. No matter how beautiful we can make a memorial, it is important to also remember the horror that makes the memorial necessary.

Chicago's depiction of the eroded and indiscernible bodies vividly portrays the way Jewish bodies were seen as indistinguishable from one another to Nazi soldiers. In painting layer after layer of bones beneath the monument, Chicago mimics the erasure of individual identity which occurred in concentration camps. In the painting, the bodies have become all intertwined. Each body has lost its uniqueness and oneness and has become another bone in the pile, as was the goal of the Nazis in dehumanizing the Jews during Shoah. The bodies toward the top of the mass grave, which are still discernible from the pile of bones beneath, all seem to be reaching up toward the monument. The reaching of some of the bodies imagines the desperation of the dead to have their memory and individuality preserved.

Yet, while portraying the dehumanization and loss of identity of the Jews during Shoah, Chicago also shows how the bodies of the dead still cry out for recognition from beneath the grave. Her work successfully brings the voices of the dead out from beneath the monument. In the middle of the painting, facial details are visible on some faces, and the mouths of many of the individuals who are recognizable are open, as if crying out to be heard. These details are significant because they imagine the desire of the dead to be heard. As active witnesses of

Shoah, there is a duty to bring these stories of the dead to the forefront of history. The dead are crying out to be heard, and in order to do justice to these victims, their stories must be told as well. Further, it is significant that these individuals are reaching out from under the monument. As the memory of events like Shoah fades further into the recesses of history, these victims are still reaching out from beneath history in order to have their legacies remembered.

While Chicago critiques the violence of Nazism and attempts to give voice to Jewish victims, her unique portrayal also critiques a kind of acknowledgement of Shoah which fails to engage with the dead. Her painting is not only a vehicle to provide voice for the dead, but also a challenge to preserve their memories. Towards the bottom of the monument, the hands reaching up from the grave blend in to the grave stones above. The interaction of the hands with the stones is important because it is the link that brings the dead back to life. The memory which the stones are commemorating is reaching out beyond the grave for recognition, challenging those who visit or view the painting to consider. The individuality of those who died must never be forgotten. This is what the Nazis attempted to take away, and this is what active witnesses must never forget. Chicago rises to this challenge by adding the names of the destroyed communities into her depiction of the monument. She has attempted to give individuality back to those communities which the monument does not honor by name.

Like Chicago's *Bones of Treblinka*, Zoran Music's *Corpses in Coffins* attempts to give dignity and individuality to the dead through a focus on memorialization. Music created *Corpses in Coffins* during his time at Dachau concentration camp. The drawing, as well as others like it, was done with materials that Music was able to find while in Dachau.<sup>23</sup> In *Corpses in Coffins* four coffins are propped open side by side, with the exception of the fourth, which is halfway

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<sup>23</sup> Glenn Sujo, *Legacies of Silence* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2001), 86-87.

closed. One or two corpses lay in each coffin. The bodies of the victims are frail and battered, and the bodies are collapsed onto one another in each coffin. The facial expressions of many of the pictured victims are visible, as are many facial features. There are several limbs protruding from various parts of the coffins without a visible body that they are attached to.

Music highlights the importance of each dead victim in this drawing. He gives the corpses discernible facial features. The viewer can see teeth, eyes, ears, and facial expressions on many of the faces. Additionally, the bodies are separated into coffins with two corpses in each. This is a unique way to depict the victims because it attempts to bring a sense of dignity back into their deaths. Music has lovingly wrapped the bodies in coffins. Further, depicting the bodies in pairs provides a sense of comfort for the dead. Many depictions of corpses during Shoah would show the bodies piled into heaps, seemingly indistinguishable from one another. In this drawing, Music forces the reader to look at each body on its own, as opposed to just a part of a heap. The coffins that Music draws into this scene respect these bodies in a way that the Nazis did not respect them. The drawing serves as Music's way to refuse the mass graves he witnessed all around him during his time at Dachau.

The fact that the coffins in the drawing are open is significant because it is the way the dead in this drawing are able to continue to call out to the living. Although these people have died, they live on and their memory and stories must not be shut up in a coffin to be easily forgotten. The open coffins allow the dead to continue to speak to the living through the preservation of their memories. Additionally, the open coffins pose a challenge to viewers. The viewers must not forget these dead by simply closing their coffins.

## **B. The Banality of Evil**

In Hannah Arendt's work *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* she uses the term "banality of evil."<sup>24</sup> Her work with this term is especially relevant to an understanding of Chicago's *Wall of Indifference* and *Banality of Evil/Struthof* because these works highlight and critique the type of understanding of Shoah that allows the viewer to remain unengaged with history. Additionally, *Banality of Evil/Struthof* reminds viewers of the complicated figures that many Nazi perpetrators were. As Arendt notes, "The deeds were monstrous, but the doer . . . was quite ordinary, commonplace, and neither demonic nor monstrous."<sup>25</sup> Chicago successfully underscores Arendt's point in her work, which successfully serves to remind viewers that anyone can become a perpetrator through conveying the ordinariness of the Nazis.

Chicago's *Wall of Indifference* reminds viewers that inaction was equally responsible for Shoah. It highlights the varied Jewish emotions experienced during Shoah and also attempts to indict nations and individuals who stood by passively while Jewish populations were decimated. The scene is the combination of a photograph Chicago's husband took of a train passing through a forest in Frankfurt and painting that Chicago has done on top of and around this image.<sup>26</sup> The train is in the center of the painting and is surrounded by green leaves and trees all around. One door of the train is removed so the viewer can see clearly inside. People are packed into the train car, many wearing visible yellow Stars of David. Suitcases and sacks are all over the floor of the car, and two people are crowded to the point that they are literally falling over on top of these items. A rabbi clings to a menorah and looks down. Several people's faces have open mouths and these people appear to be crying out for help or in pain. A child mourns his father, who has

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<sup>24</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin).

<sup>25</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: The Groundbreaking Investigation on How we Think* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 1971), 4.

<sup>26</sup> Chicago, *Holocaust Project*, 118.

hung himself. Other children cling to their parents; a husband attempts to shield his pregnant wife from the mass of frenzied people. Chicago's inclusion of differing individuals and family dynamics conveys the multiplicity of emotions the Jews experienced and the all encompassing effects of the Nazi violence.

Several of the windows of the train car are opened as well and many faces crowd these openings. These faces are literally without bodies. The people within these windows are so crowded that one window seems to show a group of heads, just trying to breathe in the air from the open window. One opening shows a mother reaching out attempting to save her naked child who is falling into the green brush surrounding the train car. Another opening shows an individual reaching up towards the sky from out of the window with a look of despair on his or her face as someone from inside the window clings to this individual.

The lush green setting Chicago surrounds the train car with creates a natural world, which stands in stark contrast to the inhumane conditions inside the train car and the eventual death that many of the train's passengers will eventually see in concentrations camps. The anguish of women in the painting is also significant. The pregnant woman, the woman falling to save her child in one window, the woman grieving over the child or loved one who has been trampled and lies on the luggage, and the woman protecting her child in the center of the train car are all consumed with trying to save or protect their children. The two women holding bodies in the train car both have faces of anguish and pain. The pregnant woman has her mouth open, as if she is in pain. The woman in the window trying to save her child is so consumed with trying to go after her child that she is face down and is literally trying to jump out of the window after her child. Together, these mothers demonstrate the strength and hardship that many women endured as they watched their children and loved ones in pain.

The wide range of ages and social rankings is apparent in the depiction of individuals inside the train car. Some people are gray and wrinkled with old age; others have lighter hair and hold young children. This distinction in Chicago's work highlights the all encompassing nature of the destruction the Nazis planned for the Jewish community. The age, sex, social ranking, or personal history of each Jewish person the Nazis aimed to eliminate was insignificant. Chicago echoes the point made through *Bones of Treblinka* about the loss of identity in her all encompassing depiction of Jewish identity in the train car. To the Nazis, each person only represented one step closer to the Final Solution.

Chicago distances outside nations and individuals from the violence in the center of her painting in depicting two winding roads which cut off the left and right of the painting from the center. The roads are made of concrete blocks and are many rows of blocks thick. This emphasizes the distance between the train car in the center of the painting and the left and right sides. Beyond the blocks on the left side are three men—a Russian official and two naked men, one covered by a British flag and the other covered by an American flag. The British man is smoking a cigarette. All three men have their eyes closed and are looking towards the edge of the painting, away from the center. Beyond the blocks on the right side are a member of the church and a member of the Red Cross.<sup>27</sup> Both of these individuals are looking towards the edge of the painting and have their eyes shut as well. The significance of the left and right sides of the painting are to demonstrate the nations and groups who stood by and turned their backs as millions of innocent people were systematically murdered. The people representing nations and groups have their eyes shut and backs turned to convey that these groups were *choosing* not to look at what was happening all over Europe. Individuals in these nations and groups were in

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<sup>27</sup> Chicago, *Holocaust Project*, 172.

positions to do something about what was going on; however, none of these groups took action quickly enough. The British man is smoking to juxtapose the petty activities going on in these other nations and groups as the worst genocide in the history of the world was taking place. The people on the left and right sides of the painting personify Walter Laqueur's comment that "when all allowances have been made, when all mitigating circumstances have been accorded . . . few come out of the story unblemished. [Shoah] was a story of failure to comprehend . . . [and of many people] who did not care."<sup>28</sup> Chicago's depiction of seemingly oblivious nations and individuals on the corners of her painting echoes Laqueur's opinion. This indictment forces the viewer to consider the implications of those who chose not to act in support of the Jews. This painting attempts to hold these groups and individuals responsible for Shoah as well. Those who are paralyzed by inaction seem to be just as guilty for the fate of the victims of Shoah as the Nazi soldiers who physically committed the violence against the Jewish nation.

The apathy conveyed in *Wall of Indifference* is echoed in Chicago's *Banality of Evil/Struthof* in the humanizing of Nazi soldiers through a portrayal beyond their identities in the concentration camp, while simultaneously exposing their evil actions in the camps. The latter work features a photograph of the patio of an inn in France. The background of the photograph shows a building that used to be a gas chamber at Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp.<sup>29</sup> The two buildings are separated only by a yard. Chicago has added people into both parts of this scene as she imagines the juxtaposition of lifestyles during World War Two. People on the patio are sitting with their backs turned away from the gas chamber. They are enjoying a conversation while drinking and smoking. The woman sitting at this table wears a cross necklace. This is significant because it highlights that even "religious" individuals were guilty of ignoring the

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<sup>28</sup> Chicago, *Holocaust Project*, 119.

<sup>29</sup> Chicago, *Holocaust Project*, 121.

atrocities committed against the Jews in their communities during Shoah. An SS soldier sits at a table behind the people in the conversation with his back also turned away from the gas chamber. This man appears to be resting, with his face down and his head propped up on his hand. He appears to be too tired or unaware to notice anything that is going on around him. This man also provides a connection to groups like the Poles, which were exposed in Lanzmann's *Shoah* as knowing what was going on and having the concentration camps basically in their backyards, but doing nothing to stop the killing going on around them. This man serves as a microcosmical representation of this concept because if he could only turn around, the horrific scene behind him would become obvious. The close proximity of both activities leaves the viewer practically screaming out to the sleeping man to wake up and take a look at the atrocity going on right behind him.

The people Chicago has painted into the gas chamber portion of the work stand in stark contrast to those sitting out on the patio of the inn. The people near the gas chamber are all naked as the group on the patio appears to be very well-dressed. One of the naked women appears to be crying out and her mouth is open. Additionally, several of the naked victims appear to be looking out at or reaching towards the patio of the inn and the group gathered there. This highlights the indifference that people like those on the patio had during Shoah. Despite the fact that many victims were crying, often this pleading fell upon deaf or unwilling ears.

Some of the naked individuals are attempting to cover their bodies or faces out of embarrassment or to hide from the long whip that the SS officer behind them is lashing at their bare backs. This SS officer is lashing his whip with one hand and holding a large dog on a leash with his other hand. He appears to be kicking the genitals of one of the naked victims. Another SS officer is tackling one of the victims to the ground. These SS officers are dressed in the same

uniforms as the officer sitting on the patio of the inn resting, which highlights that many of these SS officers were normal people who left the concentration camps each day and went home to families or carried on everyday tasks. Chicago forces us to realize that the Nazi soldiers were complicated figures. Although responsible for genocide, these people also had families and left the concentration camps at the end of each day. This juxtaposition serves to humanize the SS officers, while also highlighting how brutally they acted against the innocent during Shoah. Chicago's *Banality of Evil/Struthof* is effective in exposing the close proximities where death and life often existed in various communities during Shoah.

### C. The Legacy of Shoah

Zoran Music's *We are not the Last* exhibition serves as a response to the claim that Shoah is something that remains in the past. Music uses his memory of Shoah from his personal experiences at Dachau concentration camp, while also drawing on his feelings as he heard of continuing instances of genocide in places like Vietnam and Latin America.<sup>30</sup> The work on his exhibition was done in the 1970's in the wake of the Vietnam War, and it provides a link between Shoah and contemporary violence. His work serves to remind viewers that Shoah was not a one-time event, which will never happen again. It is an event that we as viewers must consciously remember and work to prevent in our contemporary world.

The message Music attempts to convey is underscored in the title of his collection, *We are not the last*. This ominous message serves as a warning and calling to viewers. The message and legacy of Shoah must be brought to future generations or the world risks forgetting the memory of all those who have died. Additionally, if viewers are not vigilant, additional forms of

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<sup>30</sup> "An Artist's Response to Evil: *We are not the Last* by Zoran Music," The Jewish Museum New York, accessed February 2012, <http://www.thejewishmuseum.org/ZoranMusicMicrosite>.

mass violence will be allowed to prosper in our contemporary world, as Shoah did as the world watched or looked away. Contemporary and more recent historical examples of mass violence serve as examples that the violence warned about in the title of the collection is already occurring—Vietnam, Iraq, and Rwanda are all examples that prove Shoah was not the last occurrence of horror in our world. Zoran Music's own commentary on his decision to name his collection further demonstrates the evil that can flourish when the world forgets. He notes that

When we were in the camp, people would often declare that this sort of thing could never happen again. When the war is over, they said, a better world will come into being and such horrors will never recur. . . . But then, as time went by, I saw the same sort of thing starting to happen again all over the world – in Vietnam, in the Gulag, in Latin America – everywhere. And I realized that what we had said in those days – that we would be the last people to experience such things – was not true: the truth is that we were not the last.<sup>31</sup>

Music's admission is significant in light of the title of the collection and the faces calling out in this particular painting because the viewer is reminded of the desperation those who died were filled with. In order to preserve the legacy of those who died and to ensure that those lost did not die in vain, the viewer must attempt to bring Shoah, as well as contemporary examples of mass violence to the attention of the rest of the world.

Music's *We are not the Last* reminds viewers of the atrocities of Shoah and the fact that these atrocities occurred as the world watched. Unlike *Corpses in Coffins*, the works from this collection erase the individuality of the victims. This change in style is important because it recreates the violence and erasure of identity that Jewish men and women endured during Shoah. It reminds viewers that this type of violence can happen to the world again. This erasure of identity was not indicative of one horrific experience that will never happen again. Music's work reminds viewers that it can and continues to occur in our contemporary world. This reality

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<sup>31</sup> "An Artist's Response to Evil."

forces viewers to become active witnesses through the ominous messages *We are not the Last* sends about the horrors of Shoah and contemporary violence.

The colors in this painting are significant because they illustrate the darkness that this time in history represented, especially for those of Jewish tradition and members of other minority groups who were persecuted. The light brown used in the center of the painting highlights the body parts seem to be haphazardly piled in the middle. The accent colors of darker brown and red used in parts of the center circle force the viewer to consider the bloodshed and violence that the victims of Shoah endured. The dark faces surrounding the edge of the center make the individuality of the victims indistinguishable. Although a viewer can see the separate faces, they all look exactly the same. The loss of identity that Music has aimed to avoid in his *Corpses in Coffins* comes through clearly in this painting.

The faces are arguably the most significant aspect of this painting. Each face is on the outermost part of the circle as if it is trying to get out of the mass grave of body parts in order to be distinguished from the rest. It is as if these faces are attempting to reclaim the individuality that has been taken away from them. This individualization of victims mirrors that of the victims in Chicago's train cars in *Wall of Indifference*. Further, in *We are not the Last*, the mouth on each face is open. The open mouths on the outward reaching faces represent the dead victims who are calling out to the living. They do not want their histories or suffering to be forgotten. The open mouths convey an added desperation to this message, as if the bodies are screaming this message or they are trying desperately to break away from the mass grave to ensure that this message is heard and remembered.

*Bones of Treblinka*, *Wall of Indifference*, and *Banality of Evil/Struthof*, as well as the rest of the pieces in Judy Chicago's *Holocaust Project*, and *Corpses in Coffins* and *We are not the Last* are so valuable because they force viewers to actively consider challenging questions about the legacy of Shoah. Each work raises important political questions which are often left out of discussions of Shoah. *Bones of Treblinka* and *Corpses in Coffins* highlight the need to preserve the history of each individual lost during Shoah with integrity. Places of memorialization must also become places of remembrance for the legacies of the lives that were lost. *Wall of Indifference* and *Banality of Evil/Struthof* challenge the groups and nations who turned their backs on the innocent during Shoah across the globe, as well as the native countrymen who often overlooked the atrocities being committed in their own backyards. They also serve as a reminder to present and future generations about the horrors that can become realities when the world does not take action. They also remind us that anyone can be a perpetrator of violence. The Nazis were not exemplary characters of violence; they were fathers and neighbors of those who watched the horror of Shoah unfold. This reality is important because it forces viewers to engage with the violence we see each day in our lives. These two works force the viewer to face this harsh reality head on. Despite what is often imparted in history books or other renditions of Shoah, many people stood by and were unwilling to help as innocent victims were slaughtered day after day. These works challenge viewers to carry this harsh realization into the future and act with awareness when facing current and future issues of genocide that groups of the past refused. Last, *We are not the Last* connects Shoah to continued atrocity and violence in our world. This reminder holds viewers accountable for the legacies of the lives lost, to ensure that their memory is carried on and that they did not die in vain. Shoah must not fade into history,

but it must continue to affect the minds of future generations contemplating issues of contemporary genocide and violence.

#### IV. Conclusion

To conclude, supplementary forms of representation provide viewers with an irreplaceable way to understand historic violence and trauma like Shoah outside of a trial setting. These mediums provide additional ways to understand questions that a trial can leave unanswered. Additionally, they attempt to achieve a degree of understanding on the part of the viewer. Although those who never experienced Shoah will never truly understand the magnitude and degree of horror and violence that the victims endured, supplementary mediums attempt to produce empathy in a way that a sterilized trial procedure and a feel good blockbuster hit cannot.

I do not mean this analysis to be overly critical of *Schindler's List*, easily one of the most important films of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and trial procedures, which have clear value and are an irreplaceable part of our criminal justice system. *Schindler's List* has brought the topic of Shoah into our contemporary conversations about the event, which is increasingly important as it moves further into history and generations who have experienced Shoah firsthand begin to age. Judith Doneson correctly points out that films like *Schindler's List* "help in establishing a memory for a public who might otherwise remain uninformed about the event."<sup>32</sup> Yet, films like *Shoah* contribute something which I think is different and essential in order to keep the memory of those lives lost alive, while also becoming more active in our world today. Additionally, a trial has a clear place in our system. It is an imperfect form of producing justice for victims and

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<sup>32</sup> Judith E. Doneson, "Holocaust Revisited: A Catalyst for Memory or Trivialization?," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 548 (1996): 71, accessed May 8, 2011, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1048543>.

perpetrators; however, it is the best system our world currently has. To throw this system out because it is flawed would be to overlook the many values the system does provide.

As I go on to law school, I take a nuanced understanding of the complexity of contemporary justice as a result of my research. This project has and will continue to challenge me to be a force within the legal system and to engage in conversations that strive toward a re-imagination of justice in our world. The strategies used in Lanzmann's *Shoah* and the artwork of Judy Chicago and Zoran Music ask us to continue to see the violence in our world and to engage. As Music's exhibition *We are not the Last* suggests, those who lost their lives during Shoah have and will not be the last victims of genocide. Music's drawings provide a link between Shoah and contemporary violence and remind viewers that genocide is not just an issue of the past. It is important to remember the dead calling out as a warning about what will happen if we let these issues fade into memory. In order to guarantee that the six million murdered in Shoah did not die in vain, we must attempt to keep their memory alive through promoting peace and standing up in the face of contemporary issues of genocide and violence in our world.

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