Engaged Witnessing: An Ethical Framework for Teaching the Holocaust

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Soon

Soon now their testimony and history coalesce.

Last survivors fade and witnesses to witnesses

Broker their first-hand words. Distilled memory.

Slowly, we begin to reshape our shaping story.

A card from a train in Warsaw's suburb Praha:

We're going nobody knows where. Be well, Laja.

That someone would tell. Now our second-hand

Perspective, a narrative struggling to understand.

Victims, perpetrators, bystanders who'd known

Still cast questioning shadows across our own.

Some barbarous. Mostly inaction or indifference.

Hear, O Israel still weeps their revenant silence.

Abraham pleaded for the sake of the ten just.

Our promise to men the earth? A healing trust?

Michael O' Siadhail.

Table of Contents

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Abstract

This study explores three Holocaust curriculums; Anne Frank's diary, Elie Wiesel's memoir *Night*, and Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus* to determine how or to what extent engaged witnessing may be achieved. I define engaged witnessing as addressing the gap between empathy and action and signifying the inspiration of an empathetic response that requires responsibility and can motivate action. I also explore what possibilities and/or limitations the texts offer as curriculum. The study is taking place in the context of a near future where there will no longer be Holocaust survivors and eye-witnesses in the world to bear witness to its horrors. That testimonial voice therefore must be discovered in other forms and through other mediums. The concepts of alterity, responsibility, witnessing, and response are used to create an ethical framework guiding the reading of these texts. My method draws on William Pinar's notion of currere, which is an understanding of curriculum as autobiography, and as both researcher and reader I carry out a self-reflective exploration of the texts, not only arguing for engaged witnessing in the classroom but simultaneously discovering my own witnessing voice in the process.

Keywords: alterity, curriculum, currere, empathy, ethic, history, pedagogy, response, responsibility, testimony, witness.

The Prologue

Who controls the past controls the future,

Who controls the present controls the past.

(Orwell 2000, 37)

A crisis for Europe as well as a universal catastrophe, the Holocaust is still close enough in time for survivors to bear witness to its horrors. It will soon, however, pass out of living memory leaving us without the first-hand testimony of survivors and eyewitnesses. Gray (2014, 82) tells us that 'across the globe survivors have played a key role in Holocaust education, playing an important part in its development and delivery', and Harding (2014) in a piece for the Huffington Post questions 'who is going to educate young people about the Holocaust when the survivors are no longer with us?' Survivor testimonies are among the most compelling and important historical sources we have and their role in Holocaust remembrance and education cannot be overlooked. Who will counter the denial and antisemitism that seemed to be held in check by the memory of the event, although fatal attacks in recent years in Europe and the United States would suggest that is no longer the case. The passing of the survivor generation resonates with even more poignancy when juxta-positioned against the current climate of antisemitism – what James Ball (2017) has termed a 'post-truth' era, a time when truth and facts are endangered in the political arena or to put it bluntly, when 'bullshit conquered the world'. Conspiracy theories are more common than ever in the twenty-first century,

and hatred of Jews continues to be a unifying power amongst extremist but otherwise opposing groups (Sion 2024). In the Middle Ages Jews were blamed for the Black Death which intensified antisemitism throughout Europe and later for the French Revolution which overthrew the ruling order and granted Jews in France full citizenship for the first time in history. During the reign of Russian Tsar Nicholas II, (sometime between 1894 and 1917) the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was produced, the supposed minutes of a secret meeting of Jews plotting world domination, possibly by officers of the Okhrana – the Russian secret police whose job it was to not only protect the Tsar but also combat political terrorism and left-wing revolutionary activity (Wasserstein 2012). Its purpose was to portray Jews as conspirators against the state, evoking secret Jewish plans to rule the world by manipulating the economy, controlling the media, and fostering religious conflict. Translations of the document circulated across Europe, and it became the most widely disseminated antisemitic text of that time, second only to *Mein Kampf* (Wasserstein 2012). It remains the most notorious and widely distributed antisemitic publication in modern times, and although entirely a work of fiction, continues to be used to spread hatred against Jews. This is the document that took possession of Hitler's mind helping to prepare the way for the genocide of the Jews. Indeed, the title of the final section of the document 'The Final Solution' is the phrase used by Hitler. Rambling, chaotic and unstructured, it describes control of world finance and business, fomenting communism and anarchism, the banning of all religions except for Judaism, and control of the press. Despite being proven to be a forgery in 1920, it did little to dissuade antisemites, and in truth it was not about the content, it exposed something deeper about Jews as far as antisemites were concerned. The purpose of conspiracy theories, such as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* or the burning of the

Reichstag in 1933 which was portrayed by the Nazis as a communist attack and used to justify draconian laws, is simply to pollute the wells of knowledge and damage the credibility of properly researched work. This is the harm that bad history does, and with the advent of the internet it is even more widespread continuing to rehash medieval libels. As Lipstadt (2017) tells us 'in the post-truth era we must fight the deniers even harder'.

It is important to state at this point that this piece of research is not a proposed curricular response to antisemitism. Antisemitism has existed for millennia in various guises; as early Christian anti-Jewishness, medieval economic, political and social exclusions and expulsions, and in its racialised and pseudo-scientific form in the twentieth century. However, it is important I believe to note the current context of rising antisemitism that the study is taking place within, and the increasing levels of violence and antisemitic attacks taking place in Europe and beyond. I will outline some of the most recent instances.

In 2014 a gunman opened fire at the Jewish Museum of Belgium in Brussels killing four people. That same year in Copenhagen male students at one of the cities' Jewish schools were warned not to wear their kippahs in public for fear of attacks. The following year a magazine article asked, 'Is it time for Jews to leave Europe?' citing attacks in Paris and Copenhagen as the latest examples of violence against Jews and referencing the very old Jewish question 'Do you have a bag packed?' (The Atlantic 2015). The attack in Paris in 2015 was connected to the shootings at Charlie Hebdo and several days of terror around the city.[1] A gunman took hostages at a kosher

[1] Charlie Hebdo is a French satirical magazine that features cartoons and articles on politics, religion, the economy and international issues. On January 7th, 2015, the Paris offices of the magazine were targeted by militant Islamists in response to several cartoons featuring the Prophet Muhammad published over a number of years. Any visual representation of Muhammad is prohibited by Islam

supermarket resulting in the death of four people. And in Copenhagen a Jewish guard was killed outside the city's main synagogue. In 2017 at a 'Unite the Right' rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, extremist demonstrators chanted 'Jews will not replace us' during a torchlit march.[2] In 2018 during an attack on the Pittsburgh Tree of Life Synagogue, a gunman killed eleven Jewish worshippers and wounded six in the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in the U.S. In February 2019 swastikas were daubed on portraits on Paris post-boxes of Simone Veil, the late French Holocaust survivor and politician.[3] An attack on a synagogue in California filled with worshippers during Passover in April 2019 resulted in the death of one woman and three others being injured. Later that year, in December 2019, a shooting took place at a kosher supermarket in New Jersey and three people were killed. That same month, in New York, a masked man invaded the home of a Hasidic rabbi stabbing and wounding the rabbi and four others just as they were gathering to light candles for Hanukkah. On January 6th, 2021, during the attack on the Capitol building in Washington D.C, a man was photographed wearing a sweatshirt emblazoned with 'Camp Auschwitz' on the front and 'Staff Member' on the back showcasing the presence of antisemitic symbols and sentiment at the riot. More incidents of

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which opposes the use of images or icons to portray living creatures. Eleven journalists and security personnel were murdered. After the attack the phrase 'Je suis Charlie', meaning 'I am Charlie', was adopted by supporters of the magazine and journalists as a rallying cry for freedom of speech and press.

[2] The rally at Charlottesville was a protest by white nationalists over plans to remove a confederate statue of General Robert E. Lee.

[3] Simone Veil was arrested by the Nazis in Nice two days after completing her final high school exams in 1944 and deported to Auschwitz and then to Bergen-Belsen. She survived as did her sister, however she lost both her parents and her brother in the Holocaust. Simone emphasised the sadness of her father's fate as he was a staunch supporter of the French republic, had fought for France in World War I, and had raised his children to be proud of their French nationality above all else. He never believed that his fellow countrymen would give in to demands to deport French Jews. She also struggled with the re-entry into French life after the war as the heroism of resistance was celebrated but the horrors the Jews endured avoided. She embarked on a career in law and ultimately politics and was a passionate advocate for women's rights. Having been only the second female minister in the French government she then pioneered a number of roles in the European Union and became the first female president of the European Parliament in 1979, and as a survivor of the Holocaust championed the cause of a unified Europe for the rest of her life.

antisemitism were recorded in the UK in 2021 than ever before. Some incidents included convoys of cars decorated with Palestinian flags driving around particular London neighbourhoods with the passengers shouting antisemitic abuse from a megaphone. Another was an attack on a rabbi which saw him needing hospital treatment. And synagogues and Jewish properties were defaced with swastikas. In January 2022 four people were taken hostage at a synagogue in Texas and held at gunpoint for eleven hours. And in May 2023 an attack on the ancient El Ghriba synagogue in Tunisia's southern resort island Djerba, by a Tunisian security guard, resulted in the deaths of five people. The attack took place at the end of an evening of festivities at El Ghriba which is a site of Jewish worship dating back 2,500 years; Tunisia has one of the only continual Jewish communities in the Arab world.

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference), was founded in 1951 to organise compensation and aid for the victims of Nazi persecution and to carry out negotiations for and disburse funds to individuals and organisations seeking the return of Jewish property stolen during the Holocaust. It also supports projects that promote Holocaust education and research and carries out surveys to examine Holocaust knowledge and awareness worldwide. In recent years it conducted seven surveys across six countries; the UK, Netherlands, France, Austria, Canada, U.S. National and U.S. State. The results of their Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness Survey of adults in France released in 2020 exposed critical gaps with 57% not knowing that six million Jews were killed, 30% believing two million or fewer were killed, less than 20% of respondents being familiar with the Dachau concentration camp and awareness of Buchenwald, Treblinka, Sobibor and Bergen-Belsen almost non-existent, although 66% of respondents were familiar with Auschwitz (Claims Conference 2020). Equally troubling were the findings from

the U.S surveys, both nationally and state-by-state, also released in 2020. Nationally 48% of U.S millennials and gen z could not name one single concentration camp or ghetto out of the 40,000 established by the Nazis during World War II. 63% did not know six million Jews were murdered and 36% placed the number at two million or less. Perhaps most disturbing was the revelation that 11 % of millennial and gen z respondents believe that Jews caused the Holocaust. The survey carried out in the UK in 2021, Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness in the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), revealed that their historic kindertransports, which saved thousands of Jewish children has all but been forgotten. 52% of respondents did not know six million Jews were killed during the Holocaust, 22% believed it was two million or fewer, and 32% of respondents were unable to name a single camp or ghetto (claims conference 2020). The results of one of the Claims Conference's most recent surveys, the Netherlands Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness Survey, were released in January 2023, including a breakdown of millennial and Gen Z respondents. Their findings exposed a disturbing lack of awareness of key historical facts about the Holocaust as well as the Netherland's own national connection to it. Some of the key findings included misconceptions about the death toll, a belief that the Holocaust is a myth or the numbers have been greatly exaggerated, and a lack of knowledge of their own country as a site where the Holocaust took place despite the fact that several transit camps in the Netherlands were used to deport more than 70% of the country's Jewish population to concentration camps. Perhaps most surprising in the country that Anne Frank and her family sought refuge, 32% of millennials and 27% of all adults did not know that she died in a concentration camp. In response, Claims Conference President, Gideon Taylor, stated; 'Survey after survey, we continue to witness a decline in Holocaust

knowledge and awareness. Equally disturbing is the trend towards Holocaust denial and distortion,' adding that to address it 'we must put a greater focus on Holocaust education in our schools globally. If we do not, denial will soon outweigh knowledge, and future generations will have no exposure to the critical lessons of the Holocaust.' (Claims Conference 2023). The Anti-Defamation League, established in 1913 to battle the rampant antisemitism and discrimination the Jewish community in the United States faced, is today the leading anti-hate organisation in the world. Their most recent key findings on traditional negative stereotypes about Jews (the ADL Global 100), also published in January 2023, found that antisemitic rhetoric in the political arena, violent extremism and lax social media policies have led to a spike in antisemitic tropes being believed. Some of these include the perceived power of Jews in the business world and the financial markets, the idea that Jews are more loyal to Israel than the countries they live in, that Jews have too much control over the American government as well as global affairs, and that they control the global media (ADL 2023). It seems whatever 'dispensation' was previously afforded the Jews in the post-Holocaust world no longer applies.

In ancient Rome the age, or 'saeculum' was the span of living memory, the recounting of an event by the oldest to the youngest, a history being passed down through the generations. Survivors, as the core witnesses, are the human link to the past, and many have worked in Holocaust education often followed by members of their families, who share publicly the stories of their parents and grandparents. One could worry that the memory of this event will fade as the generation who lived through it near the end of their lives. We know that survivor testimony is only one aspect of learning about the Holocaust and knowledge of this difficult history comes from a variety of sources. However, when survivor testimony is used appropriately,

placed in historical context, and integrated into the curriculum it can, according to the USC Shoah Foundation Institute:

- Provide a face to history.
- Help students learn history from an individual perspective.
- Help students and teachers appreciate the invalidity of stereotypes, misconceptions, and/or generalizations.
- Help students discount misconceptions they might have had about the period/topic of study, and the events and/or people involved in the topic.
- Help students identify different type of information available in primary sources.
- Sensitize students to the distinction between fact and opinion, and essential and non-essential information.
- Provide students with an effective understanding of history.
- Help students understand the long-term ramifications of extreme persecution and trauma.
- Introduce students to new-and various-perspectives, themes, discrete events or concepts of an historical event and/or period.

(Teaching About the Holocaust Without Survivors, IHRA, 2023)

As the survivors disappear and the cycle of memory closes, Holocaust remembrance and education becomes more challenging, because as we know memory is not neutral, and it can be contentious and contested. We are then as Langer (1995) posits, moving into the second stage of Holocaust response, moving from what we know of the event to how we remember it. Therefore, we find ourselves in the twenty-first century with fewer and fewer survivors of the Holocaust to bear witness, in a race against time, and the necessity for new forms of witnessing presents itself. The Holocaust signifies an encounter and engagement with the most extreme ideology to afflict the continent of Europe. Holocaust testimony resists the efforts of time to erase the experience and when we engage with a testimony, we are in the

presence of a past; a moment that is not being represented for us but re-presented to us (Langer 1995). We cannot undo the past or redress the actions of the perpetrators, collaborators, or bystanders, but are we willing to at least face what was done? And bear witness to it? If the answer is yes, then moving towards a future without survivors and eyewitnesses, I suggest that approaching teaching and learning the Holocaust from an ethical point of view built on the process of testimony-witnessing through the use of testimonial literature has the potential to transform the young reader to a witness, no longer an 'interpreter of texts, but a mender of the world,' (Patterson 1998, 12). What might that world look like, I wonder?

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

Trauma - and its impact on the hearer - leaves, indeed, no hiding place intact.

(Laub 1992, 72)

1.1 Context and Rationale

Teaching and learning about the Holocaust can be distressing, an assault or injury to the soul. When we speak of the Holocaust it is not some far-off, long-ago event chronicled by ancient historians but a 'living history' – one that lives and breathes and was endured and somehow survived by people still among us, as well as their descendants. When we teach the Holocaust, we ask students to confront human beings at their most vulnerable as well as in their most base and malevolent form. We retell and relate accounts of unimaginable cruelty and pain. The fate of victims of historical trauma is inevitably to be reduced to statistics and the sheer scale of the crime carried out by Nazi Germany brings with it a habitual numbness or inability to comprehend that every victim was an individual with a family, loved ones, lives to lead. The lives are simply too many. By using testimony, it has been argued (Yad Vashem 2023), we can counter the anonymity and the victim's humanity may be restored. But a testimony is more than the telling of a story, or a piece of literature, or a video clip. It is one half of a process of testimony-witnessing. To bear witness to something means to be present and attentive to the truth, it is to engage with history and to become part of a continuous chain (Simon and Eppert 1997).

At its root, the word ‘testimony’ derives from the Latin for ‘witness’ which in turn derives from the concept of becoming conscious of or knowing something, literally seeing a thing (Young 1990, 19). To testify then is also to make a witness and so the two concepts are bound together. As testimony and witness are made so too is knowledge and that knowledge is accompanied by an ethical and moral value and intent. This ethical intent is a central concept found in the Jewish tradition of *Zachor*, the Jewish command to remember, a command which took on new implications in the aftermath of the Holocaust (Parens 2012). This obligation does not end with memory but is connected to meaning and action. The Holocaust was and is an event of extreme human and ethical significance and as such learning about it signifies acquiring knowledge that is accompanied by an ethical action and responsibility. To witness then is an ethical act as responsibility is enacted from within and because of an encounter with the other (Simon and Eppert 1997). The notion of witnessing does not, as I outline below, demand empathy or some prescribed reaction to learning about a hitherto unimagined atrocity such as the Holocaust (Boler 1999). While perhaps a desirable trait, empathetic understanding does not demand enough of either teacher or student. It does not invite an inquiry into assumptions and values, nor challenge thinking patterns, nor call us into action. To witness, however, as I explore in this thesis, brings about a knowing of the unknowable, albeit at a safe remove, and it is only through the presence of a witness that the unspeakable may be brought into existence (Goodman 2012). The Holocaust can never be redeemed or transformed, but through the power of witnessing a greater capacity to see and respond to trauma may be gained.

Staub (1989) emphasizes the importance of contact with the ‘other’ in the prevention of violence as well as the role of testimony in the reconciliation process. Goodman (2012, 53) describes the Holocaust as ‘pure Thanatos’ - death instinct - but the capacity to witness as a ‘dynamic libido’ - life instinct. For Goodman, witnessing begets more

witnessing and witnessing feels alive. She develops the metaphor of the 'anti-train' to represent the power of witnessing. The 'anti' refers to the determination required to overcome the fear induced by hearing about and seeing the Holocaust, and the 'train' forms an obvious link with the Nazi transports which carried Jews from all over Europe to their deaths. The structure of the anti-train metaphor is such that the space into which we are invited allows us to maintain a barrier between the events of the Holocaust and our viewing of it. From within the train there is a choice as to when and for how long to look out of the window at the landscape of the Holocaust. To consider the presence of companions and the windows and the movement of the train which provides a framing of events and affords some comfort and protection from the enormity of the trauma which must be viewed and processed (Goodman 2012).

Gubkin (2015) advocates a move from empathetic understanding to what she terms 'engaged witnessing' to teach and learn about historical trauma in meaningful ways that do not place the students at an increased risk of trauma but nonetheless strive for an understanding that is not superficial. Along these lines, LaCapra (1999, 722) speaks of it as 'empathic unsettlement' which signifies a refusal to over-identify with the victim or make of yourself a quasi-surrogate victim but rather to respond with empathy, although not full identification. Similarly, Boler (1999) questions whether empathy can lead to justice or any shift in power relations and believes that no matter how powerful a vision of social justice the empathetic student may gain, habitual numbness prevents any action. Educational philosopher Louise Rosenblatt (1938) describes this 'habit of mind….as a form of self-protection' (185). Felman and Laub (1992) believe that the gap that exists between empathy and acting on another's behalf may then be overcome by testimonial reading which might involve empathy but primarily requires responsibility. Taking these points together, I redefine engaged witnessing as having the potential to address the gap between empathy and ethical action and as a way of signifying the

importance of responsibility for a distant other. It is the inspiration of an ethical response that can motivate action and invokes a historicized ethics.

Some of the pedagogical concerns associated with teaching the Holocaust include the risks of traumatizing students and exploiting student's vulnerabilities by maximizing the emotional impact of the curricular materials. Totten and Feinberg (1995) stress the importance of creating an emotionally safe environment believing students essentially to be 'a captive audience' and as such 'Assaulting them with horrific images outside of any constructive context is antithetical to good teaching' (330). Lindquist (2008) stresses the importance of considering the age and maturity of students while also acknowledging that different students respond to the same materials in different ways, each bringing their own personal context to the study. The ethical implications for the educator then are many and complex: the ethical obligation to respond to the call of history is tempered by the ethics involved in recognizing the sensitivity required to teach emotionally vulnerable young people and to tune into the response of the students while aiming for the cultivation of a sense of responsibility. All of which is central to the notion of engaged witnessing emphasizing the enormity of the task.

1.2 Problem Statement

The problem which I am seeking to address is how best to reach out to students in the twenty-first century with testimonial curriculums and what the responsibilities and ethics for both teacher and student are in doing so. As an interruption in human history, the Holocaust was unprecedented and unique, not because Nazi Germany attempted to annihilate the Jewish people for political, territorial, or monetary gain, but because they considered them sub-human and utterly disposable. The Jews alone were a people

marked for complete annihilation (Schuster and Boschert-Kimmig 1999).[4] The Holocaust then is the 'paradigmatic genocide' leading as it did to United Nations legislation and the definition of the very concept of genocide (Cowan and Maitles 2017). Unprecedented in its planning and execution, its intent was not only to destroy a people but also every trace of their history, culture, and memory. Totten (1995) proposes that to ignore the Holocaust distorts history and leaves critical gaps in experience and knowledge affecting how people see the world in which they live, a proposal that aligns with Eisner's null theory of education (1979) which states that ignorance is not just a void or lack of knowledge, but also has important effects on the options that we can consider.

Antisemitism was never a Nazi invention and has existed in different guises throughout history, from the anti-Jewishness of the early Church to the antisemitic stereotypes that emerged in medieval Europe leading to expulsions and exiles, to the hierarchical ordering of races by the Nazis which defined the Jews as a distinct and inferior racial group. It is important once again to stress that my research is not an attempt to provide a curricular response to antisemitism; however I do believe it is important to note the current context of rising antisemitism, the durability of antisemitic tropes, and the ease with which they are resurrected during displays of bigotry. The preservation of the memory of the Holocaust and its victims has been exceptional, constructed by and with the survivors, and as such their passing poses a challenge. Does the 'era of the witness' (Wieviorka 2006) end when the last survivor dies? And what happens to the memory of the genocide when those who lived through it are gone? As the Holocaust passes out of living memory and into history and the cycle of active memory closes, I suggest that a new approach to teaching the Holocaust must be developed. One that is based on the

[4] While the Jewish people were the main victim group systematically targeted and murdered by the Nazis in a continental wide genocide, other minority groups such as the Roma and Sinti were also victims of Nazi genocide.

process of testimony-witnessing, and one that treats testimony, however it is transmitted, as if it has a living heartbeat. This is not an easy task but one that involves following 'deep memory' to a place we never wanted to visit (Delbo 2001). However, through the power of witnessing we may increase our capacity to see others' trauma as well as our motivation to act. When we read, watch, or engage with a testimony we are in fact encountering a 'micro-history' (Thaler 2017, 140) - the story of an individual and their experiences - and this is a memory that can serve humanity. Micro-histories represent an opportunity to teach a new generation that they can feel responsible for everyday actions and should not classify the Holocaust as a tsunami, an unstoppable force of nature, but instead understand that it was incremental and insidious, a gradual process that occurred in stages. Hartman (2006, 254) tells us that while 'no precise formula exists' to guarantee a thoughtful and engaged response, testimonies speak to a wide variety of people because of their ability to touch the heart as well as the mind. The preservation of the memory of the Holocaust can serve society by giving responsibility back to ordinary people and counter the annihilation that occurs when others are present and yet do not acknowledge the inhumanity in front of them, what Felman and Laub (1992) refer to as 'the event-without-a-witness' (224). If to bear witness means a refusal to turn away, then we can surely understand the Holocaust as the ultimate collapse of witnessing? And so, in this post-Holocaust era to bear witness must also mean an attempt to break through the barriers we erect in the mind as a means of self-protection when facing fear and terror and to take on a moral and ethical responsibility when encountering the 'other'.

1.3 Aim and Scope

The three main research questions informing this study are as follows:

1. How do we teach the Holocaust in ways that respond to youth in the twenty-first century?
2. How do we do so ethically and in ways that allow for different forms of engagement?
3. What might engaged witnessing look like in response to different pieces of curriculum, specifically examples of testimonial literature?

I have chosen three curriculums to explore in response to these questions, three pieces of testimonial literature commonly used in schools and colleges, ones which have been impactful on public consciousness of the event and on teaching the Holocaust, and that have come to be considered iconic. They are also texts which I have previously read and used as curriculum myself. While there are other testimonial mediums that are equally as powerful, for example art and film, written narrative has the potential to translate a massive historical process such as the Holocaust into a series of events directly affecting the life of an individual, and narrative engagement is an exceptionally useful methodology in the classroom. When used wisely it adds a profoundly meaningful dimension to the study and can challenge students to 'examine their own lived lives and the world.' (Totten 2001, 32). Rosen (2013) believes that literature has a 'specific vocation' regarding the Holocaust and that while history seeks objectivity and has 'generally concerned itself with the macro level – the group, the institution, the movement – literature has focused on the individual…..offering ardently personal experiences on what transpired.' (2). The three texts I have chosen to explore not only represent three different genres: a diary, a memoir, and a graphic novel, but three

different experiences and representations of the trauma as well; generationally, geographically, chronologically and temporally.

The first piece of literature I have chosen is Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* which is an example of witnessing as events unfolded. It was first published in Dutch in 1947, a French and German edition followed in 1950, an English translation in 1952, a play in 1956 and a film in 1959 (Cowan and Maitles 2017). The diary is now available in over seventy languages and for many is their first introduction to the Holocaust. Indeed, it has come to symbolise the beginnings of Holocaust education. Diaries are valuable primary sources providing glimpses of an inner life and making readers privy to the author's most private thoughts. Diaries kept during the Holocaust signify a type of resistance, the preservation of a personal voice when all other vestiges of a previous life have been stripped away. Anne is a teenage girl, a young woman whose life has been radically disturbed and yet she still experiences the emotions and struggles of any young woman; she fights with her mother, falls in love, undergoes the physical and emotional changes that characterise adolescence. Anne writes beautifully, expressing her hopes and her dreams, and despite the difficulties of life in hiding continues to remain optimistic about her future, illustrating the power of the human spirit to rise above uncertainty into a realm of hope and forgiveness. However, as Anne's diary ends abruptly when she and the other inhabitants of the annexe are arrested, she does not write about deportations or ghettos or camps, and one criticism raised is that 'the book skirts the real issues of the Holocaust because the story takes place apart from them' (Culbertson 2001, 64). Without properly grounding this text in historical context it is possible for students to misunderstand the reasons for the Frank family's change in circumstance and as the real horror that the family will endure occurs off-page it is necessary to stress that their story and persecution does not end when the diary does.

The second piece of literature I have chosen is Elie Wiesel's *Night*, a memoir that blurs the boundaries of genre and is often mistakenly described as a novel or an autobiographical novel. As a Holocaust survivor Wiesel is the author of a testimony as well as a writer who employs narrative techniques and devices. Along with Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* Elie Wiesel's *Night* told the story of the Holocaust to the world. Recounting his experience as a teenager in Auschwitz and the loss of his family, Wiesel struggles with his faith in God and humanity, as well as the impossibility of representing the Holocaust and questioning the utility of his own testimony:

> Deep down, the witness knew then, as he does now, that his testimony would not be received. After all it deals with an event that sprang from the darkest zone of man. Only those who experienced Auschwitz know what it was. Others will never know. (Wiesel 2006, ix)

Wiesel continued to speak and write about Auschwitz; however, he constantly challenged its knowability for those who did not directly experience it (Reynolds 2016). He invoked an ethics of representation believing the Holocaust to be a sacred subject that must be treated carefully and judiciously and never subject to any literary licence.

The third piece of literature I have chosen is *Maus*, a graphic novel by Art Spiegelman, which is a retelling of the memory of his father's experiences in Auschwitz. While Art, the son, is the narrator with his father Vladek the protagonist of the story, at times Vladek punctuates the narration with testimony and becomes narrator as well as protagonist. In collecting his father's testimony Spiegelman created an artefact that preserved and reconstructed the memory using testimony as a literary device. This work is filled with his parent's response to the trauma they endured, both during the event and in the post-Holocaust years, but it also gives us considerable insight into the life of the child of a survivor who is growing up in a home 'booby-trapped with memories, most of them horrifying.' (Culbertson 2016,

136). Within the two volumes of *Maus* most of the major topics of the Holocaust are addressed; Jewish pre-war life, the beginning of World War II, the ghettos, efforts at finding hiding places or escape routes, the camps, liberation and attempts by individuals and families to piece their lives back together in a post-Holocaust world. Controversial due to its depiction of different groups as animals (the Jews are mice, the Nazis cats, the Poles pigs, the Americans dogs) what Spiegelman was in fact trying to achieve was a commentary on Nazi propaganda which portrayed Jews as vermin and the absurdity of ethnic divisions. *Maus* has also found it itself at the centre of a media storm more recently due to its banning in a Tennessee school on the grounds of nudity and profane language.

All three pieces of literature have been impactful on public awareness of the Holocaust, are regularly utilised in school and college settings, are of a distinct genre and contain three distinct voices with a powerful testimony to share. There is also a wealth of scholarship that exists on each of the texts which I engage with in Chapter 4 and explore the extent to which these texts offer opportunities for pedagogical practices of engaged witnessing.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Ireland is a full member of the IHRA, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, since 2011 and as such is committed to the implementation of policies and programmes in support of Holocaust education, remembrance, and research. These commitments are supported by organisations such as the Irish Jewish Museum, Holocaust Education Ireland (formerly Holocaust Education Trust Ireland), and Holocaust Awareness Ireland. It is necessary then to look for evidence of these commitments within our education system to judge if they are being adequately met. I will focus solely on education at second level. In many ways the Holocaust has

functioned in the Irish secondary system as a shadow curriculum. While a shadow curriculum may refer to educational services that are fee-based and happen outside of mainstream schooling, for example what we refer to in Ireland as 'grinds' (or private tutoring), it can also refer to classes, modules and units of work that take place within the school setting but are neither mandated nor formally assessed by examination. Within the Irish education secondary school system transition year is often the setting for these so-called shadow curriculums. Transition year is usually (although not always) an optional year between junior and senior cycle during which students continue to study core subjects such as Maths and English but there are no state or terminal examinations, and each school designs its own programme offering a variety of classes. Some of the most commonly offered classes include first aid, drama, coding, environmental studies, tourism, politics, debating, safety in the workplace, road safety, legal studies, sports coaching, and human rights. The transition year Holocaust Studies module I taught for several years is an example of a shadow curriculum. Another type of shadow curriculum is having a Holocaust survivor visit a secondary school to share their testimony. While only a handful of survivors have made Ireland their home, one survivor in particular, Tomi Reichental, has made a significant contribution to Holocaust education in Ireland for more than twenty years, visiting schools and sharing his story. The Crocus Project, an initiative by Holocaust Education Ireland, sees schoolchildren plant yellow crocus bulbs in memory of the 1.5 million Jewish children who died in the Holocaust, and is another example of a shadow curriculum. We are however seeing greater inclusion of the Holocaust in mandated curriculums in recent years. The new Junior Cycle History specification, on stream since September 2018, 'aims to develop in students an interest and enthusiasm for history and to enable them to acquire values and attitudes that shape their view of people in the past, including a regard for heritage and their cultural inheritance, and a sense of historical empathy,

where people are judged in the context and values of the time in which they lived.' (NCCA 2023). It also represents a greater effort than ever before to mandate the teaching of the Holocaust as seen in three of the intended learning outcomes for Strand 3, The History of Europe and the Wider World:

> 3.4 - discuss the general causes and course of World War One or World War Two and the immediate and long-term impact of the war on people and nations.
>
> 3.9 - examine life in one fascist country and one communist country in the twentieth century.
>
> 3.10 - explore the significance of genocide, including the causes, course, and consequences of the Holocaust. (Junior Cycle History Specification, Curriculum Online 2023, 18)

This means that for the first time learning about the Holocaust in greater depth is mandated for all Junior Cycle students through the History curriculum. The Leaving Certificate[5] History syllabus, which was implemented in 2004 and has remained unchanged since then, offers teachers a choice between the early modern field of study (1492-1815) or the later modern field of study (1815-1993). For both there are twelve main topics, six relating to Irish history and six to the history of Europe and the wider world. Four of these twelve topics must be studied. One is prescribed by the department for a documents-based study each year. When the prescribed topic is from Irish history, one other topic from Irish history plus two topics from the history of Europe and the wider world are chosen by the teacher. When the prescribed topic is from the history of Europe and the wider world, one other topic from the history of Europe and the wider world and two topics from Irish history are chosen by the teacher. Obviously if the

[5] The Leaving Certificate is a two-year programme that mandates subjects such as English, Irish and Maths while also allowing students to select four subjects from the sciences, applied sciences, business studies, social studies, and languages in order to specialise with the aim of higher education and career options. Terminal examinations take place at the end of the two years and using a points system third level places are allocated. In Irish society it is a milestone in the educational and adolescent journey. A number of Leaving Certificate subjects are currently under review.

teacher chooses the early modern field of study then a study of the Holocaust is ruled out. However if the teacher chooses the later modern field of study, unless the prescribed topic is Dictatorship and Democracy it is still possible to study modern European history without inclusion of the Second World War and the Holocaust. If Dictatorship and Democracy is prescribed or chosen (and it is one of the more popular choices), while addressing antisemitism and the Holocaust it does so within the context of the dictatorships of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin, the Nazi state in peace and war, and society during World War II. From my own experience as both History student and teacher it is not possible to gain or give an in-depth and nuanced understanding of antisemitism, Nazi ideology or an insight into the Holocaust as a continental wide genocide in which many European states and societies participated due to time constraints and the volume of work that has to be completed for the entire course in preparation for the Leaving Certificate History exam. This raises important questions about whether we are fulfilling our commitment to implement programmes in support of Holocaust education as required by our membership of the IHRA. It seems clear that the history classroom alone is not sufficient and that a cross-curricular approach would be of benefit but perhaps even more than that, what is needed is a pedagogical approach which reflects on how we bear witness not only to historical atrocities but to difference and distance today, and how we might proximate others.

1.5 Overview of the Study

This dissertation consists of five chapters. In chapters 1 and 2, I introduce the study and provide context for witnessing as an educational and curricular endeavour and situate the study within related literature examining issues such as the centrality of testimony within Holocaust education, the use of literature as curriculum in Holocaust education, the tensions that exist between empathy and engaged witnessing as a desirable learning outcome and an educational perspective on the testimony-witnessing process. In chapter

3 I outline my theoretical and methodological approach. The theoretical approach is underpinned by the writings of Emmanuel Levinas and Kelly Oliver but in fact I am more focused on particular concepts that will guide my reading of the three texts: alterity, responsibility, witnessing, and response. As a theoretical exploration of Holocaust curriculums, I have two main objectives: the theoretical framing and defining of the ethical approach – that is, the engaged witnessing - and the study of the testimonial curriculums. I mobilise a notion of engaged witnessing using the concepts to create a framework through which I will explore testimonial curriculums as well as pedagogical issues surrounding those curriculums. This is in effect my intervention, my offering: teaching through engaged witnessing. I am arguing for engaged witnessing as a way of rethinking teaching and learning the Holocaust, approaching it from an ethical point of view. In this reimagined model I also consider the aesthetics of teaching and attempt to take it back to the heart of education, that is teaching to touch souls, to develop a sense of responsibility for and response to the 'other'. Within the framework that I offer, the student as reader of testimony is more than a passive recipient and must play an active role in both the reading experience and the creation of meaning, drawing on Louise Rosenblatt's reader-response theory (1938, 1978). This theory is based on a mutual relation between reader and text and meaning is created through an exchange between the reader and the text within a specific context, providing students the opportunity to think critically and thoughtfully on their own terms, and allowing them to make meaningful and authentic connections with the texts they are reading. In choosing reader response theory I am offering a framework in which students may be empowered to not only carry the torch of memory and bear witness to a historical atrocity but also to develop a present competency which moves them beyond empathy to an action-oriented critical examination and evaluation of their own attitudes and assumptions. Methodologically I draw on William Pinar's notion of currere, which

views curriculum as autobiographical (1975). Thus, as both researcher and reader, I explore my own relation to the texts and educational experiences as both student and teacher as well as what the texts may offer as curriculum. In exploring these materials, I discover my own witnessing voice allowing the study to enact what it is trying to achieve and argue for. Thus the study becomes a performance of (that which it is) an ethical response to the call of history to teach the Holocaust as well as an acknowledgement and exploration of the ethics involved in doing so. Through this autobiographical examination I can not only revisit the past but imagine future possibilities, analyse the relationships between past, present and future life history, and practice and embrace new ways of thinking about education. Ultimately I argue that currere as an ongoing project of self-understanding can be mobilised for engaged pedagogical action. In chapter 4 I explore the testimonial curriculums as a self-reflective participant invoking a historicised ethics and carry out an analysis of the texts and my relation to them. There is a wealth of scholarship on all three texts to engage with and I explore the extent to which the texts themselves offer up limitations or possibilities beyond empathy and to what degree they contribute to a pedagogy of engaged witnessing in the classroom that could motivate action and perhaps the possibility of a more ethical and humane future. Finally in chapter 5 I present my concluding thoughts on engaged witnessing through testimonial literature and offer a specific intervention in the form of reflections on what teachers need to consider when choosing a piece of literature, orientations to look for, and what kinds of questions they should ask themselves when making curricular choices.

1.6 My Narrative Identity

Throughout the dissertation I reflect on my own engagement with the three pieces of testimonial literature, both on a personal level and as an educator which further prompts me to reflect on my own witnessing voice and how it is constantly evolving and

maturing. Todd (2018) describes these stories as the 'adventure of education itself' (151) because as we revisit our past we cannot know which stories will hold fast or what new stories may emerge. My witnessing journey began when I first read a book connected to the Holocaust, *I am David* by Ann Holm, in primary school although I had no concept at the time of what the Holocaust was; I then went on to study the novel *Summer of my German Soldier* by Bette Greene for the Junior Certificate English course at fourteen, and read Anne's diary at fifteen. This journey has not been straightforward or always consciously undertaken but it has nonetheless led me to this point. I have now spent fourteen years as a masters' student, teacher and doctoral candidate pursuing knowledge and understanding as well as professional development opportunities and experiences at home and abroad to further my own learning and also to better understand how to appropriately teach this difficult history. The Holocaust is a vast and complex topic, and I feel I will never truly stop being a student of it. And the burden of this history places unique demands on both teacher and student. Lindquist (2011) explains that in contrast to other historical events in which time, place, activity and result are studied, the Holocaust is 'a vehicle by which the central essence of the human condition can be examined.' (27). The fundamental questions about humanity raised by the Holocaust and the complexity and scale of the crime and its aftermath mean it has become a watershed event in history, with a before and an after. As such it places unique demands on the teacher, firstly to answer the ethical call to teach this difficult history but then to commit to the work of teaching the history in an appropriate manner with a sound and thoughtful rationale and responsiveness to 'do more than just teach about the Holocaust…….call on students to examine their words, their actions and their choices. Teachers are on the front lines of this challenging – but vital – mission' (Ochayon 2019). Approaching this topic demands integrity because the stakes are that high. The historical knowledge is paramount but the issues raised by the topic are

critically important to contemporary society and have the potential to prepare our students to live in a fragmented world that often shows very little care for the 'other.' To carry the burden of the history means carrying the burden of memory and to bear witness; but as a teacher it also signifies creating a community of memory and witness as a collective so that what is learned and read and seen and heard may be passed on to others. When Sydnor (1987) asked 'How can you bear to teach the Holocaust?' he himself answered 'How can we not?' There is an accepted phenomenon in which those who teach the Holocaust become immersed in the subject and it becomes more than a professional endeavour but a personal journey as well. Rosenberg and Bardosh (1982; 1983) believe this is because 'The event shatters us as it frees us from our confident presumptions and allusions' (4) and Lee and Steele (1998) explain that it forces us to accept 'the full burden of reentering the 'Holocaust kingdom'' (159). Deutsch, Perkis and Granot-Bein (2018) describe this as having a passionate historical orientation and passionate historical teachers as those with 'deep knowledge, often cultivated by profuse reading on the topic, personal engagement with Holocaust sites, and participation in HE teacher training programs. The roots of their interest in the Holocaust often go a long way back' (90).

I can attest to this personally as someone who has been driven by the history for many years and felt compelled to continue to learn and fully immerse myself in it. I bear witness then as an individual in the world who has knowledge of the history and wishes to contribute to a more just and ethical future, as a teacher who must make curricular and pedagogical decisions to best teach the history professionally and sensitively to vulnerable youth, and as a teacher-witness who has created a space for collective witnessing and bears witness to their response and witnessing of the event.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Our entry into the world of the Holocaust thus depends on who tells the tale – and how.

(Langer 1982, 5)

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I first discuss the literature surrounding the educational perspective on the process of testimony-witnessing – the pedagogical character of testimony and the act of witnessing, and the classroom as the potential site for a collective witnessing. I will then explore the centrality of testimony in teaching the Holocaust providing an overview of several educational philosophies and their guidelines for teaching the Holocaust and the use of testimony, as well as the challenges and opportunities that may arise in teaching this difficult history; what Young and Muller (2013, 2016) term 'powerful knowledge'. Following this I will reflect on the use of literature in teaching the Holocaust and issues regarding age-appropriateness, suitability, historical accuracy as well as concerns around the use of fictional accounts as opposed to memoirs and testimonies. Finally I will look to empathy and the frequent calls for its desirability as a response to learning about the Holocaust and explore to what extent a purely emotional response can constitute an engaged learning or witnessing of the event.

2.2 Testimony and Witnessing: An Educational Undertaking

> In the era of the Holocaust……in the age of testimony – teaching, I would venture to suggest, must in turn *testify*, make something *happen*, and not just transmit a passive knowledge……

(Felman 1992, 53)

Simon and Eppert (1997) discuss the pedagogical character of testimony, describing it as an engagement between memory and history. Pedagogically speaking it makes history come alive. Testimony then is the human and personal supplement to impersonal documentary evidence which reduces human beings to facts and figures, and counters the anonymity which is the fate of victims. The writing of history cannot happen without testimonies, they are meaning traces that make it possible, but it also cannot happen without historians, people in the present time who wish to know and understand and to communicate with others (Wieviorka 2006). The act of witnessing imposes an obligation on those who receive it, a commemorative ethic (Simon and Eppert 1997), the transformation of the one who bear witness into a carrier of the torch of memory. The act of witnessing then is grounded in this commemorative ethic which signifies an obligation to bear witness and to 're-testify' (Simon and Eppert 1997, 187). To do so, however, constitutes an engagement with the unsayable and what can be said can never fully encapsulate that to which it refers. The challenge in creating this space for witnessing in the classroom, for 'pedagogical witnessing', lies in the impossibility of truly grasping the trauma of the 'other' and the risk involved in bearing witness to trauma. Moreover, there is also the fact that witnessing in the classroom is collective and as such students are co-witnesses and therefore responsible for each other and the teacher for them (Zembylas 2006, 322). This collective witnessing as distinct from singularly spectating signifies an invitation to inquiry and a call to action (Boler 1999). To witness on this view is to learn, but it is also to teach, and the classroom becomes a

potential site for transformation, a threshold between past and future, a unique time-space (Bergdahl and Langmann 2018). Bergdahl and Langmann (2018) reflect upon the 'fostering task' of education that rather than educating for common values must instead strive to make values common in and through education. While Nazi Germany signalled the collapse of morality and ethics in mere abidance with customs and conventions and unthinking obedience to abstract ethical codes (Bauman 2000), to engage with and bear witness to historical trauma, human-initiated catastrophe, invites engaged and embodied responses. Perhaps then not only the character of education but the characters in education might too be transformed. Confronting an unresolved past such as the Holocaust pushes us to the limit of our understanding of what it is to be human. And when we, as teachers and students, engage in the process of questioning beliefs and assumptions we may encounter resistance and unease, both internally and from those around us. Boler (1999) refers to this as a 'pedagogy of discomfort' as emotions such as anger and fear may arise in the process. It is a fear that can be of not only losing personal identities but cultural ones as well. It is important to note however, that discomfort and distress are not the one and the same, and the ethical intention of a pedagogy of discomfort is to extend an invitation to engage with a process of critical inquiry regarding beliefs and values, and to examine the self in relation to how you perceive the other. A classroom which extends such an invitation creates a culture of inquiry, flexibility and reflexivity, and Boler (1999) identifies the ethical aim of such a process as a willingness to live with a more flexible sense of self.

As I carry out the review of the literature I identify and take with me key concepts that will better inform the construction of my theory of engaged witnessing. The call to action identified by Boler (1999) as characteristic of a collective witnessing is crucial to the theory which emphasises the responsibility and response of the student be seen in a desire and motivation to act. In this way the classroom becomes a potential site for

transformation, as well as occupying a unique position as a threshold between past and future. I now examine the central role that testimony has traditionally held within Holocaust education.

2.3 The Centrality of Testimony in Holocaust Education

> One single Anne Frank moves us more than the countless others who suffered just as she did, but whose faces have remained in the shadows. Perhaps it is better that way; if we were capable of taking in all the suffering of all those people, we would not be able to live.
>
> Primo Levi
>
> Quoted on the wall of the museum in the Anne Frank House

Given the emotional dimensions already discussed, teaching the Holocaust is a complex and challenging endeavour, one which warrants reflection on educational philosophy, as well as a rationale and methodology for teaching it. There are various approaches to teaching through testimony offered by some of the major institutions committed to teaching the Holocaust. The educational philosophy, for example, offered by Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, is very much victim-centred. According to their philosophy the individual must be rescued from anonymity to counter the annihilation that occurs when others are present and yet do not acknowledge the inhumanity in front of them, an inhumanity which Cohen (1981) believed to be an unprecedented manifestation of evil and referred to as the 'tremendum'. In order to counter that annihilation then the starting point offered by Yad Vashem is the living breathing person. They stress that the Jews must be presented as a living people; thus pre-war Jewish life in Europe is the natural starting point, and in looking to Jewish life in Europe before the Nazi reign, for example the culture, and the youth and political movements, faces and names are returned to the victims and some understanding of what was lost may be gained. Yad Vashem advises next moving into the world of chaos

that was everyday life during the Holocaust. This was characterised by constant contact with death and the constant need to make life or death decisions. Presenting dilemmas, for empathy rather than judgement, and nurturing an understanding that the Jews were living in a world of 'choiceless choices' (Langer 1980) in which every choice was essentially a bad choice is crucial. Finally, the return to life, that period of time in the immediate aftermath when survivors began attempting to rebuild their lives. As it was not obvious that any would return Yad Vashem advises highlighting that many survivors found the strength to rebuild their lives, get an education, contribute to society and attempt to rebuild what the Nazis had destroyed.

Another major institution, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, provide guidelines for teaching the Holocaust (2001) emphasising the importance of language and clearly defining exactly what the Holocaust was. It cautions against teaching or implying that the Holocaust was inevitable or providing simplistic answers to complex questions. The guidelines encourage teachers of the Holocaust to strive for precision of language and balance in establishing whose perspective informs students' study. It warns against making comparisons of pain or romanticising history but instead highlights the importance of contextualising the history, translating statistics into people, and making responsible methodological choices. This emphasis on historical accuracy and precision of language is echoed by many in the field of Holocaust curriculum studies (Totten and Feinberg 1995, Lindquist 2008, Salmons 2010). Accuracy is of particular concern considering the issues of antisemitism and Holocaust denial. By placing the Holocaust in historical context students can understand the interplay of political, social and economic factors as well as German complicity at every level of society and a bureaucratic system that made murder a necessity (Lipstadt 2011). Foster (2022) stresses that many students believe Hitler was solely responsible for the Holocaust and a discussion around complicitly and collaboration is necessary for

students to understand genocide as societal. The issue of historical accuracy is especially critical when using literature to teach the Holocaust. Lindquist (2008) discusses the need to draw a thoughtful distinction between historical truth and literary truth; historical truth is the recognised factual record while literary truth establishes the 'essence' of the event. However, the two must co-exist together. This can be achieved successfully by placing a carefully researched fictional story in an historically accurate context. And if this is achieved successfully, the literary truth may advance the reader's understanding of the event. On the other hand historical inaccuracies can be damaging and problematic in terms of theme, message and distorted perceptions of the Holocaust. For example, John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* uses the Holocaust to explore a friendship between two nine year old boys, one the son of the camp commandant, the other a Jewish prisoner in the camp. Gray (2014) cites the sheer implausibility of this premise and the dangerous inaccuracies about the historical realities of the Holocaust contained within it. Children of that age were usually murdered on arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the camp had guarded electric fences, and while the text would lead us to believe that camp commandants were respectable individuals and loving husbands and fathers who had to do their job, the actual commandant of Auschwitz-Birkenau Rudolf Hoess presided over the murder of a million people. Most controversially the reader is taken on an emotional journey which culminates in sympathy and sadness for the son of the camp commandant who is mistakenly murdered and his grieving family, but not for the primary victims of the Holocaust, the Jews. This empathy for the perpetrators as opposed to the victims does not sit easily with Holocaust survivors or scholars (Cowan and Maitles 2017). Again we can understand the importance of precision of language and clearly defining what the Holocaust was: the attempt by Nazi Germany to annihilate the Jews of Europe. Of course the need for historical accuracy is further complicated by the constant expansion

of the historical record of the event as research continues, new evidence becomes available, perspectives evolve, and 'sites of murder' previously unmarked and unacknowledged are transformed to 'sites of memory and mourning' (Thaler 2017, 142).[6]

The scale of the Nazi crime is so vast that the number, six million, makes it difficult to comprehend or envision violence on such a scale. However, we can enter the human story of the Holocaust through one individual and demonstrate that the human element was behind those astonishing numbers (Totten and Feinberg 1995). The personalisation method enables us to develop a sense of identification with the victim and its human face. This was evident in September 2015 when the photograph of the refugee child, Alan Kurdi, drowned on a Turkish beach provoked a worldwide reaction and sympathetic activism. It personalised for millions of people what daily news reports of hundreds of drownings could not and proved itself a powerful if dubitable pedagogical strategy (Cowan and Maitles 2017). I say dubitable as this image undoubtedly highlighted the plight of refugees and the conflict in Syria, it raised awareness and led to an outpouring of emotion. But what did it achieve beyond this? The plight of refugees and the conflict in Syria are ongoing which leads us to recognise the complexity within the possibility of transformation through testimony. Hallander (2019) goes further in pointing out that while the outpouring of emotion in response to the image was largely that of empathy, they were also far-right responses in the form of suspicion and questioning the validity of the image, and because none of the other children who also drowned in that particular incident, (including Alan's brother),

[6] This is evident in the archaeological and forensic approach to Holocaust research in recent times using methods such as satellite imagery, aerial photography, and topographic surveys to identify hidden mass graves and lost killing sites providing physical evidence in testimony to mass killing. Yahad-in-Unum, a French organisation with the mission of identifying Jewish killing sites, recording eye-witness testimonies, and teaching about the 'Holocaust by Bullets' and its founder, Fr. Patrick Debois, are involved in this work creating a topography of death and destruction, uncovering the lass graces of the Jews of Eastern Europe.

received the same attention in the media, they did not thus evoke the same emotional response. Nonetheless, some scholars claim that personalising the Holocaust experience and engaging with individual stories 'helps students understand the unbelievable and inconceivable reality of the Holocaust' (Cowan and Maitles 2017, 122). The use of Holocaust testimonies in the classroom allows us to rehumanise victims, restoring names, identities, families and communities, and it serves to make the inconceivable more tangible while also delivering a moral message and highlighting the ethical obligation to be aware of human suffering. There are risks however associated with turning to the Holocaust in search of universal moral 'lessons' which ultimately serve to confirm what we already believe and do not empower us to ask the difficult questions that only arise from an exploration of and attempt to understand the historical context of the Holocaust. Questions such as the one posed by Paul Salmons (2010): 'How was it possible that not long ago, and not far from where we live, people collaborated in the murder of their Jewish neighbours? Why didn't people do more to save them?' (61). As Salmons' (2010) sees it this involves facing Auschwitz head on rather than simply turning it into a metaphor for those 'lessons', and to ask such questions is to embark on a journey of inquiry which is both challenging and unsettling.

Clearly testimony holds a central position within Holocaust education and survivors have been instrumental in the construction of the memory of the event as well as its inclusion in curriculums, providing oral testimonies in schools and colleges and at museums and sites of remembrance. Due to the scale and scope of the crime and the massive number of victims, young people often struggle to comprehend it. The use of testimonies however, and the personalisation method, allows us to identify with an individual recognising the human being behind the statistic, bearing witness to the alterity of the Jewish experience. The next section discusses the use of literature in teaching the Holocaust and its role in allowing us to hear that personal voice.

2.4 A Literature of Testimony

> All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them.
>
> Isak Dinesen
>
> (Quoted in Arendt 1998, 175)

The Holocaust is one of the most documented events in human history and uniquely its narrative has been told overwhelmingly by the victims, who despite the many differences in background, age and upbringing shared one thing in common; 'they put their words to the page along the edge of annihilation' (Patterson 2013, 33). Victim writing from within the event was characterised by a sense of urgency and responsibility, and an impetus to testimony (Patterson 2013). The first witnesses were those victims – writing to others, documenting and recording what was happening, asking for help, and leaving evidence and traces of themselves behind. No other historical event has given rise to a movement of recording testimonies in such a way 'not even World War I – when the practice of recording testimonies first became common – has given rise to such a movement, which is so vast and long-lasting that no researcher can pretend to master it in its entirety' (Wieviorka 2006, xi). Much of the writing by victims during the Holocaust took the form of diaries, as one might expect, and often it was writing that was carried out in secrecy and at great personal risk, constituting not only a testament to personal experience but also to communal ordeal (Patterson 2013). The historian Emmanuel Ringelblum reported in 1943 that 'everyone' wrote diaries, 'journalists, writers, teachers, community activists, young people, even children' (Roskies 2013, 15). The diaries offer us insight into day-to-day life during the war, occupation, in hiding, imprisonment in ghettos and camps. Often entries stop suddenly, the break marking arrest, imprisonment, or death. Diaries reflect events as they are experienced by an individual, acting as a record of the event but also of the

writer's attempt to come to terms with it. One such diary, *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, has become an icon of witnessing, and marked the beginnings of teaching and learning the Holocaust: it is today one of the most widely read examples of Holocaust literature (Cargas 2002).

The first wave of Holocaust testimonies did not end with the liberation of Europe from Nazism but continued initially in the forms of Yiddish poetry and memorial books and evolved through the decades to form a whole canon of Holocaust literature. This canon includes the same genres as literature in general; a vast body of work of memoirs, diaries, testimonies, biographies, fictionalised autobiographies, and novels. However, Holocaust literature is a phenomenon in that it arises in response to an event that would seem to render a response impossible (Patterson, Berger and Cargas 2002). This canon of literature then symbolises an attempt by human beings to restore to life a relationship to humanity that affirms life and that counters the indifference that allowed and enabled genocide. The canon is the 'testimony that gropes towards community in the wake of a radical assault on the very substance of community' attesting that a 'human being, even and especially after the Shoah, is *homo narrans*, struggling to tell a tale that defies telling even as it compels the writer to bear witness.' (Patterson, Berger and Cargas 2002, xiii). The work of documentation was carried out by the victims in the ghettos and camps, and in all the places that Jews lived and died during the Holocaust; the Ringelblum Archive which documented life in the Warsaw ghetto is one such example. And while the immediate post-war years were characterised by the resounding silence of theology, philosophy and education in the face of the atrocity (Schuster and Boschert-Kimmig 1999), the work of the survivors continued. Their works represented the difficulties they faced in coming to terms with the enormity of what they had suffered. Often these works cross literary boundaries, neither purely autobiographical nor entirely fictional. Elie Wiesel's *Night* is one such example. Recounting the story of

his experiences at Auschwitz critics are divided as how to categorise it. Part-autobiographical, part fictional, it is often described as an autobiographical novel. It also serves to emphasise the scale and scope of the crime and its transnational nature. Wiesel, a Romanian Jew, wrote *Night* in Yiddish, its first publication was in Spanish-speaking Argentina, and it subsequently came to prominence after its translation into French. Wiesel considered the task of literature to be the creation of ethical awareness, not just the instruction or entertainment of the reader. For Wiesel, literature should call us to self-reflection and introspection and contribute to the search for an ethical frame of mind. It is no longer possible to say that art is innocent; rather it provides an ethical perspective and for some scholars, when a writer is conscious of the memory, there will be an ethical meaning and dimension to the work (Schuster and Boschert-Kimmig 1999). Salmons (2010) believes that 'the pursuit of historical knowledge is itself an ethical and moral endeavour, given attempts by the perpetrators to destroy the evidence and the risks taken by the victims to document and preserve it.' (63). The use of documents such as diaries, letters and testimonies allows us to hear the personal voice and their role in Holocaust education and remembrance is crucial.

2.4.1 Holocaust Literature as Curriculum

While in the past a piece of Holocaust literature was often used as a stimulus to gain student interest in the Holocaust or as a supporting material, in today's classrooms more and more it is used as a principal teaching resource (Cowan and Maitles 2017). It is worth considering therefore some of the issues around the use of Holocaust literature as curriculum not only to determine its usefulness but also to reflect on concerns regarding suitability and the potential for inflicting trauma on young readers. Baer (2000) questions whether the Holocaust introduced 'to the human race a new depth of evil?' (379) and if so how then do we talk to our youth about this evil? She considers the lengthy tradition of literature grappling with this question and what she believes to be

the urgency of doing so today considering the resurgence of antisemitism, white supremacy, and neo-Nazi culture throughout Europe. The focus within literature on the Holocaust is 'to remember' and this has a dual purpose; to memorialise those who died and to prevent such events from recurring. However, for young readers this memory is not being 'invoked' but 'created' (indeed as time goes on this will be true for all readers). Baer references Langer's 'literature of atrocity' (1975) which is concerned with 'an order of reality which the human mind had never confronted before, and whose essential quality the language of fact was simply insufficient to convey…' (Langer 1975, 3). This 'literature of atrocity' is concerned with 'historical fact and imaginative truth' and attempts to reconcile normalcy with horror (Baer 2000, 381). Baer questions if such a literature should be created for children. Given that Langer regularly asserts that the horrors of the Holocaust are unspeakable as well as his belief that texts should not be 'making meaning' from it (Baer 2000, 381), it is difficult to reconcile the task of writing for children and adolescents on the Holocaust. Baer proposes a set of criteria by which to measure the usefulness of such books in dealing with the Holocaust such as ensuring that the story deals directly with the Holocaust, that it does not present over simplistic explanations but places it in proper historical context, that it offers a warning about the dangers of racism as well as complacency, and that it should give to the reader a 'framework for response' – a consciousness, a 'memory', and a sense of personal responsibility in relation to prejudice and discrimination (Baer 2000, 384 - 385). Baer concludes that such a canon of literature compels us to recognise and convey the new evil in this post-Holocaust world. It demands that we make judicious choices when selecting reading materials and calls for a consciousness on our part in confronting this evil, contextualising it, and enabling young people to make moral choices and take personal responsibility. If we can comprehend the paradox of the Holocaust in that it is simultaneously 'unspeakable' and something that must be spoken about, we may

understand that while we may not make it meaningful, we can make its reality imaginatively or creatively possible for the generations that follow.

Other scholars such as Lindquist (2006) caution against the use of graphic materials solely to show students the violence and trauma of the Holocaust believing the over-proliferation of such material could either desensitise students or cause deep trauma. Blutinger (2009) suggests students engage with forms of self-care to account for the emotional challenges that may arise in class. He writes, 'I advise students to find some way of coping with the subject, whether through keeping a journal, finding a friend they can talk to about this, or even meeting with a spiritual advisor' (271). The practical implications of teaching the Holocaust can be just as challenging for the educators: 'It can be quite harrowing. It's very hard to strike the right balance between not shocking and alienating the children through fear, while making them fully aware of what went on' (Short 1994, 174). Jordan (2004) therefore believes that literature is one of the best pedagogical tools for teaching young people about the Holocaust without explicitly transmitting emotionally disturbing information. Within the genre of Holocaust literature that is aimed at young people there are a variety of texts, some of which are considered too graphic or disturbing for young readers. Those texts however which are considered successful, in that they are read and enjoyed by young people and used in Holocaust education, succeed because of the strategies employed by the authors to present the information in a particular way, and to educate without overwhelming. This does not mean however omitting difficult details. Totten (2001) notes that "Outstanding literature is also capable of 'personalising' this history, placing a 'face' on the horrendous facts and events" (24). Literature therefore, is a lens through which children can face inhumanity in a very human way (Jordan 2004). Through these texts, young people can glimpse what life was like for people their age in 1930's and 1940's Europe and safely see how daily existence was changed under the Nazi regime.

Jordan (2004) explores a range of texts - picture books, memoirs, fantasy novels - examining the strategies that authors employ with varying degrees of 'success' before concluding that in teaching a topic such as the Holocaust 'few tools are as useful or as illustrative as a good work of literature' (216). It is important to remember however, that not all of the many texts that are available are equal in terms of suitability or usefulness, and Totten (2001) emphasises that

> If educators seek to assist students in gaining deeper insight into the Holocaust, to become more reflective and thoughtful human beings, to ponder and care about man's inhumanity to man, and to examine one's lived life in regard to personal and social responsibility, then the thoughtful use of Holocaust literature is a valuable vehicle for reaching toward those goals (50).

The 'thoughtful use of Holocaust literature' however is complex and does present problems, chiefly the conflict between a 'moral injunction to be accurate and honest' and the risk of 'inflicting or transferring trauma on the reader while teaching about the horrors of the Nazi genocide' (Saxena 2019, 4). Due to its complex and emotionally demanding nature, Lindquist believes that students should not be introduced to the Holocaust until they are able to handle the historicity of the event as well as the emotional fall-out. Saxena (2019) wrestles with the dilemma of such a difficult subject matter and its suitability for young readers. While she considers young adult fiction a useful tool for Holocaust education as it promotes empathy and draws the reader into the process of remembrance, she also recognises the humanist and life-affirming values of young adult literature as being in opposition to the horror at the heart of Holocaust literature. It is worth noting here that while there is no one definition of young adult literature on which all agree it is generally understood to be literature written by, for, or about young adults. Herz and Gallo (2005) point out 'some have defined it as any kind of literature written specifically for young adults and being read by them' and Bucher and Hinton (2010) describe it as writing for young people that captures their attention, teaches them about people and the world and that allow teens to escape providing

pleasurable reading while also containing 'excellent…writing' and providing increased 'literacy and the ability to analyse literature' (11). They also note that this type of writing is becoming more complex and 'high-quality' with each passing generation (11). Clearly, we can see the dilemma which Saxena (2019) wrestles with. While the twentieth century was hailed as the dawn of a new period of progressive thinking in terms of the rights and wellbeing of children, it also witnessed an unprecedented escalation of physical and cultural trauma experienced by society – adults and children alike. For some, these traumas signify questionable and inappropriate themes for young readers. However, trauma does not discriminate in terms of age, and it is possible that young adult literature could be a safe space to address themes of historical trauma, fulfilling the ethical obligation to remember but also reinterpreting children's experiences of traumatic environments.

Another feature raised by curriculum scholars is the link between the very idea of Holocaust literature and the failure of bystanders during the war 'since the failure of onlookers to speak out at the time helped to permit the Holocaust to occur, to speak about it now becomes a moral imperative of the highest order' (Epstein et al 2015, 103). The implication here is one of atonement, the idea that we can in some small way play our part by reading and learning about it. This moral obligation is widely agreed upon and the chief concern seems not to be whether the Holocaust should be taught, but how it should be taught. Lauckner and Jokiniemi (2000) refer to this moral duty stating

> it is extremely important that there be on-going, high-quality Holocaust teaching in the future, both to counter the deniers and to teach future generations about the Holocaust without the direct personal testimony of the survivors [who will soon all have passed away] (xiii).

Saxena (2020) questions how we narrate trauma without traumatising the reader, understanding there to be a conflict at the heart of Holocaust literature for young people as young adult literature is a genre which 'even when delving into history, it is a genre

of hope and future, and trauma seems antithetical to the role, function and, indeed the very purpose of children's and young adult fiction which focuses on the promise for the future embodied by the young protagonist…' (102). She calls on key critics such as Kenneth Kidd (2005), Hamida Bosmajian (2002) and Adrienne Kertzer (2002) who have discussed the issues surrounding children's literature and trauma, as well as Lydia Kokkola (2003) who asserts that 'Holocaust literature for children can be conceived as having a greater moral obligation to be historically accurate than historical fiction dealing with less catastrophic events' (3). This moral and ethical obligation to remember is the impetus then behind the creation of young adult literature dealing with the Holocaust and such literature has become a popular teaching resource when dealing with this difficult subject matter.

Of course, there are potential pitfalls when exposing young readers to past traumas and to navigate this challenge authors have had to adapt traditional genres and attempt to integrate themes of historical trauma along with the ethical obligation to remember. This can be seen in the use of the fairy tale narrative to reinterpret children's traumatic experiences. Hasse (2000) believes in the 'fairy tale's potential as an emotional survival strategy' (361). The main narrative tool which Saxena analyses is that of the 'heroic quest', examining its ability to narrate trauma. She chooses Jane Yolen's novel *Briar Rose*, a story in which Yolen frames the narrative of the Holocaust within the classic children's fairy tale Sleeping Beauty. A common trope in young adult literature, a heroic quest usually involves a young protagonist who goes on an adventure of sorts, wins a victory, and returns home transformed in some meaningful way. Through the lens of a past trauma such as the Holocaust however this quest takes on a new and layered meaning. The hero's quest becomes 'a journey into the past, into memory ad history' and offers 'a space to review and reinterpret the present….to make sense of how the trauma of the past shapes the present, especially for the generation that has not

lived and experienced the events in all their horrific immediacy' (Saxena 2020, 103). In the novel *Briar Rose* the young protagonist Becca goes in search of her grandmother's past, visiting a death camp in Poland. Growing up she has repeatedly been told the story of Briar Rose or Sleeping Beauty in the Woods. This constant repetition emphasises the difficulty in representing trauma – Becca's grandmother, Gemma, has survived the ultimate trauma and created a new life and identity for herself, and yet through her incessant retelling of that story she hints at another life. In fact, she hints at another self, albeit one that is distanced by time, space and trauma, a self that constantly needs to be supressed for her to live. Gemma's experiences are the 'symptoms of history' that are carried by survivors manifesting themselves in diverse ways such as hallucinations and nightmares. Cathy Caruth, a leading figure in literary theory and approaches to trauma describes them thus: 'The traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptoms of a history that they cannot entirely possess' (1995, 5). How then do we tell such untellable tales to young readers? And how do we do so in a way that avoids subjecting the reader to the same trauma rather than preserving the distance between the victim and reader?

Saxena (2020) believes the structure of the quest narrative solves this dilemma focusing as it does on the young protagonist rather than the victim, and allowing the protagonist, who is safely removed in time and space, to bear witness to the past and ultimately come to terms with it. This integration of the past into the present is vital as the generations that have followed the survivors, themselves known as second and third generation survivors, have inherited narratives of trauma and 'bear the marks of events that they did not experience.' (Saxena 2020, 107). Therefore, the placing of the heroic quest within a Holocaust narrative not only transforms it into a moral and ethical obligation to remember and a warning to future generations, but also poses

fundamentally important questions about transgenerational transmission and how we present and narrate traumas lived by older generations to our youth.

Nonetheless contrasting views on the use of the fairy tale trope have been expressed with Kertzer (2002) arguing that Yolen had pandered to the desire for a happy ending which constituted an imaginative denial of the reality of the event while Yolen herself insisted that despite the happy-ever-after-scenario of *Briar Rose* the story still conveyed a higher truth. Two authors concerned with reconciling art with atrocity are Lydia Kokkola and Hamida Bosmajian. Kokkola (2003) is primarily concerned with formalist and structuralist approaches to texts, particularly stories that simultaneously reveal and conceal, how information can be withheld or divulged. The question of a structural closure – how a tale about the Holocaust can provide the comfort of a happy ending is key and she examines sequels (that imply life goes on) and multiple endings (that express uncertainties). Kokkola is fiercely critical of one text *Escape from the Holocaust* by Kenneth Roseman which is a choose your own adventure book allowing young readers to choose different paths to try and escape Nazi persecution. For Kokkola this is grossly offensive as it suggests choice and agency, neither of which victims of the Nazis were afforded. Advocating for historically accurate and truthful writing and believing that to stray from documented fact is disrespectful and distorts the record, Kokkola finds inaccuracy reprehensible. Another text to receive harsh criticism is *I am David* by Anne Holm, a children's book first published in Danish in 1963. The English translation of this book has sold millions of copies, has been reprinted many times, and it is one of the books relating to the Holocaust that young readers are most likely to have read (as I did and mentioned in the previous chapter). For Kokkola this story contains the 'grossest distortion of historical fact', and it is simply not possible to describe it as being 'about the Holocaust' (Kokkola 2003, 55). The protagonist David has been in a camp in Greece for eleven of his twelve years, and although the name of

the camp is never given nor are the guards ever referred to as Nazis, the camp is referred to as a concentration camp and we are told that most of the prisoners are Jewish. David's survival seems to have been dependent on a guard who gave him food and with whose help he escapes from the camp thus embarking on a great journey across Europe to be reunited with his mother in Denmark. Kokkola's critique is that it does not depict hardships harshly enough. The characters find it too easy to escape from the camp, to cross borders, to obtain food, with the result that children could get a distorted impression underestimating how severe conditions were during the Holocaust. Nonetheless Kokkola does acknowledge that it was one of the first texts to be written about the Holocaust for young readers and has some strengths such as a credible characterisation of David and the moral lessons he learns along the way. However considering its status and popularity as a story about the Holocaust she believes it to be very problematic. Ultimately Kokkola (2003) concludes that it is simply not realistic to 'expect literature to lead children to understanding in the same ways that one would expect nonfiction works. Literature is not subject to the same requirements as nonfiction.' (174), and while 'novels may be a critical element in Holocaust education as a whole, the primary task of educators is to help young children understand the background to the novels they read. ' (174). This is in line with the views of Lawrence Langer (1995) who advocates faithfulness to the facts and Terrence de Pres (2022) who sets out prescriptive conventions for literary representations of the Holocaust. Clearly Kokkola opposes unethical attempts to manipulate young readers. While I concede that the subject matter is extremely high stakes and that younger readers are less likely to be able to differentiate between fiction and historical fact, as I argue in the next few chapters, it is possible to garner important emotional, ethical, and moral truths from creative and imaginative fictional writing and to discover one's own witnessing voice in doing so.

Clearly the relationship between literature and the Holocaust is a complicated one, and for many the memoir, the first-person unembellished account, is the ultimate form of literary representation of the event, perhaps even the only acceptable one. Culbertson (2016) believes that 'fiction cannot compete with the stories that actually happened.' (136). Reading memoirs and diaries not only provides the young reader with the historical facts from the perspective of the victim but there is also greater potential for empathy and opportunity to reflect on what options, if any, were available to the writer. Fictional accounts may appear more adaptable to the classroom and are more likely to have teacher guides with suggested activities, questions and projects, however, first-hand testimony is a powerful pedagogical tool and has seemed to acquire an ''ontologically privileged status, similar to that of earlier 'testament" (Young 1988, 21). As the victims were told that none of them would be left to bear witness, and even if they did survive the world would not believe them, their testimony became 'a never-to-be-written page in history' and for many victims the sole reason to survive (Young 1988, 17). Memoirs and diaries are incredibly powerful teaching tools. While memoirs are written after the event, diaries are written from within and as such are invaluable primary sources. Most were never intended for publication and as a result provide us with glimpses of a life and make us privy to the diarist's innermost thoughts and feelings. Many students today keep diaries and journals, blog and vlog, and understand the desire to have a voice. Klett and Tambuscio (2016) understand diaries as a form of resistance, the maintaining a personal voice when it may have been illicit and dangerous to do so. Here students can reflect on the different types of resistance; not just physically fighting but also cultural and spiritual resistance too, and the different ways in which young victims may have resisted the Nazi's attempt to erase them. Diaries were written in hiding, in ghettos, in camps and while fleeing, often on any material that could be found, and the experiences that the diarists put on the page help today to

inform our understanding of this dark history. However, as they represent a record of what happened, written in the present tense with no anticipation of events that will happen later in time they do not represent the totality of the event, but rather a snapshot into one individual experience, or a testament to a wider communal experience but without a broader context. For example, Anne Frank wrote her diary in hiding in Amsterdam and her diary entries come to a sudden halt when she and her family and co-habitants in the annexe are discovered. Therefore, she does not write about deportations, life in the ghettos, transit camps or concentration or death camps leading Culbertson (2001) to note that students do not have the necessary historical background to 'piece together the events prior to [Anne's family entering] the attic' (63). Anne writes about her relationships with those around her, her increasing sense of isolation and her reaction to external events and antisemitism. She cannot however speak to what many if not most other Jews were experiencing at that time.

Scholars do offer some ways of teaching with diaries. Totten and Feinberg (2016) outline useful teaching strategies to counter these limitations such as helping students gain insight into the chronological context of the Holocaust through the creation of a timeline of Holocaust history and providing each student with a desk-size map of Europe so that each time they come across a particular event or incident they can enter it onto the map along with the date it occurred which should help to have a better sense of the scale of the crime. Alexandra Zapruder, a founding member of staff of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, compiled a collection of fourteen diaries kept by young people during the Holocaust, *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (2002), which allows teachers to create longer units of work exploring different diaries following a chronological ordering and placing the Holocaust in historical context, or to choose one or two diaries for shorter units of work emphasising on a specific theme or event. The diarists included in Zapruder's collection were

motivated to write for different reasons; to account for what they did and thought each day, to write as if to parents who had been deported, in the hopes that it would be read by someone and be a testament to the tragedy, and as a record for the future (Klett and Tambuscio 2016). In this way diaries provide young readers with the experience of reading about many distinct aspects of the Holocaust and as the writer is living in and through something the voice is powerful and raw.

Memoirs however are written after the event, whether it be in the immediate aftermath such as Primo Levi's memoir *If This Is a Man*, or after ten years of self-imposed silence such as Elie Wiesel's *Night*. Survivors recount their Holocaust experiences often in an attempt to understand or come to accept what happened, or with an urgency to ensure that such atrocities will never be repeated. They allow students to view the event through another lens, one which moves a study of the Holocaust from a massive cataclysmic event spanning twelve years and engulfing millions, to an individual account with a particular perspective, with greater understanding of the human beings that exist behind the statistics. And as they are not written from within the event, the authors have had time to reflect and consider what moments are most meaningful to their story. Patterson et al (2002) interpret the Holocaust memoir not as a reflection on a life but rather the memory of one's death, and so just as Elie Wiesel's teacher, Moishe the Beadle, returned from the grave 'to describe to you my death' (Wiesel 2006, 7), the Holocaust memoirist returns to shock us out of our complacency carrying with them the voices of the millions who can no longer speak. Yad Vashem (2024) addresses the practical issues relating to the use of testimony in the classroom and advises that a written testimony such as a memoir is an appropriate curricular choice but the students' age is a crucial criterion. The Holocaust can be taught to younger children using the story of an individual, highlighting some optimism, for example the survival of the protagonist and acts of human kindness, thus sparing the younger child from exposure

to a trauma. This model of Holocaust education is a spiral and scaffolded one, and as students progress and grow they can deal with increasingly more complex psychological issues broadening to wider discussions of family, community, relations between groups, personal, social and national identity and issues relating to the rescuer, the bystander, and the perpetrator.

In this section I provided an overview of some of the issues surrounding the use of literature as a principal resource in teaching the Holocaust, issues such as suitability, age-appropriateness, historical context and accuracy, and arguments for and against the use of fictional literature versus first-hand testimony. I explored the practical reality of teaching a historical trauma such as the Holocaust and how harrowing it can be, as well as the inherent responsibility in educating young people about a trauma without causing them trauma. A link became evident between the very idea of Holocaust literature and the silence of bystanders who failed to speak out and a moral obligation to teach the Holocaust which seems to be widely agreed upon. Finally I examined the different genres within the canon of Holocaust literature and the possibilities that they afford as curriculum. Having identified the key pedagogical issues regarding the use of literature, I have come to a greater understanding of the claim these curriculums make of us and the necessity to make informed, educated and ethical choices, and will now consider both empathy and engaged witnessing and their potential as learning outcomes when teaching and learning the Holocaust.

2.5 Empathy? Or Engaged Witnessing?

> For action is indeed the sole medium of expression for ethics.
>
> (Addams 1902, 273)

Within Holocaust education the cognitive is matched if not superseded by the affective. Not only is propositional knowledge, the cold hard facts of history studied, but affective knowledge – empathy, compassion, shared values and responsibilities, and a common sense of humanity is part of its aspiration. Empathy then is generally understood as 'the ability to reconstruct the other's perspective (cognitive dimension) and sense how the other might feel (affective dimension)' (Zembylas 2020, 1), and historical empathy as 'the process of students' cognitive and affective engagement with historical figures to better understand and contextualise their lived experiences, decisions, or actions' (Endacott and Brooks 2013, 41). Therefore historical empathy relates to the 'why' of history, and taking more than just names and dates from its study, empathy allows students to connect to people from the past and accurately contextualise their actions and experiences on their own terms without imposing todays' beliefs and values. Empathy is generally considered a positive outcome of Holocaust education and frequently included as a learning objective by teachers and educational institutions, and among the emotions most commonly discussed within educational philosophy, particularly around trauma, social justice and the Holocaust, empathy holds a special status as it seems to enjoy an 'ethical legitimacy' (Hållander 2019, 469). Gouws (2019) believes emotion to be an integral part of Holocaust education and inspiring empathy in students a commonly used pedagogical tool to achieve personalisation and encourage students to connect with the victims. Gouws (2019) also emphasises that teachers themselves are not exempt from this and that teaching the Holocaust 'is not a dispassionate, disconnected experience…..They are often personally affected…..and both their teaching and understanding of the Holocaust are often linked to their personal

stories' (47). Cowan and Maitles (2017) describe the pedagogical strategy of personalisation as powerful because it captures 'the essence of humanity and the barbarism that sought to destroy it' and in personalising the events we develop a 'sense of identification with the particular rather than the abstract' (87).

Hållander (2019) explores the educational possibilities of emotions and whether they are a desirable starting point for topics such as historical traumas and social injustice. She draws on Felman and Laub (1992) who consider crisis and emotion as both a necessary and desirable condition for learning. In such a model when teaching brings about some kind of a crisis (and providing there is care for the students' wellbeing), then transformation may take place. Zembylas (2015) however raises concerns about 'ethical violence' and whether such a process might always be said to be transformative questioning the ethics involved in evoking feelings of discomfort among students. Primarily pedagogy in the Holocaust classroom must deal with the burden of transmission; how to convey the trauma without traumatisation. Lindquist (2011b) warns of the possibility that 'unintended consequences may result from the use of emotionally wrenching images that depict the horror of the event' and emphasises the need to 'walk a carefully drawn line between avoiding the Shoah's reality on one hand and overwhelming students with depictions of the violence that occurred on the other' (118). This is even more complex when considering the fact that there may be students within the group who themselves have direct experience of conflict and war. Ultimately Lindquist (2011b) reminds us that whether teaching the Holocaust or another historical atrocity such as slavery, apartheid, or another genocide, or contemporary human rights issues or conflicts, these are topics that are 'complex, emotionally charged, and intrusive' (125). Salmons (2010) focuses on the historicity of the event and explores whether an 'emotional experience, when shorn of historical understanding – no matter how powerful, memorable and engaging, and regardless of whether it takes place at an

authentic site, a film or theatre performance or in the school classroom – can really be said to constitute learning about the Holocaust at all' (57). While the pedagogical use of empathy in learning about the Holocaust in general and in response to Holocaust literature specifically may be understood as a positive and a means to simultaneously provide students with knowledge of the past as well as belief in the dictum 'never again', there are nonetheless dangers associated with teaching for empathy. One is the risk of overidentification with the victim, what Rider (2013) terms 'empathetic over-arousal….a narcissistic focus on self, rather than on the victim of suffering' (44). She distinguishes between empathy as expressed as sympathy and/or concern for another as opposed to empathy which is focused on the self and expressed as personal distress. A mature empathetic response then is focused on the other, not the self, and characterised by emotional control and maturity. Survivor Primo Levi was outspoken about his concerns around empathy in response to Holocaust literature stating 'We are prone to assimilate them [experiences] to those related ones, as though the hunger in Auschwitz were the same as that of someone who has skipped a meal, or as though escape from Treblinka were similar to an escape from any ordinary goal' (Levi 1989, 128). This leads us to question if it is ethically desirable to empathise and ultimately identify with a victim of the Holocaust, or is it even possible?

It is necessary then to explore what kinds of relations empathy encourages or assumes. And whether or not it leads to justice, or indeed to any shift in power relations at all. Boler (1999) identifies a gap between empathy and acting on another's behalf. This gap is characterised by a habitual numbness which allows us to stay within a safe space, not being asked or asking too much. Gubkin (2015) cautions against teaching to foster empathy at the risk of replacing ethics with sentimentality. Empathy is undoubtedly a desirable trait however it can be seen to be passive and allows us to neatly package our learning of a historical trauma in a way that does not demand much of us and ignores

our responsibilities. Testimonial reading however, while still incorporating an empathetic response, can motivate action as the responsibility is assumed by the reader (Boler 1999). The student and reader must accept the challenge to look inwardly and rethink beliefs and values, and to confront the self-protecting barriers that empathy affords. This call to action is crucial and may lead us to engaged witnessing as opposed to passive empathy. There is a vulnerability involved in bearing witness to a trauma and moving beyond empathy for a distant other as with it comes a willingness to challenge assumptions and world views. It can be understood as a 'working through' of the past, as opposed to a mastery of it which refuses to bear the weight of the burden of a painful past (Britzman 2014, 12). This is echoed by Felman and Laub (1992) who describe the evocation of the memory of genocide through testimony as a potential disruption to our understanding of humanity that may frighten us. Todd (2003) explores the features of empathy as a pedagogical demand for affective response, its ethical character and the connection between empathy and projective identification and ultimately questions: 'When we empathise with others, do we engage each one through her difference, through her alterity, or is empathy always already about 'overcoming' difference in the hope of finding some common ground?'(45). Oliver (2001), whose work I discuss in more detail in the next chapter, frames the witnessing process in terms of address and response. Often we listen more to confirm what we already know, or believe we do, but witnessing involves listening for something unfamiliar, that which will disrupt what we already know. There is a tension then between listening for what we already know and listening for what we do not know, a paradox at the heart of theories of recognition as how can we recognise that which is unfamiliar? A crucial sensitisation needs to happen to allow this to break through the aforementioned 'habitual numbness' and listening defences which risk annihilating the story. An authentic learning experience however, engages student's interests and imagination without using their emotional involvement

to manipulate or impose a pre-defined meaning. Goodman (2012) explains that the power of witnessing can break through those barriers erected in the mind in the face of terror. It moves us beyond the habitual numbness that empathy affords us. This power lies in the connection between people. I can therefore interpret witnessing as the creation of possibilities for response and engaged witnessing in response to the Holocaust as addressing the gap between empathy and action, signifying more than empathy for a distant other, but the invocation of an empathetic response that also requires responsibility and can motive action.

2.6 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has sought to examine and clarify the issues around the use of testimony in the classroom, with a particular focus on the use of testimonial literature. I firstly discussed the educational perspective on the process of testimony-witnessing and the pedagogical function of testimony in making history come alive, and supplementing the cold hard facts of history, the more impersonal documentary evidence, as well as the challenge in creating a space for witnessing in the classroom. I subsequently explored the centrality of testimony in Holocaust education and the approach offered by major institutions such as Yad Vashem, which favours a victim-centred approach with the Jewish people as starting point, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which emphasises the importance of precision of language and clearly defining terms as well as contextualising the history and making responsible methodological choices. I then considered the use of Holocaust literature as curriculum and some of the issues around its use such as its dual purpose both to memorialise those who died as well as prevent such events from recurring, concerns regarding suitability, age-appropriateness, historical accuracy and context, and arguments for and against the use of fictional literature as opposed to first-hand testimonial accounts. Finally, I looked to emotions, specifically empathy and its desirability as an outcome in response to learning about the

Holocaust. Ultimately I acknowledged the desirability of empathy as an emotion, however through an exploration of its limitations as related to the testimony-witnessing process, I argued for engaged witnessing as addressing the gap between empathy and action, allowing us to move beyond the habitual numbness that empathy allows for and demanding a response from us that not only requires an assumption of responsibility but also motivates action. Carrying out this systematic review of the relevant literature has allowed me to identify the key curricular and pedagogical issues relating to the testimony-witnessing process as well as the use of Holocaust literature. For example, the obligation or commemorative ethic imposed on those who bear witness (Simon and Eppert 1997), the nature of collective witnessing in the classroom and the responsibility that the teacher must assume for the students, as well as the students for one another (Zembylas 2006), and the invitation to inquiry that the witnessing signifies (Boler 1999). Added to this are the risks associated with looking to the Holocaust as a universal moral lesson and avoiding the deeper more difficult questions it raises. This is an invaluable contribution to my theoretical framework as it is only through identifying these key issues that I can determine how engaged witnessing can navigate and respond to them and develop a pedagogical practice to be applied. In the following chapter I will explore the theory underpinning this thesis, that is the theoretical foundation to my proposed contribution to teaching the Holocaust, engaged witnessing. Although previously defined by Gubkin (2015) as a move from empathetic understanding I take this point further and redefine engaged witnessing as the creation of opportunity for different forms of response to the Holocaust through a practice of testimonial reading with the potential to address the gap between empathy and action by assuming responsibility for the other.

Chapter 3

The Theoretical and Methodological Approach

What responsibility do you and I have to a mound of skeletons in a mass grave murdered before we were conceived? None. But to the people those skeletons once were? Infinite.

(Prager 1991, 34)

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I firstly explore the theoretical underpinnings of my proposed contribution to teaching the Holocaust which centres on the practice of engaged witnessing. I focus on the concepts of alterity, responsibility, witnessing and response which serve to guide my exploration of the texts and discover what possibilities and/or limitations they offer as curriculum. They also serve to gauge what my own response to the literature as both researcher and reader will be and has been as both student and teacher. I am arguing for engaged witnessing as a way of rethinking teaching the Holocaust from an ethical point of view. In this reimagined model I also consider the aesthetics of teaching and attempt to take teaching back to the heart of education, and to develop a sense of responsibility for and response to the 'other'. I then discuss the twofold methodological approach which is based on Pinar's (1975) concept of curriculum as autobiographical and a textual interpretation which allows me to undertake a self-reflective study of the texts as well as my own relation to them. In this way I occupy a dual role as both participant and researcher, learning from my own story as well as the stories of others.

3.2 Levinasian Ethics: Alterity and Responsibility

The study is grounded first in the writings of French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas who promotes ethics as first philosophy. This philosophy is relevant for my study as my focus is on how best to teach a historical atrocity, the genocide of the Jews, historically the other in society, and an invocation of Levinasian ethics recognises the other; their humanity and subjectivity, and calls us to ethical responsibility. In attempting to develop a first philosophy through a reformulation of the human subject Levinas argues for the primacy of ethics over ontology believing that this is justified by the face of the other. By the face Levinas means the human face, but not thought of or experienced as merely a physical or aesthetic object. Rather the first encounter with the face is as the living presence of another person and as something experienced socially and ethically – 'the face is meaning all by itself…….the relation to the face is straightaway ethical.' (Levinas 1985, 86-87). Levinas spoke of the 'alterity' (the state of being other or different than the ego or self) or 'otherness' of the other as signified by the face as something that I acknowledge before using reason to form judgements or beliefs. It is out of this encounter with the face that responsibility arises. Responsibility is one of the most important attitudes for people in relation to the other and existence is meaningful if it recognises that responsibility for others and takes it as an invitation to act ethically (Levinas 1985). This philosophy challenges us as Levinas presents us with a 'theory of attachment to the other person prior to any contact, encounter, or liaison.' (Bloechl 2000, 131), which seems counter-intuitive. The responsibility that we bear for the other is not dependent on any prior relationship but rather is pre-existing. It is pre-original and pre-ontological (Levinas 1994). And it is infinite. For Levinas, to be a subject, is to be subjected to this ethical summons to the other and to respond. He states, 'I speak of responsibility as the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity. For I describe subjectivity in ethical terms……the very node of the subjective is knotted in

ethics understood as responsibility' (Levinas 1985, 95). My status as a subject therefore is constituted in my relation to alterity and my 'ethical relation of love for the other stems from the fact that the self cannot survive by itself alone, cannot find meaning within its own being-in-world, within the ontology of sameness….' (Levinas and Kearney 1986, 24). I exist then for recognition of and response to the other, and that recognition carries with it responsibility. The call of the other for recognition and response is in fact a demand, and it is one that cannot be ignored. Ethics then is first and foremost a responsibility for the other, it arises from this responsibility. In fact, ethics constitutes this responsibility. This is a radical responsibility as it disrupts conventional notions of responsibility that are based on my freedom to choose, and intrinsically links my life to that of the other, defining my humanity in terms of that relation. Levinas states 'Responsibility for the other, this way of answering without prior commitment, is human fraternity itself, and it is prior to freedom' (Levinas 1998, 116). It also entails radical generosity as I must respond to the call of the other for the good of the other. This relation to the alterity and attendance to suffering and injustice is an ethical structure of being, older than being itself. It is pre-original and pre-ontological, it precedes us which means that for as long as one is, one is responsible for another (Levinas 1994). Myers (1999) tells us that 'Levinas's ethics are not prescriptive, then, but descriptive. It is not that I *should* be responsible; I already *am* responsible by virtue of having consciousness' (274). Herein lies the challenge of holding that difficult space, what Felman and Laub (1992) describe as 'the knowledge of the trauma', but also 'the knowledge of facing it and living in its shadow' (64). As Levinas wrote his major works in the aftermath of the Holocaust having suffered significant personal loss, there is a

weightiness to his conditions of responsibility and his insistence on attending to suffering and injustice.[7]

Todd (2003) explains that Levinasian ethics cannot be applied to pedagogy but rather discovered and engaged with in existing pedagogical relations and as such become a question of implication as opposed to application. It is not a question, therefore, of applying Levinas's ideas to education because these ideas question the very framework in which education in the modern world has conceived of itself for the last two hundred years. Biesta (2003) elaborates, 'We cannot simply apply Levinas to education, therefore, because 'after' Levinas education can no longer be what it was 'before' Levinas' (62). Education then becomes the 'site for ethical inquiry and investigation' and in bringing Levinas to bear on education, what is at stake is 'a questioning of the ethical content of education itself' (Todd 2003, 3). Traditionally the Holocaust has been described as a breaking point in human history, an interruption or irruption. We label the perpetrators as monsters and comfort ourselves with the idea that it could never happen again: it was a uniquely terrifying anomaly. Bauman (2000) however, understands the Holocaust as a horrifying but nonetheless rational event, the result of the processes of modernity and socialisation. In a disturbing analysis of modernity and the modern forms of rationalism which made mass murder and genocide possible, Bauman sees the Jews as stranger in Europe and the Holocaust as society's attempt to remove that element with which it was uncomfortable, what Shawn (2016) refers to as

[7] Emmanuel Levinas was born in Lithuania in 1906 of Jewish heritage. He and his family were uprooted by World War I and the Russian Revolution moving to Ukraine before returning to Lithuania in 1920. In 1923 he began his studies in philosophy in Strasbourg and in 1928 studied phenomenology under Edmund Husserl in Germany. There he also met Martin Heidegger. He received his doctorate in 1929 and in 1939 became a naturalised French citizen. When Germany declared war on France he reported for military duty as translator of Russian and French. In 1940 his military unit was captured, and he spent the remainder of the war in a prisoner of war camp near Hanover in Germany. His status as a prisoner of war protected him from the concentration and death camps of the Holocaust, however he was assigned to a special barrack for Jewish prisoners within the prisoner of war camp and life there was very difficult. His great friend, the French philosopher Maurice Blanchot, aided Levinas' wife and child in finding safety in a monastery for the duration of the war but other family members were lost. His father and brothers were murdered by the SS in Lithuania.

the ‘dislike of the unlike’ (192). The Holocaust happened because individuals, organisations and nations made decisions to act, or not to. The alterity of the Jewish experience is compounded by the lack of response of the ‘free world’. And as Stone explains (2023) even more than a lack of response or indifference to their plight, for some European nations, the war and the Nazis’ genocidal policies, were actually an opportunity to realise their dreams of eliminating the Jewish minority. While others then label the Holocaust as a failure of modernity, Bauman instead considers it a product of modernity. Bauman (2000) understands the Holocaust to be the logical and rational result and consequence of modernity and the processes of socialisation. We must then shift our understanding of the Holocaust as a private tragedy belonging solely to the Jewish people realising that it was executed by a modern and rational society amongst the leading culture in Europe in the middle of the twentieth century, and according to Bauman, was in fact a ‘horrifying yet legitimate product’ of that time and place (2000, xii). This clearly raises important questions about the tendencies of modern society and the processes of modernity and socialisation.

Säfström and Mansson (2004) argue for education and against socialisation, understanding socialisation as reducing the individuality of the person so to fit in with a desired representation of society, placing the capacity of morality outside the individual, and in essence meaning that what is moral becomes solely the will of society. However, the authors wish to rethink education as facing the other without holding that otherness against them and breaking up the order of socialisation for a new beginning to take place. Education then can be understood as a rupture. Socialisation, that is the making of the social being, is a power-ridden process, and an educational system may be understood as the most effective social institution for the becoming of the social being. The purpose of the educational system then is to produce and reproduce the society. Therefore, socialisation does not produce moral behaviour, it manipulates it. For

example, the social being should not interfere in violence against someone as long as the violence does not converge from social conventions. Therefore societal norms supersede individual conscience. Säfström (2003) reinterprets teaching as an act of responsibility for an other, and this responsibility for or proximity to the other could be called humanity or subjectivity. This draws on Levinas' orientation to the other which is ethical in nature, as opposed to moral, and within which responsibility is located (Säfström 2003). Levinas made a clear distinction between ethics and morality believing ethics to be the response to the vulnerability of the other but morality having the power, as seen throughout history, to betray our humanity and in the preface to *Totality and Infinity* (1991) questions 'whether or not we are duped by morality' (21). Therefore ethics is not a set of morals guidelines or rules, it is relationality. Rather than speaking of knowledge and/or reason as the main frame of reference with regards to teaching Säfström (2003) focuses on the place of ethics within teaching. Within the relation of teaching the value of the other comes to the fore. And to enter into dialogue means to face the other. This dialogue involves a saying, an approach to the other. This way of being for the other and oriented toward the other is an orientation of openness which involves vulnerability and uncertainty as it is an entering into an ethical relation with the student. But through this risk the welcoming of the other is possible. Levinas terms this proximity (1994). The student is welcomed through the saying and the teacher's exposure to the other, for the other (Säfström 2003).

In teaching for engaged witnessing through a Levinasian approach to pedagogy there is a focus on encounters with the other, as Levinas places alterity at the heart of education, and from this real learning can occur. Ethics may be understood as a metaphysical responsibility to the alterity of the other person, occurring 'prior' to essence and being. In actuality ethics does not have an essence, as it functions to 'unsettle essences.', and it does not have an identity, but instead works to undo identities (Levinas 1985, 10). As

the building block of all moral behaviour responsibility arises out of proximity to the other. And when proximity is negated, then responsibility is silenced, and fellow human beings are turned into an 'other' (Bauman 2000). This abdication of responsibility and moral disengagement was an important contributor to the Holocaust and has continued to contribute to human rights violations and other genocides up to the present day. However, through the ethical reading (Remington 2021) of testimonial literature it is possible to challenge indifference, and confront the question of responsibility.

The ethical question of responsibility, and the difficulties in facing it, is brought sharply in to focus due to the enormity of the Holocaust in human history. It calls into question human values and norms. To be human is to live in responsibility and as those victims of the past found their suffering met with silence, we must now try to turn to meet those faces brought before us in testimony to affect the future. This responsibility involves an intentionality of speaking and listening and we can understand testimony to be a confiding, a plea, and a claim on our indifference. We can also understand Levinas' insistence on responsibility for the other against the backdrop of war and genocide and his own personal sufferings as well as in opposition to the period of theoretical reason which did not prevent those catastrophes from occurring. His responsibility however is not understood as collective but rather focused on the self as response. He intrinsically links responsibility and the 'other' so that to be responsible means to be 'for' the other, in service of the other. This preconscious experienced responsibility for the other is fundamental to the ethical responsible self. And it is a responsibility that is unconditional. It does not depend on familiarity, particular qualities or prior knowledge. Responsibility then as the building block of all moral behaviour arises out of a proximity to the other. In this way the two become interchangeable. Proximity equals responsibility and vice versa (Bauman 2000). Therefore when proximity is eroded, so too is responsibility, and as a result the subject loses her humanity. Bauman (2000)

finds evidence of this in the Nazi persecution of the Jews which through intense propaganda gradually depersonalised and dehumanised them, eventually removing the Jews from public life and ultimately allowing mass murder to occur. Ethical responsibility was no longer extended to them.

Holocaust literature can then be understood as an invitation to responsibility for the victims and for their rebuilding and restoring. Surely more than any genre Holocaust literature poses ethical questions of responsibility confronting us with the question of our own personal responsibility even when we are not to blame. Elie Wiesel, whose private memory served to become the collective memory of a people describes the consequences of a lack of responsibility in his memoir *Night*. He wonders how it was possible that even in the Spring of 1944 they had not heard of Auschwitz and knew nothing of what was being done to Jews in Europe. They listened to British radio every evening, heard the reports of daily bombings of Germany, believed that the Red Army was advancing rapidly, and that Germany would be defeated soon. Nobody was willing to accept the responsibility of preventing the destruction of the Jews, and it is this accusation that Holocaust writers, especially Wiesel, put to us. Throughout his writings Wiesel explores collective irresponsibility, not focusing on the motives behind genocide but rather the silence of those who witnessed it, and adopts a Levinasian vocabulary when he asks:

> Do you understand that I need to understand? To understand the others – the Other – those who watched us depart for the unknown; those who observed us, without emotion, while we became objects – living sticks of wood – and carefully numbered victims. (Wiesel 1995, 151).

The importance of my theoretical framework based on the concepts of alterity, responsibility, witnessing and response can be seen given recent research into student's understanding of collaboration and complicity by German citizens as well as citizens across Europe which shows critical gaps raising serious questions about the way the

Holocaust is taught (Claims Conference 2020). Students who took part in these surveys across Europe and the United States when asked directly who was responsible for the Holocaust responded overwhelmingly with reference to Hitler and/or the Nazis, with a lack of awareness of other key individuals, agencies or the complicity of ordinary citizens. This research made clear the need to help students recognise that responsibility for the Holocaust extended beyond Hitler and the Nazis, to consider the complicity of ordinary Germans, to acknowledge the role of collaborating societies throughout Europe, to consider the agency of soldiers and police officers who were involved in mass murder and the lack of evidence of reprisals against those who refused to participate, and ultimately to look at the full range of responses to the Holocaust including perpetration, collaboration, resistance and rescue (Claims Conference 2023). Adorno (1966) envisioned education as the social institution bearing the greatest responsibility for instilling values in the youth to best equip them to oppose barbarity. We are confronted then with the tension between the enormity of the event and the corresponding educational task. This means therefore confronting complex issues of responsibility within the context of the Nazi occupation of Europe, the culpability of the free world in what ultimately happened to the Jews of Europe, the responsibility of societies to provide safe havens for refugees, and the role of the individual to ensure a safe and free society. It is also to disrupt the 'post-truth' world we now inhabit because to 'bear witness is to take responsibility for truth' (Felman 1991, 39).

3.2.1 Levinasian Ethics: Witnessing

A witness is generally understood to be someone who was present for an event and can testify to what has taken place. It has both legal and religious connotations. However, the understanding of a witness in relation to the Holocaust has changed and developed over time. The Eichmann trial, which took place in Jerusalem in 1961, was a pivotal moment in the history of the memory of the event and opened a new era in terms of

witnessing placing the Holocaust as central to Jewish identity and Jewishness. The witness had now become the 'embodiment of memory, attesting to the past and to the continued presence of the past' (Wieviorka 2006, 88). The trial linked the Holocaust explicitly to pedagogy and transmission and placed testimony centre stage. This acceptance of the role of the witness can be explicitly linked to the developing historical narrative which would now be made up of first-person accounts signalling the beginning of the 'era of the witness' (Wieviorka 2006).[8] The witnessing event can be understood to be a powerful force that allows trauma to be at least partially known by someone other than the person who directly experienced it, and a Levinasian ethic of responsibility can help us to understand it. Tor receive a testimony is to be inflicted with a trauma and to be implicated as a listener. Levinas (1998) tells us that it carries with it a 'surplus of responsibility' (100). Confronting this 'tremendum' or overpowering terror is no easy task, and Langer (1995) describes it as becoming a witness to the death of hope. In the immediate aftermath of the war, as the camps were being liberated, newspaper articles were published, and radio broadcasts took place in a context of shocked disbelief. One journalist, Edward R. Murrow, broadcast directly from Buchenwald and while he acknowledged that his report might offend or upset some, including as it did detailed descriptions of the conditions there, he nonetheless refused to turn away (Meyers 2012). And isn't that what bearing witness is? A refusal to look away? To bear witness means to be asked; will you be with me and not look away? Could you bear it? To bear witness to a testimony then is based on an ethical structure of truth and trust, with the promise of truth on one side, and the granting of trust on the

[8] Prior to the Eichmann trial of 1961 the survivor did not occupy a public role. While one out of every three Israelis was a Holocaust survivor, it was not publicly discussed, and the general consensus seemed to be that the less it was spoken about the better. On the part of the survivor there was the fear of not being believed and for those Israelis who had not experienced the Holocaust they believed the priority now rested in establishing the state of Israel. This attitude changed as one hundred and an eleven survivors testified during the trial.

other (Jones 2019). It is to confront the brokenness of the world, which is how, as Leonard Cohen describes 'the light gets in.'

The Holocaust signifies an attempt to not only annihilate a people, but also their culture and memory, and so to face that trauma is intensely difficult. It is even more complex when we begin to explore the idea that the event itself constituted a collapse of witnessing. Laub (1992) thus named it the 'unwitnessed event'. And it was. It was shockingly unwitnessed. Visible, seen, known, but by 'witnesses who *do not witness*' (Felman 1991, 45). Every act of witnessing then is an attempt to counter that void, and to break through that wall of silence. And every act of witnessing is in Oliver's conception (2004) an act of reconstructing the addressability that makes witnessing possible. Levinas (1998) explains, 'communication would be impossible if it should have to begin in the ego, a free subject, to whom every other would be only a limitation that invited war, domination, precaution and information. To communicate is indeed to open oneself, but the openness is not complete if it is on the watch for recognition. It is complete not in the opening too the spectacle of or the recognition of the other, but in coming responsibility for him' (119).

A testimony, whether it be a spoken or written account, does not merely demand to be seen or recognised, but seeks a witnessing of something that is beyond recognition. Recognition speaks of a moment, but witnessing is a process. In her exploration of theories of identity and subjectivity, Oliver (2001) is critical of relations with others as struggles for recognition. If I see myself as subject and others as 'the other', dehumanisation is enabled.[9] To see myself as subject allows me to believe that I have

[9] In the broadest sense referring to the 'other' usually refers to individuals or groups who have been marginalised or oppressed, for example, colonised people, ethnic minorities and groups that have been excluded from systems of power. It is a commonly used phrase within discourse on social justice and human rights. This is the context in which Oliver uses this term. However, when discussing Levinas' and his thought on alterity and otherness, it is necessary to see the 'other' as other, in their alterity and difference, and to celebrate it rather than attempt to subsume it.

agency to act in the world, but others as objects are denied that agency. Oliver, building on Levinas, challenges this notion of subjectivity and develops a starting point from the other. Through bearing witness to trauma and oppression, the other can become a speaking subject. This witnessing relies on a process of address and response, address-ability and response-ability. In the move from recognition to witnessing damaged subjectivity may be reconstructed, and there is a double sensibility to witnessing: an eyewitness who can testify to events while also bearing witness to what cannot be seen. This makes witnessing a powerful alternative to recognition and reimagining subjectivity and ethical relations. Oliver (2001) posits that it is our responsibility to move beyond recognition 'to encounter each other – because subjectivity and humanity are the result of witnessing……. the result of response-ability.' (90). Oliver (2019) identifies the limits of recognition arguing that while in theory mutual recognition may be desirable, in practice recognition is conferred by those responsible for withholding it in the first place. Recognition then 'suggests a moment rather than a process.' (90), one that must be constantly re-evaluated. In acknowledging the responsibility inherent in the process of witnessing I would argue that a new, non-threatening relationship to difference may be developed. Oliver (2004) imagines this relationship as one that celebrates difference as opposed to searching for similarity and sameness, a relationship which could in turn contribute to a more human and ethical future.

The celebration of difference as opposed to a search for sameness has transformative potential and it is there the power of witnessing rather than recognition lies. Recognition requires assimilation, and is bound then to reproduce the subject/object system of dominance and oppression. Difference is subsumed into sameness. Witnessing however, pushes us beyond recognition to an assumption of responsibility because it involves an embodied ethic and obligation that goes beyond remembrance and is connected to

action. And it is when we truly move from recognition to witnessing this difficult history 'ceases to be a trope and becomes a truth' (Langer 2017, 23).

3.3 Reader Response Theory: Response

An ethic of response (Oliver 2019) offers us an alternative to moral frameworks and questions what it means to be a responsible subject in a world that is broken and fragmented, and how to respond to events and atrocities that render us speechless. As posited by Oliver (2019) this ethic is not dependent on vulnerability, nor is it based on altruism, rather it is about survival. This survival rests in the admission of our own vulnerability and the acknowledgement that we can both wound and be wounded, as can others. We realise also that some wounds are mortal, and as mortal beings we are fragile and subject to death which serves to not only constitute our humanity but enable ethical relationships. And ethic of response ethics argues against recognition, as mentioned above, as recognition is distributed in accordance with an axis of power that goes hand in hand with systems of dominance and oppression. Marginalised groups struggle for recognition from dominant groups who not only establish the criteria for recognition but also control its conferral. The marginalised therefore are beholden to their oppressors, and while there may be social and political benefits to recognition the power dynamic remains, and ultimately recognition is a moment, or a stage in a process rather than a process in and of itself. In arguing against recognition or moralistic rule-following in favour of an ethical sensibility that attends to the most vulnerable Oliver (2019) issues a call for radical generosity. Hannah Arendt (1998) believed that in dark times, what saves the world is to act, indeed for Arendt it is action not faith or hope that is an article of belief, and coined the term 'natality' that is the possibility of action in hopeless situations. It places the responsibility for action in our own hands. As a victim of and witness to 20th century totalitarianism Arendt perceived western political thought as broken, with society no longer able to depend on common sense, human decency or

moral or ethical norms. She interpreted hope as a barrier to action and explored the ethical implications of what can happen when one turns to hope during moments of crisis using the Nazi dehumanisation of Jews as an example; how hope was weaponised to destroy the humanity of people and render many helpless. Natality signifies 'our capacity to begin' (Arendt 1958, 247), to break with the status quo, to begin something new. While hope may be understood as a passive desire for a future outcome, action is rooted in natality. Natality then offers us the ability to act in new ways, to be, to speak, to respond – and is the ultimate expression of humanness.

3.3.1 Reader Response Theory

Within this ethic of response framework the reader is more than a passive recipient of information and must play an active role in both the reading experience and the creation of meaning. Louise Rosenblatt's reader-response theory (1938, 1978) can be linked to this framework since it is based on a relation between reader and text where meaning is created through a mutual exchange between them within a specific context. Rosenblatt wishes us to understand reading as something that we 'do' with texts, it is an action that is not simply a passive receipt of information. In this understanding reading is a dynamic process then with many types of activity happening simultaneously (1998). She terms the meaning that emerges through the reading activity as 'evocation' (1998, 887). By this she means that individual readers will breathe life into the texts as each reader brings their own social, cultural and educational histories to their reading. This meaning making process is one to be savoured, as readers both during and after the reading register the quality of the text and can reflect on what contributed to their evoked thoughts and feelings (1998). This does not constitute a projection of the self into the story or an empathetic response which ultimately focuses on the self rather than the other. Rather it is response-ability (Oliver 2001), the responsibility expressed by the one who bears witness. It is inclusive in this way equally valuing the lived experiences

of all members of the group and validating their perspectives and connections to the text. This type of reading is known as aesthetic as it hits us at a deeper, affective level and involves the readers bringing in their own context as opposed to efferent reading which focuses on the information given and conclusions reached. We could say that the efferent is more cognitive, while the aesthetic is more affective (1988). Aesthetic reading certainly constitutes a more holistic approach to engaging with literature allowing students to access more powerful learning through the inclusion of their own particular contexts. Totten (1998) considers reader response theory an appropriate method of engaging students in Holocaust literature whether it be a poem, short story, novel or play. He believes that the Holocaust as a watershed event influences who we are and that it is crucial to design 'powerful and pedagogically sound lessons that enable students to glean unique insights into the history of the Holocaust and leave them with something of importance to ponder far past the conclusion of the lesson itself.' (1998, 30). Sheridan (1991) reminds us of the unique time space that is the reading classroom, especially one utilising reader response, as the reader's evocation, whether shared or not, is central and becomes part of the communal space. It is a complex undertaking and even more so when we consider it in relation to testimonial literature and an authentic and engaged witnessing. Testimonial literature asks that we bear witness to trauma, and engage with material that can be emotional and upsetting. It is a living, breathing artefact that comes into being once the act of reading begins and response is offered, just as a survivor's spoken testimony makes the unimaginable a reality and creates with the witness a 'testimonial alliance' (Hartman 2012, 82). One survivor, Henri Parens, explained how important it was to him to have his memoirs read; without them he could not bear witness. Nor could he fulfil his responsibility to his people, or to all people who fall victim to genocide (2012, 93). If his memoirs were not read then how could he obey the command to remember, that of Zachor, the ancient command which took on

new meaning in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Oliver (2001) tells us that it is impossible to bear witness without an addressee and Felman and Laub (1992) describe this 'joint responsibility' as the 'source of reemerging truth.' (91). The reader then is the addressee. However, we must acknowledge the simultaneous necessity yet impossibility of witnessing, as it could only ever be truly 'known' by those who lived through it. In utilising reader response theory we are asking much of students; to collaboratively engage with Holocaust literature and participate in the construction of meaning but avoid 'taking over' the narratives, projecting themselves onto it or reducing it to sameness and maintain an ethical responsibility for the alterity of the story itself. In addition as teachers we are faced with the tension between the ethical obligation to teach this difficult history while also ensuring the wellbeing and safety of our students. It is also important to remember the response of the teachers; it is just as important as that of the students. This is a curriculum for teachers as well, to empower them to teach the Holocaust in ways that respond to youth in the twenty-first century.

One way of doing this is think with reader-response theory as it powerfully symbolises how crucial the human response to the Holocaust curriculum is. The student and reader cannot function as a passive recipient of the cold hard facts of history but rather an engaged witness to the testimonial voice. Remington (2021) interprets Holocaust literature as a memorialisation of the Holocaust through an invocation of Levinasian ethics as it 'operates by way of ethical imperatives that speak to and hold hostage those of us who chose to venture into its terrain.' (1), and 'connects us as readers, to the shared ethical space within which we are called, as individuals, to respond to the summons of responsibility-indeed, to the cries of the other.' (2). Our reading is then a response to this call to responsibility and the classroom becomes the space in which we each are summoned individually to answer the call to responsibility and to respond, to answer for what we read.

Thus theoretically, this study offers a framework for the use of testimonial literature in the classroom so that a collective witnessing may be achieved. This framework is based on the concepts of alterity, responsibility, witnessing, and response. Alterity signifies curriculum and education as encounter with the other and the embracing of proximity and elimination of distance. Responsibility is the building block of all moral action and must be assumed as pre-ontological and an essential part of the ethical self. Witnessing indicates a reimagining of ethical relations and the power of bearing witness in the construction of a more ethical future. Finally response is understood as our answer to the call of history through the reading of the texts and a reading that is engaged and authentic, active in the creation of meaning, and offers a response to the plea of the testimonial voice. These concepts will guide my exploration of the three texts allowing me to not only explore the curriculums as teacher but also to realise my own witnessing voice more fully.

3.4 The Methodological Approach: Introduction

Within this study I occupy two roles, that of researcher and reader, and through a self-reflective exploration of the testimonial curriculums I am not only arguing for engaged witnessing in the classroom but simultaneously discovering my own witnessing voice. In this way I allow the thesis to enact that which it is arguing for. In essence the thesis becomes a performance of what it seeks to be, which is an ethical response to the call of history and the invocation of a historicised ethic. My methodological approach is two-fold, drawing on the notions of currere and textual interpretation. I draw on Pinar's notion of curriculum as autobiographical (1975) and as both researcher and participant I explore my own relation to the texts and educational experiences as both student and teacher as well as what the texts may offer as curriculum. This study constitutes my response to the call of history to teach the Holocaust as well as an acknowledgement and exploration of the ethics involved in doing so. Through this autobiographical

examination and retelling of my educational experiences I can imagine future possibilities, analyse the relationships between past, present and future life history and practice, and embrace new ways of thinking about education. Currere, as an ongoing project of self-understanding, can be mobilised for engaged pedagogical action (Pinar 2004). Therefore engaged witnessing is not only my desired experience and learning outcome for the youth we teach but is also an integral element of my own journey of continuous development and growth, both personally and professionally. As a strategy for self-study, currere allows me to connect academic knowledge to a deeper understanding of my own lived experience of curriculum addressing the gap between research and practice.

3.4.1 Currere

An understanding of curriculum as autobiographical is rooted in the 1970's, a time when the curriculum field was theorised and reconceptualised in response to the changing needs of curriculum design, development, implementation, and evaluation, and with the essential purpose of providing guidance for those working in education (Pinar 1975). With the publication of *Currere: Toward Reconceptualization* (Pinar 1974) and *Toward a Poor Curriculum* (Pinar and Grumet 1976), a new autobiographical theory of curriculum was introduced. Currere, the Latin root of curriculum, means 'to run the course' (Pinar and Grumet 1976, vii) or the running of the course, and it emphasises each individuals action, process and experience. Indeed it allows us to 'reconstruct experience through thought and dialogue to enable understanding. Such understanding, achieved by working through history and lived experience, can help us reconstruct our own subjective and social lives.' (Pinar 2011, 2). Currere then is an account of one's life, not a biographical text, but an autobiographical process that is deeper and more reflexive, a 'complicated conversation' (Pinar 2004, 51). Simply put, currere seeks to understand the contribution that academic studies make to self-

understanding (Pinar et al 2008), and to establish ‘What has been and what is now the nature of my educational experience?’ (Pinar and Grumet 1976, 52). With this method, Pinar and Grumet provide a means by which students of curriculum can relate school knowledge, life history and intellectual development so as to enable transformation of the self (Pinar et al 2008).

Pinar provides four steps for this method, both temporal and reflective, enabling the autobiographical study of educational experiences and suggesting relationality (Pinar et al 2008). These steps position an individual in a ‘structure of lived meaning that follows from past situations, but which contains, perhaps unarticulated contradictions of past and present as well as anticipations of possible futures’ (Pinar 2004, 49). The first, regressive, is the retelling of educational experiences. To do this, one regresses, that is ‘returns to the past, to capture it as it was, and as it hovers over the present’ (Pinar and Grumet 1976, 55). Since the focus of this method is on the experience of education it is necessary to pay special attention to one’s own past experience and relationship with education, one’s school, teachers, books and so on. To go back as far as possible, not in order to interpret (at least not initially), but rather to be present again in those moments. That life still exists and can be brought back from the past to the present through the act of reflecting on it, concluding the first step of the method; ‘the regression to the past and the return to the present.’ (Pinar 1975, 24). The second step, progressive, goes the other way, to what is not yet, imagining future possibilities for self-understanding. The future may be present in the same way that the past was. Once again the focus of the method is on educational experience and so one can take this opportunity to imagine where one’s educational and intellectual interests are taking them, the relation between professional and personal life. One may focus on teaching, on relationships with colleagues and students considering their emotional as well as intellectual character (Pinar 1975). The third step is analytical, the analysis of the relationships between past, present and future

life history and practice. The snapshots of past and future may be set aside, with one's biographical present left. While this step asks for us to focus on the present and to exclude past remembering's and future imaginings, personal responses to both are woven in. At this stage, the student of currere asks, 'How is the future present in the past, the past in the future, and the present in both?' (Pinar and Grumet 1976, 60). And the final step is synthetical, re-entering the lived present moment and integrating this understanding of lived experience into new ways of thinking about education. Pinar concludes:

> Make it all a whole. It, all of it – intellect, emotion, behavior – occurs in and through the physical body. As the body is a concrete whole, so what occurs within and through the body can become a discernible whole, integrated in its meaningfulness…. Mind in its place, I conceptualize the present situation. I am placed together. Synthesis. (Pinar and Grumet 1976, 61).

It is important to acknowledge that there are risks involved; currere as a form of self-reflection could potentially be reduced to a form of 'navel-gazing', an indulgent self-validating practice that does not invite any growth in understanding or measurable change. Boler (1999) likens it to passive empathy since both risk 'reducing historical complexities to an overly tidy package that ignores our mutual responsibility to one another.' (177). She invokes the Socratic rebuke to 'know thyself' as a point of contrast – witnessing as opposed to self-reflection is understood in relation to others. Therefore, a pedagogical strategy is necessary in order to avoid an overly simplistic version of self-reflection or invocation of experience (Boler 1999, 178). Currere, however, provides us with such a strategy and a structure to explore teachers' narrative identity. Zembylas (2018) describes teacher identity as a 'dynamic, career-long process of negotiating the teacher-self in relation to personal and emotional experiences' (79), and McAdams (1993) tells us that 'narrative identity combines a person's reconstruction of his or her personal past with an imagined future to provide a subjective historical account of one's own development, and a moral justification of who a person was, is and will be' (100).

Jordanova (2000) compares biography to 'holistic history' (41), and Novis-Deutsch et al (2018) suggest that 'narrative identity contributes to teaching choices, by shaping teacher's experiences as learners, the ways in which they view their students and the messages they choose to impart in class.' (87). In light of this, currere is a self-conscious, self-reflective and self-aware examination of the educational experience. And as the infinitive form of curriculum, it allows us to interpret curriculum as a process and as journey. It offers us the opportunity to return to our past educational experiences, project into our future, and to examine those in-between spaces, empowering us to connect academic knowledge and research to our students, to society and to the historical moment in which we are living, without falling victim to a self-indulgent invocation of personal experience.

3.4.2 Textual Interpretation

As a theoretical study of three testimonial curriculums my research is based on a textual analysis and interpretation of three pieces of Holocaust literature along with a self-reflective exploration of my own relation and response to them. This process of analysis and interpretation involves five steps. Firstly, I chose the three pieces based on a set of criteria I developed. My criteria for choosing them to explore for their potential regarding engaged witnessing are as follows:

1. Each piece of literature is a text that is widely read by adolescents and young adults and utilised in secondary schools and college settings (in Ireland and other western countries).
2. It relates directly to the Holocaust and focuses on the Jewish experience.
3. It has a powerful testimony to share.
4. Each piece of literature narrates a different experience of the Holocaust, in terms of chronology and/or physical location from the others.

5. It has been impactful on public consciousness of the event.
6. I have a prior relation to it.

With this set of criteria guiding me I chose Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*, Elie Wiesel's *Night*, and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. I will expand briefly on my choices here.

As a diary written from within the event, Anne Frank's record of her life in hiding in the annexe is a testament to both an individual and communal ordeal. Anne's is the voice who told the world about the Holocaust, and despite the fact that she died two years before its publication, she is probably the most famous diarist in the world. However, Anne's experience, as offered to us in her diary, does not deal with the totality of her experience and is certainly not representative of the experience of the majority of European Jews. Anne's diary ends when she is arrested and so the aftermath; imprisonment, deportation, and genocide is not presented to us. Anne's entry in her diary on July 15th, 1944, is the most frequently quoted excerpt from the text – 'I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart' (Frank 2007, 332). These are beautiful words speaking of hope and light in the face of terror and darkness, demonstrating her belief in the goodness of humanity. They are also frequently taken out of context. The avoidance that characterises most readings of Anne's diary in preference of hope and courage is an issue I will explore in greater detail in the following chapter.

As the voice who largely told the story of the Holocaust to the world along with Anne Frank, indeed his work 'opened the floodgates for Holocaust remembrance' (Stevick and Gross 2015, 6), Elie Wiesel was the leading proponent of the approach that the Holocaust is not knowable but rather a unique event in human history that can only be known by those who directly experienced it. This denies the possibility of art and

exhorts us to forgo imaginative representation of the event and focus instead on testimony. Wiesel's ethic of literature understood it as not simply existing to entertain but also to teach. His seminal work *Night* details his family's illusion of wellbeing and safety in their Orthodox community in Hungary, even after much of European Jewry had been murdered, their eventual deportation to Auschwitz, and his struggle for survival there. Drawing deeply from Jewish history, religion, and mysticism he lays bare his grief and angst at the ethical dilemma presented to the Jewish world in the face of the crime perpetrated against them. His ethic is one drawn from memory, and he understands the task of witnessing as never-ending and urgent, and the role of literature to function as society's conscience, always alert to injustice and persecution.

As an example of 2nd generation Holocaust literature *Maus* demonstrates to us the transmission of familial and communal history and trauma from parent to child, making clear the transgenerational character of the effects of the event. It explores themes such as family, identity, and survivor's guilt. Art was born after the war and after his parents had somehow survived the Holocaust but had lost their firstborn son to it, and so he grew up with the knowledge that his parents had already had a family to which he did not belong and had experienced something that he could never comprehend. This text not only explores the guilt experienced by his parents as survivors and how they struggled to cope with it, but also his generation's inherited memory and trauma. The psychological burden which he felt and the state of perpetual mourning which characterised his upbringing is seen through his anger at the perceived insignificance of his problems as he grew up, his frustration with his father who had difficulty in dealing with everyday life, and his sense of alienation from his Jewish identity.

It was then necessary to research the history of each of the texts including the life and experiences of the author, and so for example in a detailed study of Anne's diary, it is

important to understand how the diary came to be published and also how it came to be included in curriculums around the world. And as a sample of Holocaust literature with a testimony to share, the experiences of the authors takes on even greater significance. Following this I summarised the content of the texts as I cannot assume that that the reader will have detailed knowledge of them; here the experiences of the authors and how the Holocaust directly impacted them is crucial. My textual interpretation of the texts is guided by the concepts of alterity, responsibility, witnessing and response, and encompasses scholarly and academic writings. The four concepts guide my reading as I evaluate what these texts offer in terms of engaged witnessing and how they answer the pedagogical questions raised in the literature review, questions regarding suitability, historical accuracy, evidence of choiceless choices and so on. Finally in a process that is both temporal and reflective I consider my own relation to the texts including my earliest engagement with them and how I approached them as curriculum invoking currere to journey back to my past educational experiences to self-consciously and with self-awareness reflect on their impact on me as student and as teacher allowing me to connect personal experience and academic knowledge with the present moment.

3.5 Conclusion

There is much to explore in all three texts and all three meet the required criteria which I set out above. Because these texts are so widely read and taught there is an existing wealth of scholarship on them which I can explore and engage with, including the educational philosophies and pedagogical guidelines offered by major institutions such as Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, as well as academic writings and theoretical explorations. In this study I outline an ethical approach to teaching the Holocaust that is built around the process of testimony-witnessing and that utilises these three iconic pieces of literature to contribute to an ethical awareness and a collective classroom-based witnessing. Key to the ethical

awareness is the response to the testimony and crucially the sense of responsibility that it provokes and the desire and motivation to act. As an ethical curriculum and pedagogy, it can open a space within the classroom for a collective witnessing that goes beyond mere acknowledgement or recognition of the other but may in fact lead to a transformative and energised response, allowing the young reader to become witness.

Chapter 4

Testimonial Readings

For the memory that I encounter, the memory with which I collide, in the Holocaust memoir takes root in my own memory. There it grows, like a tear in the fabric of my being, and from the depths of that rupture I must somehow answer. I must become not an interpreter of texts but a mender of the world, a part of the recovery that this memory demands.

(Patterson 1998, 12)

4.1 Introduction

A distinctive narrative thread runs through the Jewish experience and has since ancient times. This can be seen in the written word at the core of traditional Jewish life, the thriving literary world that existed in pre-war Jewish Europe, the work of documentation which began after World War II, the emergence of Holocaust literature as a major body of work, and the power of the narrative as a pedagogical tool in teaching and learning the Holocaust. In the aftermath of World War II Jewish historical commissions sprung up across Europe as part of the wider pursuit of justice and to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the catastrophe that had befallen the Jews. Thousands of surveys and eye-witness accounts were gathered. For those who had chosen to remain in Europe after the war it was also part of their battle against antisemitism which in many of the liberated countries had not abated. Moyshe Feigenbaum, who headed up the central historical commission in Munich, commenting on the Nuremberg Trials and its focus on the German conspiracy to wage war as opposed to any understanding of their policy toward Jews, believed that it would be up to Jews themselves to supplement the trial record with their own experiences.

> [The trial documents] show only how the murderers behaved towards us, how they treated us and what they did with us. Do our lives in those nightmarish days consist only of such fragments? On what basis will the historian be able to create an image of what happened in the ghettos?.....Therefore each testimony of a saved Jew, every song from the Nazi era, every proverb, every anecdote and joke, every photograph is for us of tremendous value (Cesarani 2016, 785-786).

Testimonial literature had already begun to gain significance after World War I as result of the devastating effects of a new kind of war with its awesome power to kill and the massive numbers of soldiers and civilians affected by it at a time when the average level of education was higher than previous centuries. Many felt compelled to write their testimonies expressing their shock at the unprecedented violence they had experienced and witnessed. The Armenian genocide had also taken place and had targeted an entire people although at that time it was difficult to name such a targeting. Veterans of World War I and Armenian survivors had a cruel knowledge of war and genocide and recognised its significance for humanity. Testimony became established in literature, and while it could lead to legal inquiry or be used by a prosecutor in a trial, its more common function has been to allow the court of history to judge the events it documents. Testimonial literature serves to amplify the official record, and its validity and authenticity lie in the lived experiences of individuals. It has been defined by George Yudice as

> an *authentic* narrative, told by a *witness* who is *moved* to *narrate* by the *urgency* of a situation (e.g. war, oppression, revolution etc.). Emphasizing *popular oral discourse*, the witness portrays his or her own *experience* as a *representative* of a *collective memory* and *identity*. *Truth* is summoned in the cause of *denouncing* a present situation of exploitation and oppression or *exorcising* and *setting aright* official history. (1985, unpublished manuscript, in Gugelberger and Kearney 1991)

The use of personal memory in history in general and in teaching and learning the Holocaust in particular is one of the most powerful ways of remembering an event and of honouring its victims. The body of knowledge of any event in history is consolidated by different types of sources. The Holocaust is one of the most documented events in

human history and along with testimonies by survivors and witnesses there are official Nazi documents, official Allied documents, trial transcripts and much more. However, personal documents written by Jews such as diaries, letters, and testimonies, during the war and in its aftermath, offer a special value to teaching and learning the Holocaust. They serve to rehumanise the victims, make the inconceivable more tangible, and deliver an ethic, and a moral message. When we engage with a testimony, we get a glimpse into a history that would otherwise not be available to us. We place a human face on an event in history that is overwhelming in its scale and certainly here in our Irish context, seems very far away from us. The scope of the crime is so vast both geographically and in terms of the numbers of victims that we can better enter this history through the story of one individual. As Hannah Arendt (1968) tells us 'The story reveals the meaning of what otherwise would remain an unbearable sequence of sheer happening.' (104).

In this chapter I explore three iconic pieces of testimonial literature and suggest that they offer an invitation to responsibility for and response to the victims of the Holocaust. As literary texts they make a claim on the reader and student reminding us that indifference to the other is a constant threat. These 'burdened narratives' (Hartman 2006, 250) go beyond reporting the facts. They are deeply personal in nature, and powerfully educative as well as evidential, and therefore require a pedagogy. Primarily this pedagogy must deal with the burden of transmission; how to convey the trauma without traumatisation. Other risks include an inappropriate fascination with the evil recounted, or an overidentification with the victim, the latter being Primo Levi's chief concern (Rider 2013). Levi also believed an absolute moral determination was needed to undo the Nazi's 'war against memory', their attempt to not only annihilate the Jewish people but also their memory, culture, and history, reminding us of the ethical imperative of education to respond to the call of difficult histories (Bergdahl and

Langmann 2017). This is more important than ever as, a lived experience for two generations, World War II and the Nazi era is now for our youth just a story from the past. First-person survivor testimony has been an integral part of Holocaust education in many countries since its inception, and they have borne witness in educational settings, formal and informal, in classrooms, museums, and at memorial sites. However, the necessity of teaching the Holocaust without survivors and other eyewitnesses has already become a reality in many parts of the world. Therefore, another method of delivering the testimony must be substituted. With each of these three pieces of testimonial literature I intend to utilise the ethical framework exploring the texts through the concepts of alterity, responsibility, witnessing, and response.

4.2 *The Diary of a Young Girl,* Anne Frank – The History of the Diary

> I'll make my voice heard, I'll go out into the world and work for mankind! 11th April 1944
>
> (Frank 2007, 262)

Anne's diary is one of the most famous books in the world. Approximately thirty million copies have been sold and even those who have not read it know her story. After the bible it is the most widely read nonfiction book in the world, it has been translated into sixty languages and adapted countless times for stage, film, and television. Anne kept her diary for just over two years, from her 13th birthday on 12th June 1942 until her last entry on 1st August 1944 three days before the Nazi raid on the secret annex where she lived in hiding with her family. Anne represents the voice of a writer calling out from the darkness. She is a victim of persecution, and her life is in mortal danger due to her Jewishness; however she is more than a victim. Her identity, more than a casualty of war, is that of a young woman who displays humour, frustration, anger, and longing for adventure, romance, and fun, all that life should offer someone of her age. She also lives under the shadow of great fear: falling bombs, the threat of betrayal and arrest,

dependence on helpers to bring food, and long days spent in hushed reading and study. Despite these fears her diary ostensibly gives us a message of hope in the face of evil and enduring optimism in the face of adversity. Anne's diary so captured the attention of the world that her name has become synonymous with and symbolic of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. It is undoubtedly one of the most famous and enduring accounts of the Holocaust.

The publication of Anne's diary in 1947 signalled the beginning of teaching and learning the Holocaust and its journey since has been a remarkable one. Discovered in a fragmentary state on the floor of the annex, its author is now of international renown despite having died two years before its publication. The story of the publication of Anne's diary, its engagement by millions of readers around the world over seven decades, and its inclusion as curriculum in schools internationally is almost as remarkable as the diary itself. Fleeing Germany in 1933, the year Hitler was elected Chancellor, due to its anti-Jewish policies, the Frank family (Otto, Edith and their two daughters Margot and Anne) settled in Amsterdam. Anne seems to have enjoyed a happy childhood there although in 1941 she was transferred, along with her sister, from a public school to a school for Jewish children and as the year progressed saw many of their remaining rights withdrawn. The catalyst for moving into the annex was Margot's summons by the Nazis for labour service on July 5th, 1942, the first member of the family to receive one. Over the next twenty-four hours Otto took his family to the hiding place he had slowly been preparing for over a year, in the upper floors of the warehouse of his business at Prinsengracht 263, which like many other buildings on Amsterdam's canals consisted of a house with an annex. One week later, as planned, the van Pels, a family of three, joined them and in November a dentist of one of the non-Jewish people helping them, Fritz Pfeffer, also joined them bringing their number to eight. The group lived there for just over two years until August 4th, 1944, when they

were arrested, as were two of their five non-Jewish helpers, the result of an anonymous phone call to the Dutch police. The eight residents of the annex were first sent to Westerbork, a transit camp near the Dutch-German border, and in September all eight were deported to Auschwitz. Anne and Margot were subsequently sent to Bergen-Belsen where the conditions and deprivations proved too much, and both most likely succumbed to typhus in late February or early March, shortly before the British liberated the camp on April 15th, 1945. Of the eight people in hiding together, only Anne's father Otto survived. The day after the residents of the annex were arrested one of their helpers, Miep Gies, returned there and discovered Anne's diary, notebooks, and other papers. She decided to stow them away safely hoping to return them to Anne but when it became clear that Anne had not survived, she gave them to Otto, still unread. On receiving a lifetime achievement award from the Anti-Defamation League in Washington D.C in 1996 Miep stated:

> I could not save Anne's life, but I could help her live another two years. In those two years she wrote her diary, in which millions of people find hope and inspiration……..Again, I could not save Anne's life. However, I did save her diary, and by that I could help her most important dream come true. In her diary she tells us that she wants to live on after her death. Now, her diary makes her really live on, in a most powerful way! (Gies 1996)

4.2.1 Publishing the Diary

Anne had begun her diary on her thirteenth birthday, June 12th, 1942, a few weeks before they went into hiding and she continued to record her life throughout her time in the annex. In the Spring of 1944, she began reworking it in response to an appeal by the Dutch government-in-exile. The Dutch Minister of Education, Gerrit Bolkstein, spoke across the airwaves from London, to urge people in the Netherlands to document the Nazi occupation, and to hold on to and preserve their letters and any documents that would provide future generations with a record of what happened (Frank 2007). Anne was inspired by this plea and feverishly set about reworking her diary into a revised

edition called *The Secret Annexe* which she hoped one day would be published. Envisioning it in this way she transformed her original entries into a kind of epistolic novel. When Otto was given his daughter's diary on his return from Auschwitz, he found her writing profoundly moving and insightful. He shared excerpts with close friends and family, and one friend, Jan Romein, wrote a column 'A Child's Voice' about it for the Dutch newspaper *Het Parool* in April 1946 in which he stated, 'to me, however, this apparently inconsequential diary by a child's voice embodies all the hideousness of fascism, more so than all the evidence at Nuremberg put together.' (Romein 1946). This piqued the interest of an Amsterdam publishing house, Contract, and Otto was persuaded to publish it as a book, compiling an edition from the diary's two versions as well as some of her short stories. Otto's main concern at that time, and the publishers', was that Anne's diary should have universal appeal, and should in essence be an adolescent story, not a Jewish one (Britzman 1998). The Frank family before the war were a highly assimilated, middle-class, secular, German, Jewish family. Otto Frank served as an officer in the German army during the First World War and the families understanding of themselves was first and foremost as German citizens. Otto and his publishers were aware in 1947 that a singularly Jewish story would not sell well, and that the public were weary of the Holocaust and the war in general and wanted to look to the future. And they were certainly correct in their belief that young people, particularly girls, would identify with Anne's adolescent struggles and that Anne's observations would resonate with them (Culbertson 2016). Indeed for many it is as much a diary about growing up and coming of age as opposed to solely a diary of the Holocaust and the voice that she gives to her inner life seems to powerfully illustrate the previously unacknowledged challenges of adolescence.

The original versions of the diary, both in Dutch and in English, were marketed as a statement about a young girl's hope for humanity in the face of war. Once again we

recall the most oft quoted entries from the diary, 'I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart.' (Frank 2007, 332). Taken out of context and held up as an idealisation of her continued optimism and hope for the future amounts to a betrayal of her pain and suffering and the despair and fear that she experienced. After a break-in and near capture at the end of April 1944 Anne wrote, 'We've been strongly reminded of the fact that we're Jews in chains, chained to one spot, without any rights, but with a thousand obligations. We must put feelings aside; we must be strong and brave, bear discomfort without complaint….' (260). Through her diary Anne worked through these opposing feelings of obligation and defiance as well as her exploration of her claustrophobia, frustrations, love and sexuality. Discussions on her sexuality as well as her difficult relationship with her mother were edited by Otto and contributed to his initial reluctance to publish. He was understandably concerned with how those depicted in the diary would be remembered, especially his late wife, and it is important to keep in mind that it was not customary at that time to write openly about sex, especially not in books for young adults. Anne, thirteen when she began writing and fifteen when she was forced to stop, had written freely and without reserve about her likes and dislikes. The Dutch edition received positive reviews such as 'a war document of striking density' and 'Parents and educators are strongly advised to read this diary.' The first modest printing of three thousand copies in June 1947 was followed in December 1947 with another 6,830 copies and the third, 10,500 copies in February 1948. After the success of the Dutch edition Otto found publishers in West Germany and in France, and both were published in 1950 (The Anne Frank House 2023). Meyer Levin, an American Jewish author of novels and nonfiction about the Jewish people, became aware of the French version of the diary in 1950. He had written many novels about Jewish life prior to the war but felt his work was seen as 'too Jewish' to have mass appeal (Britzman 1998). A correspondent during World War II he was an eye-witness reporter to the

liberation of Buchenwald in 1945. Upon encountering the diary, he felt sure that with his efforts this document had the potential to radically reshape how the Holocaust could be understood (Britzman 1998). When it was published in English in 1952 with a preface by Eleanor Roosevelt, his review, published in the *New York Times*, contributed to its popularity and reprinting. After a cautious start print run after print run sold out in rapid succession and millions of Americans had soon read the book. Levin next wanted to write a play based on the diary and Otto agreed. However, while Levin felt that only a Jew could and should identify and write about Anne and her sufferings, Otto preferred a play that focused on the power of the human spirit and while Levin wrote his play Otto eventually selected an alternate one written by husband-and-wife Hollywood screenwriting team, Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. Levin interpreted this rejection by Otto and the Broadway producers as an affront to Jewish memory and the 'second death' of Anne Frank, and it signalled the beginning of a thirty-year public battle between the two. In 1974 Levin published his account of what had gone wrong, *The Obsession*, seeking vindication for suing Otto for the rights to publish a play based on the diary and confronting his own preoccupation with controlling how the play was received (Britzman 1998). His larger struggle centred on whether or not an obsession is worthy, even if it causes a great deal of misery and difficulty. Britzman (1998) sees parallels between Anne's words,' Although I tell you a great deal about our lives, you still know very little about us', which could be reformulated for Levin as 'Although I tell myself all, I understand little.', and connects to us as educators who can never fully know whether or not our efforts with the diary will be 'beautifully gratifying or predominantly painful.' (124).

4.2.2 The Diary as Curriculum

Both Otto and Levin essentially wanted Anne's diary to be both educative and inspirational, a hope I presume all educators share. But what should that look like? Should engaging with the diary be 'beautifully gratifying or predominantly painful'? Should an engagement with the diary represent the specific Jewishness of the tragedy or instead focus on the universality of adolescence? And yet another layer of ethical considerations must be taken into account regarding pedagogy when we reflect on our responsibility to protect our youth from suffering any traumatisation through our teaching of the trauma. The study of genocide is certainly complex and can take a psychological toll but Totten and Feinberg (2016) believe this concern can be addressed through the allocation of ample time for student question and discussion which must be incorporated into the study. By doing this, students will better process the information they are being introduced to as well have opportunities to articulate any difficulties or distress they are experiencing in dealing with such a difficult subject. Boler (1999) outlines a pedagogy of discomfort in which feelings of discomfort are necessary not only to question and challenge beliefs and assumptions but also to respond to a call to action. And in allowing oneself to reside in that space of discomfort, for a period of time, transformative learning may occur.

Anne's diary, despite its universal appeal, has come to symbolise the voice of the one and a half million Jewish children who died during the Holocaust, an awesome burden, as well as presenting an idealised figure for adolescent girls. Therefore its inclusion in school curriculums raises important pedagogical questions. Questions regarding its ability to represent something so much larger than itself. Has her inclusion come at the expense of other more comprehensive historical representations of the Holocaust? Is Anne's story too limited? Is she the true face of the utter alterity of the experience? Being in hiding meant that she was not exposed to the most extreme horrors of the

Holocaust, the ghettos and camps – except we know she was. Anne was deported to Auschwitz after her arrest in the annex and died in Bergen-Belsen but as it is not presented to us on the page it raises questions about the ethical obligation of the educator to properly ground the text in historical accuracy. Is it possible that young readers could participate in a study of the text and not realise what happened to Anne after the last page? Culbertson (2001) notes that students do not have the historical background 'to piece together the events prior to the attic' (63) and that 'the book skirts the real issues of the Holocaust because the story takes place apart from them' (64). Culbertson argues against teaching Anne's diary because it does not exemplify the typical Holocaust experience and is limited in scope, and if not placed in context, presents a skewed perspective of the Holocaust. She believes that there are other diaries and memoirs that could replace it, leading us to another question: is Anne too familiar? As a secular, assimilated, upper-middle class, Western Jew is Anne too obvious a choice? Would our students be better served by reading a diary by a Jewish boy or girl from an Eastern European orthodox background, from one of the communities that was obliterated by the Nazis and in doing so contribute to restoring their names and memory? We know there was not one way of being Jewish in Europe before the war. Jews were secular and orthodox, assimilated and segregated. Jews lived in cities and in shtetls, were wealthy and poor. Every voice contributes to the historical record and so perhaps the problem is not whether Anne is the right voice to speak for the victims of the Holocaust, but actually that no one voice ever could. Again we are reminded of the colossal scale of the crime. Stone (2023) describes the 'pan-continental scale' of this 'transnational event' as a 'major phenomenon in world history.' (152) and Bergen (2009) notes that 'the Holocaust was an event of global proportions' and 'any effort to grasp it in its entirety must begin with recognition of that massive scope' (viii).

Essentially the entire story of the Holocaust cannot fit between two covers, it cannot be taught in the time it takes to teach a diary, memoir, or novel.

4.2.3 Issues Raised by the Diary

How then do we approach the use of Anne's diary as curriculum and consider its implications in terms of contemporary witnessing in an educational setting? We know that we are living in a time of increasing nationalism and xenophobia, and denial and distortion are on the rise (Milisavljevic 2019). The words of eye-witnesses have never been more important. We know that we are fast approaching a time when those that experienced the Holocaust will move from contemporary memory into the history book. We must first begin with an acknowledgement that Anne's diary became a very different kind of witness than it could or perhaps should have been. Iconic due to the popularity of the Broadway play, Anne and her diary was framed in a very specific way. But what if Otto had stuck with Levin's version of the play? What Anne would have been presented to the world? Levin had reported on the war and was a witness to the camps, among the first to enter Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, and Buchenwald. What he saw changed him, but he knew that the truest telling must come from the mouth of a victim. So when he was handed a copy of the French edition of the diary he believed he had found what he was looking for – an authentic voice that could testify to the Holocaust. While the Broadway play diminished Anne's Jewishness and the reason for her circumstances in order to make her accessible, which undoubtedly contributed to her evolution into an iconic figure, this avoidance became mainstream and infiltrated our reading of the diary. We search and duly find courage and hope. We echo her regularly quoted sentiment that people are 'truly good at heart' (332), beautiful words speaking of hope and light, conveniently forgetting that she goes onto to say in that same paragraph 'I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness, I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too, I feel the suffering of millions.' (332). This

avoidance is a type of psychological resistance and defence mechanism that protects us and our students from the pain of true witnessing as opposed to mere recognition. As a sacred icon in the Jewish world and beloved figure the world over, we dwell on her belief in the goodness of humanity for self-serving reasons. Perhaps it affords us some comfort to think of Anne in that way, still full of youthful optimism, and safe (in our minds at least) in the annexe, avoiding the heart-breaking reality of what occurred after we closed the last page of her diary. However, as Morris (2001) tells us 'the fact is that Anne Frank died in Bergen-Belsen and there is nothing hopeful or courageous about that' (10); further, she writes, 'a Holocaust education pains.' (6). We cannot avoid a crisis in a Holocaust curriculum as it signifies one and evokes another. It forces us to grapple with something we cannot make sense of and would rather not have to. In this sense it is a 'dystopic curriculum' (Morris 2001, 9) but such a curriculum also invites alterity and responds to it. It constitutes an ethical curriculum that answers Levinas's invocation of the other. How can we truly bear witness to Anne and her suffering? To the utter alterity and desolation that she faced? Firstly, we must attend to the particularly Jewish tragedy that the Holocaust signifies. Before ever opening Anne's diary students require being exposed to the circumstances that led her to the annex. That she was a refugee who fled Germany with her family when Hitler came to power in 1933. That her family were unable to secure visas to the United States due to their restrictive immigration policy and the outbreak of war. That they were also unsuccessful in their attempts to gain access to Cuba. That what they hoped would be a safe haven in the Netherlands, historically a place of religious freedom and tolerance where Jewish communities flourished from the 16th century onwards, where there had been no legal difference between Jewish and non-Jewish citizens for one hundred and fifty years, became one of the most dangerous places to be with three quarters of Jews there being

murdered, the highest number in Western Europe.[10] That once the Nazi occupation occurred in May 1940 the situation quickly deteriorated with the order for Jews to wear the yellow star, anti-Jewish riots, the banning of Jews from professions, the systematic stripping of their possessions and enforced social isolation. It was only ten days after the family went into hiding, that deportations began in earnest, firstly to Westerbork, and then on to concentration and death camps in Germany and Nazi-occupied Poland. It is crucial to teach this text with full consideration of the historical context, and to tell the full story including what happened before Anne began writing, and most importantly what happened after she stopped. A truly ethical approach demands no less. Britzman (2014) questions 'Should the apprehension of the *Shoah* really have to lean on the shoulders of a young girl?' (14), and Culbertson (2001) believes that if you are going to use this diary you must 'balance it with the fate of most other Jews.' (134). I agree. Undoubtedly more than one voice is valuable, contributes to the historical record and to students' broader understanding of the crime and allows teachers to align historical themes with the diarist' writings. But let us not forget that while the Frank family had financial means that sustained them in hiding along with the altruism of brave helpers such as Miep Gies, means that many other Jews did not have, they ultimately met the same fate regardless. This powerfully proves the dictum: it is true that not all the victims were Jews, but all the Jews were victims. That some managed to survive is the exception, in principle they could not.

[10] While prior to 1940 the Netherlands was characterised by a liberal tradition with the majority of Jews having lived there for centuries and being largely integrated, after the Nazi occupation the government and monarchy went into exile and the country fell into the hands of the top civil servants who were instructed to stay and collaborate with the occupying forces for the good of the population. Hitler appointed Austrian Nazi and lawyer Arthur Seyss, who was fiercely antisemitic, as head of the occupying regime. Anti-Jewish riots were triggered by the Dutch National Socialists with the secret support of local German authorities, and Jews were increasingly driven into social isolation and stripped of their possessions. By the time deportations began in July 1942 the German police were in almost complete control and used deception and misinformation to systematically transport the Jewish population bit by bit without too much resistance or too many people going into hiding. This explains the large percentage of Jewish victims in the Netherlands as does the late development of organised resistance and networks for people who were going into hiding.

4.2.4 My Relationship with the Diary

My personal relationship with Anne's diary dates to 1997, when I was fifteen, and found a copy of it in my local library. I can't be sure if I had heard about it before finding it in the library or if I was drawn to it because of my interest in World War II but I took it home and quickly found myself completely captivated by it. As a mandatory subject for what was then the Junior Certificate (now Junior Cycle) the history course included World War II and as part of that larger section, the Nazi rise to power and Nazi policies including persecution of Jews. It was not dealt with in any depth, however, and that was also the case when I chose history as an optional subject for the Leaving Certificate. World War II was covered, as were the dictatorships of Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin. And when learning about Hitler's Germany, Nazi policies such as totalitarianism, the use of terror, propaganda, and yes antisemitism were included. But again, not in any depth and without any nuanced or historically grounded understanding of the Holocaust as the attempt by Nazi Germany and their collaborators to systematically annihilate the Jews of Europe. I don't believe on that first reading of the diary at fifteen years old that I properly understood the reason that Anne and her family were in hiding nor what actually happened to them after the diary ended. As a teenage girl, who loved history, and loved to write and kept a journal, I was drawn to Anne. She was my age, she was funny, intelligent, feisty, and she was living out some kind of clandestine wartime adventure in the Secret Annex. I was sure in another lifetime we could have been friends.

After I returned the diary to the library, I was anxious to have my own copy, and so my mother bought me one. It sat on the bookshelf in my bedroom, and I regularly took it down and opened a page at random to reread. Over the years I have reread Anne's diary many times, although I always shied away from any of the dramatic representations of her story, whether as a series or film. While still in teacher training college and on a

placement in a girl's secondary school teaching religion (before embarking on my journey of studying and teaching the Holocaust) I used that frequently quoted line from Anne's diary 'I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are good at heart.' (332), and it does cause me some discomfort now when I think about it. Taken out of context and used for a different purpose, to achieve a different learning outcome, I chose it to give students a message of hope and of humanity. Several years later when I began teaching my Holocaust Studies transition year module and was given a modest budget for resources, I chose to spend it on a class set of the diary so that I could read it with my class of twenty-five female students. Truthfully, most of them had never heard of Anne Frank, and for some (particularly those students who do not seem to read for pleasure) it was challenging, although it had a profound effect on many of them. As with the course in general I saw a range of responses; some would not allow themselves to feel it on a deeper level and were unemotional, some found it incredibly moving and displayed sadness and disbelief at Anne's fate, and some remained in that safe middle-ground with an appropriate attitude of empathy but no more.

When I began this research project and once again took Anne's diary down from the bookshelf to reread, I began to reflect on my reluctance to watch any of the dramatized versions of her story. Around this time, 2021, a new Dutch dramatization 'My Best Friend Anne Frank' was released on Netflix, which centred on the real-life friendship between Anne and Hannah Goslar, their separation when Anne was in hiding in the Annex (at which time Hannah believed the Franks were safely in Switzerland), and their harrowing reunion at Bergen-Belsen a month before Anne died. This is obviously an aspect of the story less typically focused on, her friendship with Hannah (Hanneli), and can give us further insight into Anne's life in Amsterdam before going into hiding, as well as after it, in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The film moves between their happy friendship in Amsterdam, although life does become increasingly difficult with

Nazi restrictions encroaching on their freedoms, and their brief reunion on opposite sides of a fence in the camp. Hannah and her family had international passports and were categorised as political prisoners and so were held in a slightly more privileged area of the camp than Anne and Margot. Anne was in ill health and very distressed and Hannah risked her life to throw food and supplies across the fence to her. It became obvious early on in the film that in contrast to the diary we would have a depiction of Anne in the camp. I immediately felt uncomfortable with that thought and resistant to it. I did not want to see Anne in that way, in that setting, and I switched the film off. There was something to this I realised that warranted further reflection and I started to wonder if the reason I had been drawn to Anne's diary, not only as a teenager who was not yet mature enough to properly place it in context, but as a teacher who chose to include it in her curriculum, was precisely because it did not force me to see Anne in that way. As Langer (1995) puts it - 'Perhaps this is one source of their appeal: they permit the imagination to cope with the idea of the Holocaust without forcing a confrontation with its grim details.' (159). It was self-protecting and self-serving. There is a part of me that felt as if it was protecting Anne too, preserving her memory because to honestly show the reality of her fate was somehow sacrilegious. I couldn't come to terms with the idea of seeing her in her final wretched state. And so Anne remained safely, in my mind's eye, in the Annex. It is a strange and unsettling thing to admit to myself and I needed to truly reflect on what I was arguing for with engaged witnessing in an educational sense but also on a personal level. I have watched many documentaries and films about the Holocaust and seen difficult and upsetting footage, although I consciously do my best to avoid very graphic material as I do not believe it serves me nor does it honour the victims, and I have met many survivors and heard their traumatic testimonies. But for some reason seeing this beloved character in a camp setting was a step too far. And that was the problem. I realised that I was reducing her to a 'character' from a book, perhaps

even a caricature, as opposed to engaging with her as a real person from a defining historical moment. With this realisation came not only a feeling of cowardice but also a sense of responsibility and I decided to watch the film through to the end. It was shattering. But honest. The glimpses of Anne through the fence as her best friend Hanneli would have seen her, showed us a young girl, thin and frail, her hair shorn from her head, her body trembling from hunger and fear. It was how an eyewitness in Bergen-Belsen described her; 'She was in rags. I saw her emaciated, sunken face in the darkness. Her eyes were very large' (Schnabel 1958, 177). Hanneli herself described her as a shadow of the girl she had known (Pick-Goslar 2023). Another witness from the camp described her last days and her death from typhus which Elie Wiesel tells us is a necessary account and a 'tragic postscript to the *Diary*.' (Burger 2018, 126). Langer goes so far as to insist that *Night* must be 'an essential companion or antidote to *The Diary of Anne Frank*' as from reading the diary 'you don't know what happened when she died of typhus, half-starved at Bergen-Belsen' and Wiesel agrees stating 'Where Anne Frank's book ends, mine begins' (Donadio 2008). The diary and the play which would ultimately influence the world's perception of Anne only gives us the bearable part of the story. It saddens us and our students of course, but does it push us, or rather do we allow it to push us to a place of discomfort, of confronting something difficult, something that may even threaten our emotional security? To make it real and immediate for both us and our students we need a new paradigm in which to read the diary so that a new generation can understand it. So that we can bear witness across difference as we cross the bridge between contemporary history, when society remembers things because it lived them, and history, when those who experienced it are no longer around.

4.3 *Night*, Elie Wiesel – The History of *Night*

> The witness has forced himself to testify. For the youth of today, for the children who will be born tomorrow. He does not want his past to become their future.
>
> (Wiesel 2006, xv)

The narrative perspective given to us in *Night* is that of Eliezer, a twelve-year-old Jewish boy who is highly religious growing up in a shtetl in eastern Europe in Sighet, a town in Transylvania, in 1941. His father, Shlomo, is a businessman and community leader, his mother, Sarah, was brought up in the Hasidic tradition. He has three sisters, two older, and one younger. They help in the family store while his place is in the synagogue immersed in religious study. Classifying *Night* has proven difficult, however. Although it reads like a novel, it is a true story, it is autobiographical but not an autobiography. Its author, Elie Wiesel, has called it a memoir – 'an autobiographical story, a kind of testimony of one witness speaking of his own life, his own death.' (Cargas 1976, 73). Written in the first person as an eyewitness account, it gives public expression to the author's memories through personal testimony. We are introduced to Moishe the Beadle, a vagrant character, who becomes Eliezer's teacher in Kabbalist studies and Jewish mysticism. Moishe however is a foreign Jew, and one day all the foreign Jews are expelled from Sighet, crammed into cattle cars by the Hungarian police (Wiesel 2006, 6).[11] Moishe returns months later with a horrifying tale, they were transported by train and truck to a forest in Galicia, forced to dig trenches and then shot into it.[12] No one believes him. Moishe is the first witness, but his testimony is dismissed. This raises questions about the relationship between Sighet and the outside

[11] Sighet has a complicated history. During the 19th and early 20th centuries Sighet was the capital of Maramaros County in the Kingdom of Hungary. After World War I northern Transylvania (and Sighet) was returned to Romania, however during World War II, from 1940 to 1944 the town was again part of Hungary. After the war Sighet was under Russian rule for a time and then once again returned to Romania.

[12] Hungarian authorities rounded up about 20,000 Jews who had not been able to secure Hungarian citizenship in the summer of 1941 and deported them to Kamenets-Podolsk in German-occupied Ukraine where Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units) carried out the first large-scale massacre of the 'Final Solution.' It is believed about 2,000 Jews escaped and slipped back into Hungary in various ways. Among them was Moishe the Beadle.

world from 1941 to 1944 when the Nazis arrive, about what they know and how they respond. Why do they refuse to believe Moishe when he returns? Do they really not believe him? Or can they not allow themselves to believe him? We can explicitly link this refusal to believe Moishe with the direct style of writing that characterises *Night*. It is devastating because of its simplicity, with no analysis or explanation, just Elie's account of what happened. Every sentence is weighted and deliberate, distilled to its essence, emphasising his determination to be heard and to be believed unlike Moishe. He writes with directness and clarity in a deliberately spare style understanding himself as a messenger, speaking for those who did not survive. In this way he attempts to prevent us from responding to the story in the same way the Jews of Sighet responded to Moishe. The controlled language also sits in sharp contrast to that which it describes; a world which was beyond control. The character of Moishe, and the social dynamics of his relationship with the community in Sighet are complex. A prophetic character he knows the truth but goes unheeded and the outcome of what he knows will be certain catastrophe. And within the alterity of the Jewish experience, he occupies an especially lonely space; a foreign Jew who is stateless, among the first to be deported, soon forgotten by the community, and not believed when he returns.

Time passes and the war rages on, but the Jews of Sighet hold on to their illusion of security. In the Spring of 1944 German troops invade Budapest and still the Jews of Sighet do not believe the army will reach their town. But in less than three days German vehicles appear on their streets. The festival of Passover is celebrated privately in homes rather than in the synagogue so as not to provoke the Germans but on the seventh day of Passover the 'race toward death had begun.' (Wiesel 2006, 10). The leaders of the Jewish community are arrested, Jews are prohibited from leaving their homes for three days under pain of death, Hungarian police enter Jewish homes and confiscate jewellery and valuables, and every Jew has to wear the yellow star. More edicts follow denying

Jews their right to enter restaurants or cafes, travel by rail, attend synagogue or be outdoors after six o' clock in the evening. And then come the ghettos. The Sighet ghetto was established on April 18th – 20th 1944. It was comprised of two sections, a large ghetto within the city which was made up of four streets where the Jews lived, and a small ghetto in the suburb Ober-Yarash containing several small alleys. Elie and his family, along with 11,000 Jews from the city and a few nearby villages lived in the large ghetto. The smaller ghetto had a population of about 3,000 Jews mostly from rural areas. Conditions in both were appalling with extreme over-crowding. Nonetheless most thought that they would remain in the ghetto until the Red Army arrived and the war ended. Elie describes it thus 'The ghetto was ruled by neither German nor Jew; it was ruled by delusion.' (Wiesel 2006, 12). Deportations began in May, firstly from the small ghetto and once that had been emptied residents from the large ghetto were transferred to the small ghetto to then be deported to Auschwitz. These were among the first deportations from any ghetto in Hungary. It was May 1944 and by this time almost 80% of the Jews of Europe had already been murdered (Culbertson 2016).[13] In one conquered nation after another Jews had been identified, isolated, and singled out for murder, and only one large group was still alive – the Jews of Hungary. The role of ordinary people, both as participants and bystanders, is notable here. Elie describes the Hungarian police as 'our first oppressors' and 'the first faces of hell and death.' and as the police screamed at them and forced them to run, their former neighbours and friends, their fellow citizens, 'from behind their windows, from behind their shutters…. watched as we passed.' (Wiesel 2006, 19). It is worth noting here that of the one million

[13] The Jews of Hungary were safe initially as Hungary was not a conquered nation but an ally of Germany's. They had their own anti-Jewish laws but refused to murder or expel Hungarian Jews. After the deportation of foreign Jews in 1941, Hungary, under the rule of Prime Minister Miklos Kallay, came under increasing pressure to do so. Recognising that Germany was increasingly likely to lose the war Kallay attempted to negotiate an armistice with the Allies. To prevent this, German forces occupied Hungary in March 1944 and removed Kallay. The new Prime Minister, General Dome Sztojay, committed Hungary to remaining in the war and cooperated with the Germans in the deportation of Hungarian Jews. As the last country to be invaded by the Nazis Hungarian Jewry are often referred to as 'the Nazis' last victims.'

Jews murdered at Auschwitz, one in three was from Hungary, and they arrived and were killed within fifty-six days between May and July 1944 (Stone 2023). Had it not been for the deportations, the number of victims at Auschwitz – the most infamous Nazi site, would have been dwarfed by Treblinka. The most commonly known images of Auschwitz; the ramp where selections took place, and the photographs documenting the selection process from the so-called *Auschwitz Album* all come from that period of time of the Holocaust of Hungarian Jews.[14] And of course the rapid and mass deportation process would not have been possible without the part played by Hungarian police rounding up and deporting Jews. The uniqueness of the Holocaust and the loneliness of the Jewish people, with no help, no one to stand by their side, is devastating. Elie would later describe it as a 'dual sorrow' as those who survived and returned to their homes often found that antisemitism had not dissipated, in fact often it was stronger and they faced further persecution and violence (Schuster and Boschert-Kimmig 1999, 89) The trauma of deportation continued as they were crammed into cattle cars and transported to an unknown destination which would turn out to be Auschwitz, a place they had never heard of. Once again, the narrative style is devastating in its simplicity – 'Men to the left! Women to the right!' (Wiesel 2006, 29). These eight simple words were part of the selection upon arrival at the camp – the process of separating families with the men and older boys in one column, and women and children of both sexes in the other, to be judged on sight by camp doctors and other functionaries as to whether they would live

[14] The Auschwitz Album is the only surviving visual evidence of the process leading to mass murder at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The photos were taken at the end of May or beginning of June 1944, either by Ernst Hoffman or Bernhard Walter, two SS men whose job it was to take ID photos and fingerprints of the prisoners (not of the Jews sent directly to the gas chambers). This was during the height of Hungarian deportations and murder and a special rail line was extended from the station outside the camp to a ramp inside the camp for this purpose. Many of the photos in the album were taken on that ramp. The photos show the entire selection process whereby those considered fit for work were sent into the camp, and everyone else was sent to the gas chambers. The photos do not however show the killing itself. The purpose of the album is unknown. The album was donated to Yad Vashem by Lilly Jacob-Zelmanovic Meier, a Hungarian Jew who survived Auschwitz. On the day of her liberation from the Dora-Mittelbau concentration camp, hundreds of miles from Auschwitz, Lilly found the photographs in a bedside table in the deserted SS barracks while she was recovering from typhus, and contained within it photographs of her family and friends as they arrived on the ramp unknowingly awaiting their death.

or die. Most probably we have heard or read about the selection process before, maybe we think we know it. But we know about it, we don't know it. Auschwitz has become a type of shorthand for the Holocaust, emblematic of it, a universal metaphor for evil, and our familiarity with it can lead us to complacency (Franklin 2011). The actual experience of that separation, the reality of saying goodbye to his mother and sisters could never be known, nor could he himself have known in that moment that he would never see his mother or little sister Tzipora again. Their belongings, their hair, even their names are taken from them, they are pushed and prodded, beaten, and humiliated. They are told work, or the crematoria, these are the only choices (Wiesel 2006, 39). Their arrival and initiation into life at Auschwitz-Birkenau is orchestrated by the Nazis to strip them of their identity in a ruthless and systematic process of dehumanisation.

Eliezer remained by his father's side for the following year as they struggled for survival at Auschwitz and on a death march, on foot and in open cattle cars, that brought them to Buchenwald.[15] By the time they arrived his father was very ill with dysentery and died a few days later. Unable to cry he was ashamed that he felt free (Wiesel 2006, 112). We do not know however what that freedom signified – being free from the responsibility of caring for his father or perhaps finally being free to give up himself? He survived three more months in Buchenwald until the Americans arrived and the camp was liberated. After becoming very ill and spending several weeks hovering between life and death in the hospital Eliezer looked at himself in a mirror, the first time he had in a year, and this is where his story ends with his shock at the corpse staring back at him. After the war he was sent to France along with four hundred other

[15] Just days before the Red army arrived at Auschwitz in January 1945 approximately 56,000 prisoners were evacuated. Most were marched in the direction of nearby towns before being taken by rail to concentration camps deeper within the Reich. These death marches have been described as 'walking death camps', 'the last collective crime of Nazi Germany' and the 'final stage of Nazi genocide' – those who could no longer go on were shot or collapsed and died, their bodies left on the roads and in ditches, and the guards' brutality and cruelty was exacerbated by their fear of what would happen to them at war's end.

child refugees and spent the post-war years in an orphanage there where he was reunited with his two older sisters, Beatrice and Hilda. In 1948 he entered the Sorbonne to study philosophy and literature. He then went to work as a journalist for the French newspaper *L'Arche* and met Nobel Prize laureate Francois Mauriac who encouraged him to record his memories. The result was a 900-page memoir written in Yiddish under the title *Und di Velt Hot Geshvign* (And the World Stayed Silent) published in Buenos Aires in 1955. The French edition was reduced to 120 pages and published in 1958 under the title *La Nuit* (Night) and then in English as *Night* in 1960. With the translation from Yiddish to French and the change in title to *Night*, the emphasis moved from the indifference of the world to the more abstract night, the darkness that they descended into, both physically and spiritually. The soul (which derives its life force from human and divine relationships) as well as the body was targeted for annihilation in Auschwitz and not only are we made aware of routine humiliation and random violence, and the prisoner's reduced state to 'nothing but a body. Perhaps even less: a famished stomach.' (Wiesel 2006, 52), we also understand the narrative as a chronicle of the loss of faith, or at the very least a crisis of faith. We see the process unfold through the changing relationships between the prisoners and God, and between Eliezer and his father. When the prisoners are forced to watch the slow and agonising hanging of a young boy a voice amongst them cries out 'For God's sake, where is God?' as they rage against God's silence (Wiesel 2006, 65). The prisoner's debate whether or not they should fast on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, as to fast could bring about their death more quickly but it would also prove their faithfulness to God even in such dire circumstances (Wiesel 2006, 69). When they find out the camp is going to be evacuated Eliezer and his father must decide whether they should stay behind or leave. The sick can remain in the infirmary, but the prisoners worry if they stay the camp will be blown up immediately after the evacuation, and so Eliezer's father

decides they should go (Wiesel 2006, 82). (However, after the war Elie learns those who remained behind were liberated by the Russians two days after the evacuation.) Eliezer watches the SS officer beat his father and does not intervene, and he climbs into his bunk when his father is deathly ill rather than stay with him (Wiesel 2006, 111). This is the enactment of 'choiceless choices', a term coined by Lawrence Langer (1980) which has become a fundamental concept in Holocaust studies and which he explained as 'the situation that consumed so many millions imposed impossible decisions on victims not free to embrace the luxury of the heroic life.' (58).[16] Essentially it means that we cannot view behaviour in the camps through the same lens that we would in a normal context as no prisoner in a camp had any control over his or her life. We must apply the ethical lens and enable students to view the impossible dilemmas the victims faced and the choices the victims made with empathy rather than judgement, and to understand that even in the world of chaos in which they existed, a world that was shockingly different to our own, victims continued to ask moral questions.

4.3.1 Night as Curriculum

The words spoken by Elie Wiesel in the preface to *Night* and quoted above are indicative of the question which dominates all his written works; 'What happens when the witnesses are no longer able to pass on their message, and their words pass unheeded?' In that sense then it is a story about allyship, about bearing witness and responsibility for the other. And speaking for the other when they no longer can. For Elie it is a dual obligation; to tell his story but also to speak for his family, his community, for those who did not survive. Paul Salmon (2010) tells us that 'the pursuit

[16] Lawrence Langer taught the first course on Holocaust literature in the United States in 1965, and his text *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* was the first study of Holocaust literature published in the United States in 1975. In 1991 he published *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* based on his study of survivors' oral histories in the Yale Fortunoff Video Archive of Holocaust Testimony. This was the first scholarly work on survivor testimony as a means for understanding the Holocaust.

of historical knowledge is itself an ethical and moral endeavour' (63). We can consider that statement in response to questions regarding a rationale for teaching the Holocaust while also remembering that the genocidal process involves eight stages with the final stage denial. Education and remembrance are the necessary response. For Elie they must go together, one occurs through the other. He trusted in education more than politics or organised religion and believed that young people around the world must embrace responsibility for what is happening today, and how memory of the past influences the present (Schuster and Boschert-Kimmig 1999). An ethic of responsibility and response to the other is integral to a reading of *Night*, something that Elie continuously focused on in literature and in life. He railed against the indifference shown towards him and his family and community by former friends and neighbours, and the world at large, believing that while today's youth are not responsible for this history, they nonetheless have a responsibility to it. The notion of proximity, of closeness, is equal to responsibility, as the opposite is distance and indifference. As the building block of all moral behaviour, responsibility arises out of proximity to the other. And when proximity is negated, responsibility is silenced, and fellow human beings are turned into an 'other' (Bauman 2000). Human history has been characterised by social separation and the devaluation of groups who are defined as culturally different. When we draw a line between ourselves, between 'our group' and a devalued or 'othered group' we avoid responsibility and distance ourselves from human suffering allowing human rights violations and violence to occur. This abdication of responsibility and moral disengagement contributed to the Holocaust and has continued to contribute to other genocides to the present day. *Night* is at essence, an accusation that contemporaries shunned their responsibility to prevent the genocide of Europe's Jews. When we wonder how it was possible that Sighet's Jews, geographically closer to Auschwitz than Boston is to New York had not heard of Auschwitz, Wiesel's response is simply that the

indifferent world did not tell them (Myers 1999). Elie focuses on the collective irresponsibility of society as opposed to the motives behind the genocide, and the inactions of bystanders who passively assented to the destruction of the Jews. Staub describes active interventions and active bystandership as the point whereby you can no longer accept the status quo, you can no longer look on, and you must take action (Goodman and Meyers 2012). Historiography in general has relied more on the documents of the perpetrators than testimonies of the victims, and history and historians do not accept memory as a foundation for their discipline. Blight (2009) notes that 'History is what trained historians do,' and it 'asserts the authority of academic training and rules of evidence' (242). Whereas 'memory carries the more immediate authority of community membership or family experience' (243). Elie invokes an ethic drawn from memory believing that the discipline of history cannot be objective or neutral – it needs an ethical perspective. The historian, and the educator, most work from an ethical principle, their concern must be ethically determined, and the work must be situated in an ethical context (Schuster and Boschert-Kimmig 1999). How then does Elie want us to respond to his story? And what does he want us to do to prevent ourselves, and our students, from responding to the story in the same way the Jews of Sighet responded to Moishe?

One of Elie's students at Boston University, Ariel Burger, describes the core of Elie's educational approach as a 'methodology of wonder' with the 'potential to awaken students' ethical and moral powers.' (Burger 2018, 233). Literature is tasked with creating an ethical awareness, so as not merely to entertain but also to instruct, and to call us to self-reflection and introspection. At its essence it is the search for an ethical frame of mind (Schuster and Boschert-Kimmig 1999). The use of literature then, specifically testimonial literature such as *Night*, must be read and taught through this ethical lens. Culbertson (2016) believes *Night* will remain a classic and one that

teachers turn to because of its ability to transform us into witnesses of an event that none of us should ever have to experience. She does however caution that many students presume it to be a work of fiction because of the death and despair recounted, reminding us that young peoples' exposure to violence in film that is fictional 'does not prepare them for the brutality of historical fact.' (Culbertson 2016, 135). Death is an ever-expanding presence in this text, and we bear witness to the deaths that Eliezer chooses to share with us. This victim-centred perspective has the potential to deepen student understanding, create empathetic connections and transform the way students see history and the world. But there are burdens in this. It will challenge students not just academically or intellectually, but also emotionally and spiritually, and there is work to be done to prepare for this, to be both sensitive and accurate. This involves the judicious use of first-hand accounts and a critical approach in which students ask questions about the stories that they are told and the knowledge they learn, but also are themselves questioned by the text. Students must pay attention to their reactions and responses to the text and in doing so shed light on their values and assumptions. The Holocaust was not the murder of six million, a homogenous group. It was six million murders. The murder of six million individuals. To appreciate that loss we must focus firstly on their lives, for how we can truly appreciate the loss of something if we did not know that it existed in the first place? This connects us to the educational philosophy of Yad Vashem which stresses the importance of teaching Jewish life in pre-war Europe. While the Holocaust signifies death and destruction, learning how Jews lived in Europe gives us an insight into the rich cultural civilisation that existed before the destruction. Before embarking on a guided reading of *Night* with students, teachers must carry out a geographical and historical overview of Sighet and the pre-war Jewish community there so as to better understand how the community survived until 1944 in relative obscurity and safety, and how political and military alliances and conflicts intervened to bring

about their destruction. *Night* not only documents the destruction of human beings but even the destruction of the idea of human beings. Remington (2021) believes that it speaks to us, questions us, challenges us, even holds us hostage, through an invocation of Levinasian ethics. It empowers us to eliminate indifference and distance and confront the question of responsibility, and our share in it. To embrace this sense of responsibility then is to bear it not as a burden but as a privilege. It is when this difficult history 'cease to be a trope and becomes a truth (Langer 2017, 23), and we move from recognition to a deeper and engaged witnessing.

In my exploration of *Night* I refer to the author as both Eliezer and Elie, something that I will clarify now as it relates to using the text in the classroom. Eliezer was the boy who spoke Yiddish, who was deeply observant and studied each and every day in the synagogue, who lived in a traditional shtetl in eastern Europe amongst his community, where Orthodoxy and Hasidism dominated. A certain life was already set out for him. But Eliezer is also the boy who experienced the destruction; the arrival of the German soldiers in his hometown, the restrictions issued to curtail his freedom, being forced to move into the ghetto, deportation, separation from his mother and sisters, the systematic dehumanisation that characterised his life in Auschwitz, and the loss of his father. He had experienced all of this by his sixteenth birthday. Elie grapples with the impossibility of representing this alongside the necessity to do so (Reynolds 2016). There are two levels to his narrative, the young Yiddish boy, (Eliezer) the protagonist of the story, and the more cosmopolitan twenty-five-year-old (Elie) who had ten years to reflect on his experiences before putting pen to paper. In order to move from a mere recognition of this survivor and his story to a true witnessing of his experience and what it represents, we must reflect on the life he had before the war and who and what he would have been, as well as the one million Jewish children who did not survive, and what their loss signifies to the world. Totten and Feinberg (2016) suggest utilising a reader response

theory whereby the student is not passively accepting a pre-determined meaning or message but instead is actively involved in coming to an understanding of the text based on his/her responses to it. Each students' response is highly valued and informed by their own background, experience, insights, and perspectives. In the introduction to the study, I described testimony as being more than the telling of a story or piece of literature, but one half of a process of testimony-witnessing, and to bear witness to something means to be present and attentive to the truth. The students' response to the text then is the other half of this process.

4.3.2 My Relationship with Night

My first encounter with Elie Wiesel and his canonical text *Night* was while studying religious education and training to be a religion teacher. One of our modules, Christology, focused on the historical person of Jesus and the extraordinary claims made about him. Christology is the subject within Theology concerned with the work and nature of Jesus, and matters such as the incarnation, the resurrection, and his human and divine nature. One of the most emotionally distressing scenes in *Night* involves the execution of the boy, the 'sad-eyed angel', whose death is prolonged and painful (Wiesel 2006, 64). When a voice amongst the prisoners who are forced to watch questions where God is, Eliezer hears the answer from within; 'Where He is? This is where – hanging here from this gallows…' (Wiesel 2006, 65). This extract was used in class during a discussion on the problem of theodicy – how do we reconcile a kind and compassionate god who is also omnipotent with the existence of evil and of pain and suffering in the world. I wanted to know more about Elie Wiesel, whom I had never heard of before, and I bought a copy of *Night*. Once I had completed my teaching degree I decided to continue with a master's in theology, and chose Anthropology, Politics and Theology as one of my modules, which would as it turns out influence my future witnessing journey. In this class we looked at historical atrocities, including the

Holocaust, through a theological lens and ultimately, I wrote my thesis on the theodicy problem as it related to the Holocaust. It was titled 'Where was God in Auschwitz? The Shoah and its Implications for Christian Theology' and I drew on German theologian Johann Baptist Metz who stated, 'It took a long time before I grasped the fact that Auschwitz was a deadly attack on everything that we Christians should hold sacred.' (Schuster and Boschert 1990, 15). The two key theological questions that needed to be addressed in the aftermath of the Holocaust, according to Metz were: where was God in Auschwitz, and where was humanity in Auschwitz? Metz wondered how anyone who survived such horrors could ever again have faith in 'man' or even humanity, and I connected his thought to Elie Wiesel's concerning the vulnerability of not just human beings, individuals, but the very idea of humanity. Metz challenged us all to face the Jews and to look back to Auschwitz to learn something of value for the present, and for the future, to ensure that such a catastrophe may not be allowed to happen again.

Having completed my masters, I continued teaching, however that one module and my thesis had reignited a passion for this difficult history in me and I decided having read deeply on the theological perspective of the atrocity, I now needed a deeper historical understanding of the event itself but also a specialised pedagogy. This led me to an intensive course of study with Holocaust Education Ireland which included a period of study at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, as well as educational trips to Berlin and Krakow. I met survivors for the first time, and was privileged to hear their testimonies, and saw first-hand the sites where the crimes were carried out, sites such as Sachsenhausen, Plaszow, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. It was a transformational experience, and solidified my passion for teaching this history, setting me on the path towards doctoral study. And I trace this journey directly to one of my lecturers, Dr. Sandra Cullen, choosing to use an extract from *Night*, a powerful piece of testimonial literature, in class. As Langer (1982) tells us, 'Our entry into the world of the Holocaust thus depends on who tells the

tale – and how.' (5). I have since used *Night* in the classroom myself, both with individual senior cycle history students who are preparing their research study, a special project worth 20% of their overall Leaving Certificate history grade which aims to develop students' research skills while allowing them to focus on an area of particular interest to them, as well as in my transition year Holocaust Studies module. Notable amongst student reactions was one particular student who was researching the life of Elie Wiesel for his research study and using *Night* as a primary source. He was so shocked by what he read and what had happened to Elie Wiesel that he genuinely could not come to terms with it or believe that it was possible. This led him to web searches which inevitably, based on how he was phrasing his questions ('did this really happen…etc.), led him to revisionist and denier content. It was a huge learning experience for us both, for me not to be complacent about how shocking this history is despite my familiarity with it, and for the student to understand that not everything you find on the internet is true or valid and that you must use a critical lens. It also goes deeper.

Denying the possibility of such horrors is a more comfortable and comforting space. It is familiar and safe. The student was not lacking in empathy, he was innocent, and that cannot be taken lightly as an educator, the fact that you are participating in the loss of that innocence. Simon and Eppert (1997) remind us, using testimony to evoke the memory of genocide can catch us in a disruption of our understanding of what it is to be human. Describing newly arriving prisoners at Auschwitz, 'a station where those who arrive have never arrived, where those who have left never came back.' (3), Charlotte Delbo (2014) explains that they 'expect the worst – not the unthinkable.' (4). We could say the same of our students. Until encountering a testimony, the Holocaust can remain a very abstract notion, something that happened a long time ago to a large group of people, but by virtue of its scale remain impersonal and unaffecting. Once that history is

personalised and rehumanised through the restoration of a name, a face, a life, it becomes a human story. The past now has meaning. But a meaning that is devastating and previously unimagined. This past that we have yet to come fully come to terms with, pushes us to the limits of our historical and empathetic understanding.

4.4 *Maus,* Art Spiegelman – The History of *Maus*

> I know this is insane, but I somehow wish I had been in Auschwitz with my parents so I could really know what they lived through! I guess it's some kind of guilt about having had an easier life than they did.
>
> (Spiegelman 2003,176)

Maus, by Art Spiegelman, is a graphic novel that tells the story of Art's father Vladek and his experiences as a Polish Jew during the Holocaust, with the story of Art's interactions with his father as he interviews him to record his memories running parallel. It began in 1980 as a serialised comic in an avant-garde comic magazine, *Raw*, which was published by Art and his wife Francoise Mouly, and in 1986 was published as a collected volume, *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History* attracting mainstream attention. In 1991 a second volume, *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began* was published and was one of the first books in graphic format to receive significant academic attention. It became a New York Times bestseller. In 1992 Art won the Pulitzer Prize for *Maus*, the first and only graphic novel to win one, as well as a solo exhibit at New York City's Museum of Modern Art. In 1996 the two *Maus* volumes were published together as *The Complete Maus* and translated into more than twenty languages. *Maus* is a representative work in second-generation Holocaust literature conveying the transmission of familial and communal history and trauma from parent to child and signified the beginning of the trend of the children of survivors writing about their parent's experiences. *Maus* is brutally honest – Art portrays himself trying to figure out how best to tell his family's story, and he chooses to include the most sensitive details, such as his mother's suicide, his own breakdown, and the difficulties

in his relationship with his father. Themes of family and identity, survivor's guilt, the transgenerational character of the effects of the event, and the dynamics of the father-son relationship are all present. The Holocaust however is inescapable, symbols relating to it appear in most panels. The Holocaust is the founding trauma of the family and the community, a trauma he was absent from, and so in effect Art is attempting to write himself into his family history, find a way to connect himself to his father's narrative, and narrow the psychological void that exists between him and his family members. Art feels responsible for the preservation of his father's memories and compelled to do so. This is borne out of a sense of respect for what his parents endured, for the many family members lost, including his brother Richieu who did not survive, but also to explore his own troubled relationship with his parents and his Jewishness. This sense of responsibility also presents a moral dilemma. Art is fearful of misrepresenting the horrors and unsure about the morality of portraying it at all. He grapples with the difficult questions of what it is to be a moral witness and the responsibility that is inherited by the survivors but also the generations that follow, the children and grandchildren of survivors. The Holocaust then represents a multi-generational struggle to make sense of the tragedy and how to bear witness to it.

One of the challenges with *Maus* is how to classify it. Langer (1991) describes it as 'a serious form of pictorial literature' (3) and Brown (1993) as 'an oral history account and also an account of an oral history.' (1669). LaCapra (1998) outlines the various categories that *Maus* can comfortably sit within – 'documentary art, pictorial literature, novelised comic or cartoon, graphic novel, oral history, biography, autobiography, ethnography, vehicle for testimony, and medium for memory work.' (145). Art himself observed 'I don't know how to refer to myself – author, artist, cartoonist, historian.' (Spiegelman 1991, 4). All are appropriate. Through his skilful weaving of the historical, the ethnographic and the autobiographical he brings a historical atrocity to the attention

of people who otherwise might never be exposed to it and is committed to providing a factual record of the Holocaust, to 'stylize horror without aestheticizing it.' (LaCapra 1998, 144). *Maus* is stylized and shaped, it is made, but it is not made up. Art was shocked when it was categorised by the New York Times Book Review as fiction, and fearful of potential political implications in that it could play into the hands of revisionists and the far right (LaCapra 1998). It was however moved to the nonfiction list in response to his letter to the Times in which he stated 'I shudder to think how David Duke – if he could read – would respond to seeing a carefully researched work based closely on my father's memories of life in Hitler's Europe and in the death camps classified as fiction.' (Young 2000, 38-39). Through the 'bleeding' of history Art rebuilds his family and community history and constructs an artefact that somehow manages to address an impossible topic using the comic medium. But it is a painful process. There is pain involved in the testimony process, throughout much of the text we can see that Vladek has no desire to relive the trauma, and his 'bleeding' of history, the slow and painful retelling of his story, comes at great personal cost. After his wife Anja's death Vladek destroyed her diaries along with letters he exchanged with another survivor, and so Art must rebuild and construct the family narrative frame by frame. It is not only the comic medium that shocks and distinguishes *Maus*; but the fact that all the figures are animals. The Jews are mice, the Germans are cats, the Poles are pigs, the Americans are dogs, the one Frenchman is a frog, the Swede is a reindeer, and the gypsies are moths. This metaphor is framed by the epigraph in the first volume, a quotation from Hitler, 'The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human.' (Spiegelman 2003, 10). Therefore, Art must ask, if the Jews are not human, what are they? His response is to draw mice heads on human-looking bodies. They are mice (and cats, dogs etc.) who perceive themselves as human and who in every other respect, are human. In fact, at times, they wear animal masks. For example, when Vladek gets out of

hiding he wears a pig mask to pass as Polish, and Art often portrays himself as a human, not a mouse, but wearing a mouse mask, perhaps searching for a connection to his Jewish identity. Art is problematizing identity, and we can see that the identities are assumed, and seem to be only in relation to one another, and in relation to the Holocaust (Hirsch 2023). So rather than echoing the Nazi racial policies through representing different groups as different animals he is in fact using it as a literary and aesthetic strategy. The second volume also has an epigraph, a quotation from a 1930's German newspaper which states, 'Mickey Mouse is the most miserable ideal ever revealed….Healthy emotions tell every independent young man and every honorable youth that the dirty and filth-covered vermin, the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom, cannot be the ideal type of animal….Away with Jewish brutalization of the people! Down with Mickey Mouse! Wear the Swastika Cross!' (Spiegelman 2003, 164). Obviously an antisemitic text it expresses the stereotype of Jews as 'pests' or vermin. Facing the epigraph is one of only three photographs included in the complete text, a photograph of Art's brother Richieu who did not survive the Holocaust. He was the brother that Art never met and part of the family that existed before Art did. Richieu was sent away for safe keeping but because of this did not survive, an aunt poisoned him rather than let him be captured by Nazi soldiers during an evacuation, and Art shares in his parents' guilt over this.

The response by the children of survivors to their parents' experiences and accounts of war is named by Marianne Hirsch (1997) as 'postmemory'. This describes the relationship that the next generation has to the personal, familial, collective and cultural trauma that the previous generation experienced by means of the stories, images and behaviours among which they grew up. Postmemory is not identical to memory as it is not based on a direct experience of the trauma, however the stories and behaviours that the children of survivors grew up with has the emotional power of memories. Just as

Hartman (2006) considers testimonial literature to be 'burdened narratives' (250), the children of survivors are burdened by a history that they have never lived and are the guardians of memories that they do not possess but have nonetheless inherited. The focus in testimonial literature is 'to remember' with the dual purpose of memorialising those who died as well as preventing such events from recurring. However, for the children and grandchildren of survivors, and for young readers, this is not a memory being 'invoked' but rather 'created'. Hirsch (2023) explores this, as the child of survivors herself, how trauma is transmitted across the generations, how it is known and embodied by those who did not live it, and identifies with Spiegelman's Artie.[17] Indeed it was her encounters with the two volumes of *Maus* and specifically the three photographs that Art chose to include among the drawings, one of his lost brother Richieu, one of his father Vladek, and one of himself as a young boy with his mother Anja, and her analysis of the use of the photographs that inspired the idea of postmemory. The experience of growing up as the child of survivors is a paradoxical one, while they are constantly told by their parents that their very existence is a miracle, they still cannot shake the feeling that the ups and downs of their lives are inconsequential and insignificant in comparison to what their parents went through. This is made clear by Artie in the opening frames of *Maus*, when at the age of ten or eleven he returns home upset because he was roller skating with his friends and fell and they skated off without him. He meets his father Vladek in tears, but his father's response is as follows – 'Friends? Your Friends?...If you lock them together in a room with no food for a week……Then you could see what is it, friends!' (Spiegelman 2003, 5). It is easy to imagine how difficult it would be to grow up in a home where there is very little empathy for your ordinary childhood or adolescent trials and tribulations. Helen Epstein, who wrote about the phenomenon in a New York Times article in 1977

[17] Hirsch's parents, Lotte and Carl, survived the war in hiding in Romania.

and interviewed the children of survivors, discussed how some survivor parents were overly critical of their children, while some tried to protect them from everything. Some lived vicariously through their children, while some struggled with overwhelming anxiety and worried about the future, their health, the political situation. Some survivor parents never spoke of their war time experiences while some never stopped (Epstein 1977). Franklin (2011) wonders if it is possible for this trauma to be absorbed and inherited, and in the opening of her article Epstein (1977) quotes the director of a psychiatric hospital in Tel Aviv as saying 'The trauma of the Nazi concentration camp is re-experienced in the lives of the children and even the grandchildren of camp survivors. The effects of systematic dehumanization are being transmitted from one generation to the next through severe disturbances in the parent-child relationship.'

An added complexity is the role of the survivor in society. In contrast to their low public profile in the decades immediately following the war and the open hostility they experienced in Israel where the work of building a nation was prioritised over the rehabilitation or care of traumatised survivors, heroic stories were eventually celebrated. The survivor came to hold an elevated position in society, one that garnered respect, admiration and awe, not only a survivor but a witness and a moral messenger.[18] And yet when dealing with Vladek, a survivor of the Holocaust, we struggle. He is a difficult character, for his son and for us as readers. Although a survivor who should be respected, he is not necessarily likeable. The Vladek portrayed in the Holocaust sequences is resourceful and courageous. But the Vladek in Rego Park is selfish and self-obsessed; he is a hoarder and a scavenger. His second wife leaves him but returns

[18] The Eichmann Trial of 1961 in which Adolf Eichmann was put on trial in Israel on fifteen counts including crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes against the Jewish people, put survivors and witnesses at centre stage for the first time to set out the story of the Holocaust. The survivors acquired a social identity and role as bearers of history and through this trial the witness became the 'embodiment of memory…. attesting to the past and to the continuing presence of the past.' (Wieviorka 2006, 88).

and feels trapped by how demanding and controlling he is. While we would connect his issues with spending and hoarding food and other items to his suffering in the war, she makes no such allowances as she and many of their friends also survived the camps and they do not behave in this way. Therefore we simultaneously empathise with Vladek while also despairing of his difficult nature.

Some scholars of Holocaust literature believe that in the Holocaust canon Vladek is one of the only, if not the only, victim who 'is not consistently noble, inventive, supportive of others, generous, brave and kind – in short, a saint.' (Kokkola 2003, 80). And this could be viewed as one of the risks of reading *Maus*; empathetic identification may not be with the survivor, but instead with his son (Boler 1999), however it is through his son that we bear witness to his father's testimony. As LaCapra (1998) explains, we can 'respect the survivor without sacralizing him or enabling his trials to excuse everything about him.' (173).

4.4.1 Maus as Curriculum

Art, and all children of survivors, have been profoundly shaped by experiences that occurred before they were born, and it is through the graphic form of *Maus* that Art found a way to express this complex relationship, one that is characterised simultaneously by identification and misidentification, curiosity and fear, acceptance and rejection of the past. Culbertson (2016) describes it as 'living in homes that are booby-trapped with memories, most of them horrifying.' (136), and believes that it is correct to show the survivors more fully realised as human beings rather than to elevate them to figures of martyrdom. The life of the survivor was to perhaps be the only remaining member of your family, to bear that guilt and wonder why you survived when others did not, to revisit stories and actions and inaction, grappling with the consequences of your choices. Culbertson (2016), also the child of survivors, believes

that the need to reconnect and to remake families brought about speedy courtships and marriages as well as parenthood and responsibilities that the survivors were not always ready or able to take on. Many survivors had spent their formatives years in a camp and so had missed out on education and life experiences and their attempts to start new lives were not always successful. While physical wounds could heal with time, the emotional and mental repercussions of their suffering were not so easily addressed. She believes Art shows bravery in confronting the difficulties of growing up the child of survivors and in choosing to include his mother's suicide, which was very much a taboo amongst the survivor community, not something to be spoken of publicly. Art agrees that his deliberate choice not to portray his parents in an idealised way countered the 'sanctification of the victim' (Tolin 2023). *Maus* is about response to trauma: Art's parents' response to the trauma they endured during the Holocaust as well in the years after, and Art's response to his parents and the trauma that he inherits. In this sense then it is not one story but two stories told simultaneously; his father's story, and his own record of it, what happened during the Holocaust, and what happens now as a result of it. Young (2000) explains that by reflecting on his own role in extracting the testimony from his father Art not only highlights testimony as an event but also his own role within it. 'The listener is a party to the creation of knowledge *de novo*.' (Laub 1992, 57).

As a piece of curriculum *Maus* offers an opportunity for engaged witnessing that is powerful but challenging. Just as Charlotte Delbo (2014) exhorts us to 'Try to look. Try to see.' (xix), to no longer shield ourselves from its horrors, Spiegelman managed to find a medium that allows us to see what our mind tries to protect us from. It can do more than just tell us, it can show us. The gripping visuals make it appealing to young readers, however the blunt and graphic form of the text should not belie its complexity. Using the comic book convention Spiegelman charts his parent's lives spanning the

totality of the Jewish and Holocaust experience; from pre-war Poland to Auschwitz and beyond. Through a testimonial reading of *Maus* we enter into the history of the Holocaust and Vladek and Anja's experiences of hiding, the ghettos, deportation, the struggle to survive in Auschwitz, resistance, liberation and the aftermath of war. It is breath-taking in scope. One of its most complicated issues is the existing antisemitism in pre-war Poland and how that was lived out during the Holocaust. We can bear witness to the vibrant Jewish communities that existed across Poland will full knowledge that those communities were ultimately entirely destroyed. Jews suffered at the hands of their neighbours, friends, classmates, employers, and employees, and while we are comfortable with portraying the Nazis as the ultimate force for evil we also need to confront the fact that the Nazis did not invent antisemitism, nor did it begin or end with the Holocaust. The responsibility then expands and applies to us all, not just the German people who have inherited its legacy. *Maus* raises moral questions regarding the role of bystanders and rescuers, about the ethics involved in saving yourself even if it means endangering another, about dealing with the guilt of survivorship, as well as questions of citizenship that connect powerfully to the refugee crisis of modern times. What does it mean to be a citizen of a state? What constitutes citizenship? Jewish communities had existed in Europe for more than two thousand years, and in fact many of the Jewish communities of Europe had come into existence hundreds of years before the founding of the states of which they became a part. In every country which fell victim to the Nazis there were well established Jewish communities dating back hundreds of years, and even in the case of Greece more than 2000 years (World Jewish Congress 2023). Ordinary people across Europe contributed to the persecution of their Jewish neighbours and became complicit in human rights violations once again emphasising the utter alterity of the Jew in twentieth century Europe.

Maus was once again at the centre of controversy in 2022 when the McMinn County Board of Education Tennessee banned it from their eight grade curriculum. Minutes from the meeting which made it into the public arena indicate objections over instances of profane language ('bitch' and ''goddamn') and the depiction of a nude woman (one small image of Art's mother Anja in the bath after taking her own life) and the execution of four Jews in the town square where Vladek lived.[19] In response to the ban which became global news, *Maus* sold out on Amazon. One board member indicated that it was out of a desire to protect their students and not promote violence and murder. I do not believe that *Maus* promotes violence of any kind, but instead bears witness to it. Spiegelman commented that they 'want a kinder, gentler, fuzzier Holocaust' to teach to children but we know that no such thing exists (Tolin 2023). He believes that as a graphic novel it is a particularly easy target as 'Pictures go straight into your brain, you can't block them, right through your eyes. You see it, you can't unsee it.' (Tolin 2023). The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum tweeted that 'Maus has played a vital role in educating about the Holocaust through shared detailed and personal experiences of victims and survivors.' and 'books like Maus can inspire students to think critically about the past and their own roles and responsibilities today.' (Twitter 2022). My own experience of *Maus* is that each time I read it I find something different, I access it at a deeper level, and it asks different questions of me. Part of the responsibility in teaching the Holocaust is meeting the students where they are, and leading them safely through the experience. Therefore it is perfectly reasonable to choose not to use a text such as *Maus* with younger students as it does take us immediately into the heart of darkness. Choosing stories more focused on resistance and rescue is a perfectly valid choice for younger students particularly primary school students, not shying away from the history

[19] This is part of a wider movement within the United States to limit the types of books that children and adolescents have access to, including books that address the Holocaust, racism, the history of American slavery, and LGBTQ issues.

but also being careful not to traumatise while teaching the trauma. Students can be brought further into the history each year, consistently building on prior learning. The McMinn County Board removed *Maus* from their eight grade curriculum which is the equivalent of second year in the Irish secondary system, thirteen to fourteen year olds. I would counter that at that age in the right context *Maus* is a responsible curricular choice. And I would go further and state I believe that choosing a text such as *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* which is embedded in curricula around the world for students younger than thirteen or fourteen, is far more damaging and actually the irresponsible choice, filled as it is with historical inaccuracies and misconceptions. Culbertson (2016) describes it as 'strikingly inappropriate' and 'harmful in its attempt to turn our attention and sympathy away from where it should be.' (136).

4.4.2 My Relationship with Maus

My personal relationship with *Maus* began in 2015 in Munich in Germany. I was an accompanying teacher on a school trip for senior cycle German language students, a trip which included visiting the site of Dachau concentration camp. I was invited on the trip specifically because of my engagement with and relative expertise in the subject due to my own studies and was at that time working with Holocaust Education Ireland to create a curriculum for teaching the Holocaust to senior cycle students. Initially I was hesitant as it was not a history trip, but I agreed to go on the condition that I would have some class time with the group beforehand so as to put the visit in context and provide the group with some concrete historical background. I took the group for four classes in the two weeks leading up to the trip and during that time we discussed what the experience of visiting a former concentration camp might be like, and what we felt as a group some good guidelines would be in terms of dos and don'ts. One important decision we agreed upon was not to take photographs. Having visited several former camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau, I had witnessed buses pulling up full of students

who would disembark, race around the site quickly, snapping photographs on their phones. I wondered about their preparedness for such a visit and whether it was a visit a teacher had chosen to bring them on and part of a course of study or if it was mandated and simply a tick the box exercise. As a group they showed maturity in understanding the sensitivities of visiting a site like Dachau and were happy with that decision. I also explained to them that while Dachau was a Nazi concentration camp from 1933 until American troops liberated the camp in April 1945, and not a death camp, there was a crematorium area as well as gas chamber although there is no evidence thus far to say that the latter was ever used.[20] It was important to stress that if at any moment any member of the group felt upset or overwhelmed to let me know and we could take a break and that no student had to walk through the gas chamber if they did not want to. It was after our guided tour of the site was finished that I spotted *Maus* in the bookshop. I was familiar with the title but had never read it and bought myself a copy. I started reading it that night and for the following two nights of the time we were in Munich and was completely engrossed. I had never read a graphic novel before and so it was my first introduction to the genre as well as being unique in terms of the Holocaust literature I was already familiar with. I am sure the fact that I was on a school trip in Germany, doing my best to safely lead students through the experience of visiting a former concentration camp (a first for me) was part of my immersion in it. But I found it extremely impactful, and it was unlike anything I had ever read before. I knew it would appeal to a certain number of students in any given group who would want to read it because of the genre and style, but also that I could use it in my transition year Holocaust Studies class perhaps not as a text to read together (I did not have the budget

[20] A crematorium was a facility containing a furnace for reducing dead bodies to ashes by burning. The crematorium area in Dachau was constructed next to the main camp in 1942. It included the old crematorium as well as the new one, and a gas chamber. There is no credible evidence that the gas chamber there was used for mass murder however prisoners underwent 'selection' and those judged too sick or weak to continue working were sent to a 'euthanasia' killing centre near Linz, Austria.

to buy another class set of texts) but using selected extracts and images. It seemed it would be especially useful in thinking about the effects of the Holocaust still felt today, emphasising the Holocaust as a 'living history' and how the children and grandchildren of survivors have dealt with and are still dealing with the inherited trauma. I began by picking a few frames from the text and enlarging and printing them as posters to display on the classroom wall. One particular page I chose was when Vladek sketches out his and Anja's hiding place in a bunker hidden beneath a coal cellar. I chose this page for a couple of reasons. I wanted students to understand the different kinds of places that Jews looked for safety and the hiding places they occupied. That while Jews were hidden in homes and attics and farm buildings, they also hid in cellars and bunkers and sewers. That they hid in difficult and unpleasant conditions, experienced cold and hunger, always fearful of being betrayed and discovered. I also wanted to emphasise Vladek's words when he was sketching the hiding place for Artie and commented 'It's good to know exactly how was it – just in case' (Spiegelman 2003, 112). This seems to me to be a clear example of the enduring anxiety and fear that would characterise the life of a survivor and possibly their children's. Art does admit that as a child he imagined Zyklon B coming out of the shower head instead of water and had nightmares about SS men coming into his classroom to drag all the Jewish children away (Spiegelman 2003, 176). George Halasz, also the child of survivors, names it 'relational trauma' (2012, 151) and believes that the reverberations of the trauma in the psyche of the survivor may be felt across the generations. Anecdotally I have heard of survivors who keep a packed suitcase in the back of their wardrobe and that many Jewish people prefer to hold dual citizenship and have two passports illustrating that psychological need for a safety net, which would surely infiltrate their children's' lived experiences as a continuous baseline of worry and fear.

4.5 Key Pedagogical Issues Raised by the Texts

When deciding on the inclusion of these texts as curriculum and in light of the concepts of alterity, responsibility, witnessing and response, there are some key pedagogical issues to consider.

Anne's diary offers so much to us as a personal story. The immediacy of this text which allows us to journey with Anne across two years in hiding is both intimate and powerful. However, because it is a diary, one that stops suddenly when she is discovered and arrested, the true horror of what happened to her occurs off page. The diary then can be mistakenly interpreted as a redemptive narrative, one which although dealing with a traumatic experience narrates it in such a way that communicates an emotionally positive outcome, and which prevents us from truly bearing witness to the utter alterity of her experience. Langer cautions against redemptive language believing it to be a way of 'evading the Holocaust' that 'distorts the nature of the experience', and he urges readers to 'face the losses and profound suffering of victims and survivors without the sentimentality that he feels predominates' (Smith 2021). From my own reflective exploration of my relationship to the text I can recognise that I myself never properly grasped it and that quite the contrary, more akin to fictional accounts which tend to be redemptive in nature I found it comforting. Spiegelman (2011) described his own daughter's response to the diary, 'I remember my daughter getting excited about it as a coming-of-age love story and being inspired to briefly keep a diary" (44), and in her introduction to the English translation of the diary Eleanor Roosevelt framed it as a coming-of-age tale. These self-protecting barriers allow us to avoid the reality of what happened to Anne, and prevent us from moving past recognition to witnessing. The Holocaust can never be redeemed, but through the power of witnessing, of truly grasping the alterity and desolation of Anne's experience, a greater capacity to see and

respond, to intervene in mass and individual trauma, may be gained, a competency which surely must be the only appropriate response in a fragmented world.

Notable in *Night* is the author's celebration of difference. Wiesel highlights, embraces and celebrates characters, such as Moishe the Beadle, and throughout his writings rejects the tyranny of sameness. This preference for the outsider, the underdog, does not have assimilation as its goal, nor tolerance. Rather a celebration of otherness based on respect. As a memoir *Night* is a memorial to those lost, but a living one that can speak to the present moment as well as the future. In our increasingly multicultural and global society tolerance is commonly expressed as a societal good, and in curricular plans for units of work on human rights as well Holocaust units which are often explicitly linked to human rights education, an attitude of tolerance is more often than not included as an intended learning outcome. Tolerance is not however equivalent to respect. With respect comes an openness to learning from the other, the alternative being an echo chamber of sameness. Just as Wiesel celebrates difference he simultaneously highlights the risks of indifference. *Night* is in essence his reproach to the world for their abandonment of the Jewish people and his plea for us to assume responsibility. The educators' task then is not only to revisit a historical traumatic past but to project it forward in order to develop capacity to understand and uphold an ethic of respect and responsibility, ultimately to recognise what Hungarian novelist Imre Kertesz referred to as 'a general human potentiality in which we ourselves are included' (as quoted in Meier 2005, 159). In employing a framework for response students may be equipped to reflect on a historical system that prioritised military expansionism and nationalist revitalisation at any cost but also to consider their own choices and the challenges of the present moment, unpacking and challenging the assumptions of our age. Bearing witness then to the historical moment becomes an action in the present day and is simultaneously a contemporary practice as well as a practice of memory.

As a graphic novel *Maus* employs a literary device that allows us to cope with the difficult subject matter. The novel is a story within a story and as the characters are all portrayed as animals the reality of the suffering being depicted is perhaps softened a little, allowing us to maintain some distance. Indeed Spiegelman explained that he needed to 'show the events and memory of the Holocaust without showing them.' (Young 2000, 32). This distance is afforded to us through the use of striking graphics and nuanced narrative allowing us to encounter truly horrifying events whilst maintaining our composure Nonetheless *Maus* has the ability to shock and the development of secondary trauma is a concern. The suffering of Spiegelman's parents and the loss of their first son, as well as Spiegelman's own trauma as a second-generation Holocaust survivor and holder of 'postmemory', is deeply unsettling, and a dark and disturbing tale. It is important to note that Spiegelman (2003) chose to include drawings of inside the gas chambers and of the crematoria (230-231). But as previously discussed, it is in these uncomfortable spaces that engaged and authentic learning can occur. The banning of *Maus* in recent years seems to signify an inability to reside in those spaces, an unwillingness to confront the alterity of the Holocaust, and a resentment at having to put the voice of the other first. But it is in truly bearing witness to the antisemitism and violence in *Maus* and sitting with that discomfort that makes it so powerful. It is not about finding a more 'appropriate' text, it is about facing up to our responsibility to engage with the uncomfortable truth of what *Maus* has to say about humanity. In this sense then not only do we as readers unmask the characters as we move beyond the animal masks to the real human beings they represent, but our own masks start to slip as we are challenged to examine our own lived experiences, and our cherished beliefs, values and thinking patterns.

4.6 My Journey of Engaged Witnessing

Within the classroom the ethical practice of witnessing cannot be undertaken alone and student responses exist on a spectrum from determined and resolute resistance to becoming emotionally overwrought. Disbelief and denial can be a much more comforting space and it can at times be necessary to push students to a place of discomfort once it is within an emotionally safe space in which students can explore the subject. Feinberg and Totten (2016) believe that 'By adhering to sound rationales, teachers will more likely ensure that their units of study and individual lessons are as comprehensive, accurate, and engaging as possible.' (3). Students can even be engaged in the development of rationale statements. Once a rationale for teaching the history and a philosophy and perspective in doing has been firmly established, there is an authenticity to the teaching, and views and feelings can be comfortably expressed without the teacher being overwhelmed themselves, and as such they are better equipped to respond to students' needs. This was made clear to me during the third year of my doctoral journey when I took a career break from my own school to concentrate on my studies but also did some substitute work in a school quite different from my own. While the school where I usually teach has a minority of students who live locally in direct provision, most of the students come from smaller towns and villages in the surrounding area and so it very much has the feel of a country school. [21] The school that I spent time substitute teaching in, however, is a city school with a much more diverse student population. There are many different ethnicities represented and languages spoken. Within this group there is a cohort of students from Syria and more recently from Ukraine. I would have originally described it as my first experience of teaching

[21] Direct provision refers to the system of accommodation in Ireland for those seeking international protection while going through the asylum process. While it was initially conceived as a short-term solution to accommodate those seeking asylum and provide them with the basic necessities, most spend an average of three years in direct provision and sometimes more than seven years. There are many difficulties for those living within the system, long processing times, inappropriate accommodation and a lack of sufficient services.

students who have first-hand experience of war and carry that trauma with them, however I have realised that is incorrect. What I can say is that those students who live in direct provision while cared for and included in terms of school life, are not witnessed in the sense of the lives they had before coming to Ireland. Certainly we are aware of the challenges of living in direct provision, however I don't believe we ever truly bore witness to their experiences or the reasons they left their homes. And it was humbling to admit that to myself. It was also overwhelming at times, to enter into the process, and even more complex than I expected. An Irish student in one of my learning support classes asked me to explain what the war in Ukraine was about, why had Russia attacked them. Before I had a chance to reply, a Syrian student remarked, 'You know there has been a war in Syria for eleven years, not that anyone cares about that'. That was when I realized how 'othered' the Syrian students must feel, by the western world who no longer seems to care what is happening in Syria, and by their school community who in their rush to care for and help in any way possible the recently arrived students from Ukraine (a completely valid and correct response) but who are guilty of forgetting about those students who have been carrying a trauma with them for many years. One student from Syria sat in front of me and began to speak. She described leaving Aleppo with her family in frightening and dangerous conditions. Spending time in a refugee camp in Turkey and then crossing the Mediterranean and seeing people drown. It felt like bearing witness to a testimony and I think about it often. The immediacy of it, having a young person in an ordinary Irish classroom on an ordinary school-day describe such traumatic events, from their own recent past, stood in stark contrast to previous experiences of listening to elderly Holocaust survivors relate their stories from another time and place. It was extremely impactful and felt like a transformative moment for both myself and the other students present. It also raised important questions about how best to navigate these spaces. The number of displaced people

globally has increased every year for twelve years, and currently is estimated to have exceeded 120 million, and of that number, an estimated 47 million are children below eighteen years of age (UNHCR 2024). Here in Ireland we witnessed a rapid social change which had its origins in Irish membership in the EU, the economic boom of the Celtic Tiger years and the replacement of massive emigration with increasing immigration (Devine 2005), and currently 12% of the population of Ireland has a nationality other than Irish (Hannigan et al 2022). As 'historians of the traumas of their age' children articulate experiences of war and displacement previously unknown and unheard (Stonebridge 2024, 178). As my Syrian student shared her experience knowledge was created through witness and testimony. My research interest and passion within education is teaching the Holocaust, how to best teach the trauma without traumatizing the student, and how to engage young people at a time in society when antisemitism is globally on the rise. How to create opportunities for meaningful response. But my understanding and appreciation of the concept of witnessing, of bearing witness to something is constantly expanding, and as I believe and now argue for, becoming more and more important in schools as young people deal with all sorts of issues whether it be gender, sexuality, or an individual, family or community trauma that they carry. There are many burdens to be carried. This takes commitment on the part of the school and the individual teachers, a receptiveness to it. And this is why I subscribe to Bruner's belief (1977) that 'if a curriculum cannot change, move, perturb, inform teachers, it will have no effect on those whom they teach. It must be first and foremost a curriculum for teachers. If it has any effect on pupils, it will be of virtue of having had an effect on teachers.' (15).

Chapter 5

Concluding Thoughts

Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lie our freedom and our power to choose a response. In our response lies our growth and our happiness.

(Attributed to Viktor E. Frankl)[22]

5.1 Introduction

In the introduction to this study I described teaching and learning the Holocaust as 'distressing, an assault or injury to the soul.' I set about exploring the problem of Holocaust memory in a post-truth age and a near-future with no survivors or eye-witnesses left, and suggested a new approach to teaching the Holocaust, one based on the process of testimony-witnessing that treats testimony, however it is transmitted, as if it has a living heartbeat. Specifically, I argued for engaged witnessing as an alternative to empathetic understanding as it invites inquiry into assumptions and values, challenges thinking patterns and call us into action. Central to the notion of engaged witnessing is the response of the students and the cultivation of a sense of responsibility within them. As a complex endeavour with ethical concerns for both teacher and student this requires a specialised knowledge and pedagogy. I posed three questions to frame the study:

[22] While this quote is commonly attributed to Holocaust survivor and author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor E. Frankl, its actual origin is unknown. An acquaintance of Frankl's, Stephen R. Covey, who wrote *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, explained that while on a writing sabbatical in Hawaii and wandering through the library stacks of a university, he randomly picked up a book and read the three lines quoted above. These lines had an immense impact on him, and seemed to him to be a confirmation and summation of Frankl's teachings. He failed however to note the name of the author and despite returning on a second trip and attempting to find the source was never able to do so. The quote has therefore never been properly attributed to the rightful author and it is generally attributed to Frankl. Covey's explanation can be found in the foreword to *Prisoners of Our Thoughts: Frankl's Principles for Discovering Meaning in Life* by Alex Pattakos.

1. How do we teach the Holocaust in ways that respond to youth in the twenty-first century?
2. How do we do so ethically and in ways that allow for different forms of engagement?
3. What might engaged witnessing look like in response to different pieces of curriculum, specifically testimonial literature?

In response to these questions, three pieces of testimonial literature were selected that are commonly used in school and college settings, have been impactful in terms of public awareness of the Holocaust, and that I have previously read and used as curriculum myself. The three texts I chose based on this criteria were Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*, a diary written from within the event, Elie Wiesel's *Night*, a memoir written ten years after liberation, and *Maus* by Art Spiegelman, a graphic novel which not only recounts the experiences of the author's parents during the Holocaust as Polish Jews but also his personal experience as a second generation Holocaust survivor introducing us to the concept of postmemory. Each of these texts possess a powerful testimony and together as a central part of the canon of Holocaust literature are breath-taking in scope, covering a time period from the 1930's to the 1990's, crossing many borders and boundaries. While the Holocaust is a remarkably distant history for youth today, these texts in their urgency and immediacy have the power to bring us directly into the heart of the human story of the Holocaust. Almost eighty years have now passed since the event but the stories carry the memory through to each new generation creating a community of memory and witness. Baum (1996) explains 'while historical knowledge is essential to any understanding of the Holocaust, Holocaust literature teaches us, in part, how to feel about the historical facts.' (44-45). It is timely in my view to carry out this study considering the wider context of diminishing numbers of survivors who can bear witness to the horrors of the Holocaust alongside the current climate of antisemitism. It is timely, moreover to consider the Irish context in light of

our full membership of the IHRA and commitment to the implementation of policies and programmes in support of Holocaust education, remembrance, and research. In carrying out this research and employing the method of currere I was empowered to not only carry out a textual interpretation of the texts and explore what limitations and possibilities they offer as curriculum but also to reflect on my own relation to them and my own witnessing journey, and in doing so enter in to a deeper and more reflexive autobiographical process. More than a research method currere now signifies to me teaching as responsibility and curriculum as a claim on my capacity to see the other; to not only assume but to enact an ethic of responsibility and response.

5.2 Engaged Witnessing

To engage with and bear witness to the Holocaust is to confront complex issues of responsibility within the context of the Nazi occupation of Europe, the culpability of the 'free world' in what ultimately happened to the Jews of Europe, the responsibility of the international community to provide a safe haven for refugees, and the role of the individual to ensure a safe and free society. Holocaust literature such as Anne's diary, *Night* and *Maus*, signifies an invitation to responsibility for the victims and requests that we rebuild and restore community. It is more than a request, it is a demand for justice. It is not justice that we can fully deliver however. Some things are past changing. We cannot alter the fact that more than six millions Jews were murdered. We must look to the future, as well as the present, reaffirming that while the Holocaust is a historical atrocity from the past it also concerns the future and as such is a living history. One of the possibilities in teaching the Holocaust, opportunities even, is to facilitate honest reflection about our choices, points of view, attitudes, actions and inaction, and to consider how impressionable we are, whether or not we are susceptible to propaganda, or possess critical thinking skills. It is no longer possible to expect only German youth to grapple with questions of whether or not they would have been immune to Nazi

ideology and propaganda. These are questions that concern all of us. Therefore in teaching for engaged witnessing through testimonial reading we may move past empathy, invite inquiry into assumptions and values, challenge thinking patterns and issue a call to action. Regnery (1996) tell us that 'Education without courage is useless' (24) and that 'The course of human history is determined by what people believe, by the values they hold, and most of all by whether or not they will act upon them' (26). We can understand this call to action then as an opportunity for students to examine their own lives through the lens of the Holocaust and question what they would do in a moment of moral and ethical crisis, and their roles as active citizens in society. The phrase 'never again' has long been linked to Holocaust remembrance and education and is attributed to newly liberated survivors of the camps. It is generally understood to encompass the sentiments of the Jewish community at large and their determination to prevent their victimisation ever again. Renowned Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer however identifies the main lesson of the Holocaust as 'Never, but never, be a bystander' (1998). This is a powerful starting point for self-reflective classroom discussions about choice and agency in life. We can shift our understanding of the testimony-witnessing process to a testimonial reading practice and Boler (1999) tells us that in this practice the reader must 'attend to herself as much as to the other' (168). We can understand testimony as 'trauma's genre' (Boler 1999, 167) and therefore to truly engage with it will bring about a loss of innocence and demand much of our youth. Felman (1992) describes the age of testimony as 'an age whose writing task (and reading task) is to confront the horror of its own destructiveness' (114) but believes that literary testimony has the power to 'speak beyond its word.' (278). Passive empathy reduces testimony into something more easily consumed; however to address the gap that exists between empathy and action, and invoke a response that is empathetic but can motivate action engaged witnessing is necessary. Teaching the Holocaust continues

to evolve and the changing context we are now confronted with means we can no longer rely on the moral, political and educational will of survivors to push us beyond passive empathy and into engaged witnessing. Those survivors, who have shaped Holocaust education, will soon be gone. While a wealth of literature and film exists, much of it fictional or 'loosely' based on real events, I believe that authentic testimonies by those who experienced the events themselves and their descendants offer a deeper entry into the how and why. Wineburg (2001) claims that the study of history has the power to 'humanise' us (5) and that 'Historical thinking…..is essential in teaching people how to understand others different from themselves' (110). Our natural assumption of the sameness of others in behaviour and belief is disrupted by the study of history. This is why historical thinking is 'unnatural' in that it disrupts the status quo, and also why it is so important. The study of history can be understood then as more than the transmission of facts; it is relationship to moral and intellectual growth. This speaks to the potential of Holocaust education to contribute to a more just society, to be more cognisant of difference and eliminate distance. Holocaust curriculums such as *The Diary of a Young Girl*, *Night* and *Maus* therefore demand much of us. As teachers we are burdened not only by the need to translate a massive historical process involving millions across many nations into a suite of neatly packaged lessons, but also to imbue those lessons with meaning, to transform attitudes, and to affect future behaviour. And therein lies the tension between teaching the facts of history and living with the claim it makes of us. Engaged witnessing however answers that claim. It empowers us to embrace a pre-ontological responsibility for our fellow human beings and move beyond the safety of passive empathy with courage and resilience so that we may challenge injustice and respond with action, to respect and defend the dignity of all. Engaged witnessing in action then would provide an entry way into difficult conversations and would be characterised by a personal commitment to speak out when confronted with instances of

injustice, prejudice or discrimination, to better recognise warning signs of future atrocities, and broadly to examine the world in which we live with greater insight.

5.3 Engaged Witnessing as a Pedagogical Approach

Engaged witnessing as a pedagogical approach must become more than just a cross-curricular approach in a classroom but also form part of an ethos and spirit within the school itself. In order to achieve this certain practical tasks must be undertaken: the creation of resources to be shared and lessons planned for all year groups; team-teaching and co-planning of units of work; class sets of certain texts purchased for the school library; workshops for staff; the use of assemblies and tutor time - all in order to make the Holocaust something more than a topic that is 'adequately' covered in the history classroom. But more than that as a school a commitment must be made to embrace the classroom and the school itself as a potentially transformative space where students and teachers may become critical witnesses to past and present trauma, learning from the past, educating in the present, and changing the future. Having spent seven years teaching a Holocaust Studies module at second level which I created with Holocaust Education Trust Ireland – a process that involved developing the materials, piloting them, recruiting other teachers to pilot them, re-evaluating and editing them and finally settling into a routine of teaching them to the point of knowing them by rote, I now feel ready to start all over again. Through the review of the literature, the formulation of the theory of engaged witnessing, and the exploration of three canonical pieces of Holocaust literature I have developed my own practice of testimonial reading and a framework for response that gives me the confidence to embrace a new relationship with my students. To engage with them collaboratively in the construction of meaning and a collective classroom-based witnessing. To empower them to become engaged witnesses to the testimonial voice, and to respond to the call of history through a reading practice that is meaningful and authentic. With this study I have argued for

building the teaching of this difficult history around the process of testimony-witnessing using testimonial literature. Narrative has the potential to translate a massive historical process such as the Holocaust into a series of events directly affecting the life of an individual. When used wisely it adds a profoundly meaningful dimension to the study and can challenge students to 'examine their own lived lives and the world.' (Totten 2001, 32). Through a testimonial reading of the selected texts students can access memory and in doing so eliminate indifference, celebrate difference, and assume responsibility. In this way Langer (1991) explains the aim of history as being inclusion; 'it assembles the important data of experience, and it makes them accessible to an audience' (108). Students can move beyond passive empathy to a deeper engagement which constitutes an ethical response and an attendance to the voice of the other. This is not without challenges, as identified in the review of the literature, and one of the challenges in creating a space for collective witnessing in the classroom lies in the impossibility of ever truly grasping the trauma while nonetheless allowing emotions such as anger and fear to arise in the process and to engage with the process of critical inquiry regarding beliefs and values even though it may bring some discomfort. Another is to confront the paradox of the Holocaust as something that is both unspeakable but something that must be spoken about, and the risks of over-identification with the victim and the occurrence of secondary trauma. Therefore I have considered the implications of the curriculums we choose in teaching this difficult history and focusing specifically on literature offer this intervention: my thoughts on what teachers need to consider when choosing a text, orientations to look for, and questions to ask themselves when making curricular choices. (This is also included as a template for teachers in the appendices.) It is through story that we access humanity in the darkest of times and our capacity to understand ourselves and each other in narrative terms is deeply embedded in who we are and how we interact with one another and the world around us. While I

do not believe that any one story can ever tell the 'whole' story, my reading of these three popular texts has led me to believe that having an ethical framework to inform the selection of literature to teach this difficult history is vital and with proper historical context and preparation it can allow for different forms of response and ultimately engaged witnessing.

5.4 Testimonial Reading - Selecting Literature for Teaching the Holocaust

I conclude this study with my thoughts on key concerns surrounding the use of literature in teaching the Holocaust and to provide guidance for teachers in making responsible and responsive curricular and pedagogical choices. This intervention is informed by my review of the literature and guided by the concepts of alterity, responsibility, witnessing and response, the theoretical underpinnings of my contribution to teaching the Holocaust.

1.When selecting a piece of Holocaust literature, we must consider the author - is the author an authoritative source, a survivor or eye-witness, or perhaps the child or grandchild of a survivor? And if not, is the author a reputable historical researcher/writer? For many years the testimonial memoir was the dominant form of Holocaust writing with an emphasis on providing evidence. On the part of the survivors this connected to Zachor, the command to remember, an obligation that goes beyond remembrance and is connected to meaning and action, and the fact that they not only spoke for themselves but for those that did not survive. It was also in response to the indifference of the world, and had a 'moral connection to the writing of history' (Lang 2000, 20). Levi described it as thus, 'The need to tell our story to 'the rest', to make 'the rest' participate in it, had taken on for us, before our liberation and after, the character of an immediate and violent impulse, to the point of competing with our other elementary needs.' (1987, 15). Elie Wiesel was fiercely critical of fictional

representations of the Holocaust and believed that imaginative representations were insulting to the victims (Franklin 2011). He stated, 'A novel about Treblinka is either not a novel or not about Treblinka.' Franklin (2011) explicitly links the dominance of the testimonial memoir with the manner in which Holocaust literature has been read and interpreted since Adorno (1949) famously stated 'To write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric.' This dictum has repeatedly been taken out of context in the years since and reinterpreted as a warning against artistic, imaginative representations of the Holocaust as opposed to its original meaning that the aesthetics of post-Holocaust art are barbaric in character; artistic representations require form and pattern, but the Holocaust signifies chaos (Franklin 2011). If art is symbolic of the cultural values of the society in which it is produced, how then do we reconcile art that reproduces the values of the society that brought about the Holocaust. However, by the mid 1990's, *Maus* had been awarded the Pulitzer Prize, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum had opened in a prominent position on the national mall, and Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's' List* had been released. Public awareness of the Holocaust had reached an all-time high as had the hunger for literature on the topic, and as the Holocaust increasingly entered public consciousness fictional writing became mainstream.[23] While Franklin (2011) believes there is nothing wrong with an account that is more accessible to readers, it is important to be wary of redemptive narratives that attempt to deliver a simple moral, or ease the burden of responsibility. Therefore it is necessary to reflect on the positionality of the writer and the accuracy of what they are writing.

[23] The issue of the provenance of authors of Holocaust literature came to light in 1995 with the publication of *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood, 1939-48* by purported Holocaust survivor Binjamin Wilkomirski. The response to the text was exceptionally enthusiastic and historians and literary critics were reverential in their reviews. He recounted his birth in Latvia, the murder of his family in Riga, and his survival as a Jewish child in the Nazi camps of Majdanek and Auschwitz. Within a couple of years however it was determined he was a fraud. He was neither Latvian nor Jewish, and his name was in fact Bruno Doessekker.

2.What is the genre of the text? Is it a diary written from within the event, a memoir written after a period of reflection, an essay, a short story, a poem or a fictional account? And if fictional, is it grounded in historical research and context? Holocaust literature covers a range of genres, and more and more literature is used a principal resource in teaching the Holocaust as opposed to a stimulus to gain student interest or to accompany other historical resources (Cowan and Maitles 2017). When selecting a piece of literature Totten (2001) advises that 'the work should be historically accurate, and not convey misconceptions about the history of the people involved.' (29). In addition those 'literary pieces that romanticize the history the Holocaust should be avoided' and 'literary works should present 'true-to-life' characters, as opposed to caricatures or stereotypes' (31). I firmly believe a that well-written, properly researched fictional account is preferrable to a lack of representation or silence in the face of the Holocaust. Fiction has the power to impact our students both cognitively as well as affectively, and it is possible to garner important emotional and ethical truths from fictional writing. For many however the memoir will remain the ultimate form of literary representation. Clearly the relationship between literature and the Holocaust is a complicated one. Totten believes that 'Good literature can bring *any* history alive (1995, 329). To ensure that the piece of fiction we choose qualifies as 'Good literature' then we must ensure historical accuracy, the inclusion of choiceless choices and a focus on the Jewish experience. However, considering the wealth of authentic testimonies that exist and the historical moment in which we are living with the cycle of active memory soon to close, it seems more important than ever to highlight the survivors voices and through a practice of testimonial reading bear witness to their testimony.

3. Is the text appropriate for your particular class? Think about this in terms of descriptions of violence and death, and whether or not a text has been written simply to shock or play on student's emotions. Therefore it is necessary not only to gauge the

readability of the text (Totten 2001) but also to avoid works that set out to shock or overwhelm with feelings of fear or revulsion. Klett and Tambuscio (2016) tell us that to do so is unconscionable but also counterproductive, and Lindquist (2006) believes it could either desensitise students or cause trauma. As teachers we must consider what our students can handle when making use of what Langer (1975) named a 'literature of atrocity'. Perhaps then the most challenging aspect of teaching the Holocaust, it is a paradox; teach the trauma without traumatising the student. When selecting texts, as well as images or other resources, we must not exploit student vulnerability to maximise impact and while we can allow fear and anger to arise, employing Bolers' 'pedagogy of discomfort' (1999), we must differentiate between discomfort and distress. Gubkin (2015) describes this tension as the 'desire to spare students emotional pain and the conflicting desire to help students understand the experience of another when pain is a critical element of the other's experience.' (103-104), and Simon, Rosenberg and Eppert (2000) as 'a responsibility that concurrently involves learning to live with, and in relation to, loss.' (3).

4. Is the text focused on the Jewish experience? One of the issues regarding John Boyne's controversial novel, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, is the fact that the tragedy and emotion evoked in response to it centres on the little German boy, Bruno, who is mistakenly murdered in the camp. Culbertson (2016) questions how the author felt it was appropriate to create a scenario in which the imprisonment and death of the little Jewish boy, Shmuel, was inevitable and somehow acceptable while Bruno's death is the shocking and heart-breaking climax to the story. The boy whose father is overseeing mass murder is mourned, perpetrator becomes victim, and Shmuel simply functions as a literary device to get Bruno under the fence and into the camp. Culbertson (2016) describes this story as 'harmful in its attempt to turn our attention and sympathy away from where it should rightly be.', and 'the opposite of what we hope for as a result of

our teaching about the Holocaust.' (136). When teaching the Holocaust we must clearly define terms, and we can define the Holocaust as the attempt by Nazi German and their collaborators to annihilate the Jews of Europe. We cannot proceed with teaching the Holocaust without students having a clear understanding of who the victims and perpetrators were.

5. Is the Holocaust represented as a human event, involving human beings rather than mere numbers? Because of the sheer scale of the crime a lack of engagement on the part of students may be evident. The pedagogical approach then of personalisation can counter the anonymity and dehumanisation of the victims, and through developing a sense of identification with the particular a deeper engagement with the human story can be achieved. Therefore we must demonstrate that it is individual people; children, parents, and grandparents, behind the statistics, while also emphasising the diversity of experiences within the larger historical narrative. And this is why literature is such a powerful teaching tool allowing us to access individuals caught in a massive historical experience. Of course this will not make the subject matter more easily digestible, in fact quite the opposite. The fact that not only the innocent victims were ordinary thinking, feeling human beings but the perpetrators too, makes this history even more painful and more difficult to comprehend.

6. Is the text historically accurate or inaccurate? Once again we can refer to *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. Cesarani (2008) accuses the author John Boyne of a lack of knowledge of the Holocaust and Auschwitz-Birkenau, and of distorting history. Gray (2014) goes so far as to label the story a 'curse' to Holocaust education as it generates problematic misconceptions, is historically inaccurate, and has a skewed moral message (133). Among the historical inaccuracies found in the text is Bruno's ability to befriend a prisoner the same age as him, a nine-year-old boy. Jewish children of that age were

usually murdered on arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau as they would not have been capable of carrying out forced labour, and along with elderly people, children had the lowest rate of survival in concentration and death camps. Another inaccuracy is the notion that Bruno would have been able to sneak into the camp. Auschwitz-Birkenau had electric fences which were guarded, and by enabling Bruno to enter the camp the author diminishes the severity of conditions there. Another harmful message this text offers to readers is that commandants of camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau were respectable and hard-working individuals, family men, who simply had a job to do. The actual commandant of Auschwitz-Birkenau, a man named Rudolf Hoess, had already been convicted of murder in 1924, voluntarily joined the SS in 1933, trained at Dachau concentration camp, spent time at Sachsenhausen concentration camp where he was responsible for discipline and executions, and assumed control of Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1940 (Cowan and Maitles 2017). Hoess was by no means a model citizen. In response to the criticism levelled at his novel, the author emphasised that it is described as a fable on its title page and perhaps we should recognise this. However a fable by definition is a short story that contains a moral message, and clearly the moral message in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* is entirely problematic, and must be judged accordingly. Gray (2014) believes there to be no justification for its inclusion in curriculum.

7. Is there evidence of the concept of ‘choiceless choices’ in the text? What choices are available, and what are the consequences of those choices? Langer (1980) introduced the idea of choiceless choices into Holocaust discourse in a discussion on dilemmas in the death camps and argued that behaviour in the camps could not be judged in the way we judge normal human behaviour today as the choices necessary to make moral and ethical decisions were simply not available in the camps, and survival in such places constituted an existence with no relation to our system of time and space, the result

being ‘choiceless choices’. Langer (1980) further explained the victims of the Nazis ‘were plunged into a crisis…where critical decisions did not reflect options between life and death, but between one form of ‘abnormal’ response and another, both imposed by a situation that was in no way of the victim’s own choosing.’ (224). Therefore while students may be shocked to learn about the role of Sonderkomandos for example, it is important to teach for empathy not judgement as well as a deeper contextualised historical understanding and witnessing of the dehumanisation of the victims.[24] It is through an examination of choiceless choices that students may begin to comprehend the impossible situations faced by the victims and the dilemmas they were confronted with daily. In his memoir *If This is a Man* Primo Levi leaves the reader with this question, ‘How much of our ordinary moral world could survive on this side of the barbed wire?’ (1987, 92). Totten and Feinberg (2016) suggest each time students come across such a situation in their readings they record it and comment on it in reflective journals.

8. Is there evidence of the global nature of the Holocaust and its scale and scope in the story? The Holocaust was the state-sponsored continental wide genocide of European Jews carried out by Nazi Germany and their collaborators. In this sense we can say it was a geographical event evident in the very particular language that characterises Holocaust discourse; concentration, transport, deportation, relocation, and of course the Nazi concept of *lebensraum* or ‘living space’ which denoted expansion and nationalism and drove its military and racial policies. The train perhaps more than any other image has come to symbolise the Holocaust, representing the Nazi transports which brought

[24] Sonderkommandos were groups of Jewish prisoners who were kept alive for labour in the camps and forced to perform duties in the gas chambers and crematoria. These duties involved instructing newly arrived prisoners (who were unaware of their fate) to undress before entering the gas chambers and entering the gas chambers after the murder had been carried out to remove the bodies, burning the bodies, and disposing of the ashes. They were usually killed after a few months and replaced by new arrivals. Forbidden from warning prisoners of their fate and forced to participate in mass murder this work was not just physically exhausting but psychologically devastating too.

Jews from all over Europe to their deaths. But it was also a global event. Obviously it occurred in the context of a world war, but Nazi antisemitic ideology extended to all Jews, everywhere, and as the enemies of Germany they would have to be destroyed wherever they were. For instance, Einsatzgruppen had been established to murder the Jews in Palestine and were standing by in Athens ready to follow General Rommel's corps to kill the half a million Jews that had fled Europe. [25] Had the Germans and Italians not been driven out of North Africa they would have done so. The Holocaust was also a global event in terms of the many places Jews sought refuge. Thirty thousand Jews found refuge in Shanghai in China for example, as it was one of the few places that had an open policy towards immigrants, and became an important site of survival (Bergin 2016). Therefore while continuing to focus on the Jewish experience we also need to understand the Holocaust as world history, specific yet universal.

9. Is there a framework for response? Will students be asked to participate in group discussions, to journal their thoughts and feelings, to respond creatively through art or music, to work on projects individually or in a group, to geographically map the event or create a chronological timeline? Could they as witnesses prepare presentations for another class group or prepare displays for a public space within the school? In utilising reader response theory to fully engage students in an active reading process can they set personal goals to achieve through reading the text and establish their own personal intended learning outcomes? As reader response theory centres on the significant role of the reader in the construction of meaning, it is highly appropriate within this proposed theoretical framework. One of the four main concepts guiding the study is response, the idea that students will have an engaged response to the text that moves them beyond

[25] Einsatzgruppen were mobile killing units, death squads essentially, that were created by Reinhard Heydrich in 1939 to liquidate Polish intelligentsia and prevent a coordinated response to the Nazi invasion of Poland. They followed the Nazi army into the Soviet Union in 1941 and carried out the Holocaust by Bullets, the mass murder of Jews by shooting.

empathy to a more reflexive and personal space. And to provide a forum and a framework in which students can not only learn the historical facts but also personally react from their own unique perspective engaging in meaningful dialogue with their teacher and classmates. This could include sharing stories that come to mind as they read the text, forming small discussion groups, consulting with one another to plan response activities thereby taking responsibility for their learning as well as their response, and writing book reviews on completion. As previously discussed in the literature review, one of Baer's criteria by which to measure the usefulness of literature dealing with the Holocaust is that it offers to students a framework for response which she defines as 'a sense of personal responsibility regarding prejudice, hatred, and racial discrimination.' (2000, 385).

10. When selecting a piece of literature to teach the Holocaust it is necessary to be mindful of the lived experiences of students, especially any who may have experienced war, oppression and/or marginalisation as a result of their religion, ethnicity or any other aspects of their identity. Therefore consider what supports you can put in place and how you will prepare your class to undertake this work so that collectively you can navigate it with sensitivity and awareness. This could involve modelling as well as agreeing collectively on appropriate language in order to avoid creating or perpetuating any harmful stereotypes or prejudices, and thinking carefully about images or footage used as supporting materials which may be distressing to those students who have direct experience of conflict and/or displacement. It may also be necessary to have check in conversations with particular students as well as emotional trigger warnings.

5.5 Conclusion

These questions and concerns are based on my review of the literature on Holocaust education as well as my own journey navigating between the historical fact of the event

and the claim it has made on me, a personal journey as well as a professional one, culminating in my theory of engaged witnessing. As a template it will serve as a criteria or checklist to allow teachers to respond to the literature they are considering as curriculum and ensure their selections are appropriate and based on sound educational philosophy and crucially an ethic of response. In carefully choosing a piece of testimonial literature for inclusion in curriculum, we can avoid damaging errors in historical context, clearly see the impact of the event on the lives of individuals and communities, rehumanise the victims, make something unknowable, inconceivable and unbelievable more tangible, empower students to bear witness to something that will affect them deeply and inspire them to assume responsibility to carry the torch of memory, and teach to youth a historical truth as well as a present competency to respond when witnessing injustice. This active reading practice and present competency to respond is itself the response to the 'call to action' that is absent when teaching for empathy alone. In arguing for engaged witnessing as a way of rethinking teaching the Holocaust from an ethical point of view, I am suggesting that it is based on the process of testimony-witnessing. I now recognise witnessing as an educational endeavour, one that relies on the process of address and response, assumes responsibility, moves beyond empathy to the creation of opportunities for response, and signifies collaboration between teacher and student within a community of memory and witnessing. I have gained an understanding of curriculum not as policy to enact but as practice, one that can be lived out in the classroom. Currere has enabled me to bring together my past educational experiences with my passion for teaching this difficult history and the claim it makes on me, and connect it to the present moment. It is more than a research method but a new interpretation of curriculum as a claim on my capacity to see the other and to recognise teaching as responsibility and response, and an on-

going project of self-understanding that I can mobilise for engaged pedagogical practice.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Timeline of Witnessing

The Holocaust has been characterised as 'epochal', that is an experience that happened at a certain point in time having a monumental impact on both history and the individuals who lived through it (Engelman, Day and Durant 1993). The immediate aftermath of the war was not characterised by a nuanced understanding of the specific targeted and systematic annihilation of European Jewry. And in the immediate aftermath the survivor and witness did not find a role in public life. The nature of witnessing in all its complexities has occurred within different contexts and in different forms, physical and metaphorical, throughout the years since the war. The summary timeline of witnessing which I present here although chronological is not linear but shifting, open, and foreclosing at times, always impacted by the degree to which society was and is receptive to it.

1945

- In 1944 Primo Levi, an Italian chemist, is arrested as part of the Italian resistance movement and upon confessing to being Jewish, he is sent firstly to an internment camp near Modena and then to Auschwitz. He survives there for eleven months. Following this he spends time in a Soviet camp for former concentration camp inmates in Poland and is asked by Soviet authorities to document living conditions in Auschwitz. He does so along with Italian doctor Leonardo de Benedetti. Known as *The Auschwitz Report*, it details the deportation to Auschwitz, selections for work and the gas chambers, everyday life in the camp, and sanitary and medical arrangements there. It is an unemotional report delivered in a straightforward style with no literary devices or flourishes, the facts speak for themselves.

1945-1947

- The Dachau Trials, also known as the Dachau Military Tribunal, takes place on the grounds of the former concentration camp. It handles the prosecution of

almost every war criminal captured in the U.S military zones in Allied-occupied Germany and Austria, as well as prosecutions of military personnel and civilians who committed crimes against the American military and American citizens.

- The Auschwitz Trial tries forty former staff of the Auschwitz camp.
- Survivors erect the first memorial stones and monuments in the grounds of the former Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

1945-1949

- The Nuremberg Trials, a series of trials held by the Allied powers, the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, takes place in the German city of Nuremberg against representatives of the defeated Nazi regime for crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

1946

- The first part of the *Oneg Shabbat Archive*, a collection of documents about the fate of Polish Jews in the Holocaust, is recovered from the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto in clay covered tin boxes. The archive was created by historian Emmanuel Ringelblum to document life in the ghetto and ensure that a record of Jewish life and persecution was left behind.
- *The Auschwitz Report* is published in Italy.

1947

- *The Diary of Anne Frank* is first published in the Netherlands as *Het Achterhuis (The Secret Annex)* which was Anne's proposed title.
- Primo Levi publishes his memoir *Se Questo e un Uomo* (*If This Is a Man*). It is a record of his eleven-month incarceration in Auschwitz.
- The Jewish Historical Institute is established in Warsaw to collect accounts of Holocaust survivors and to make such documents useful in prosecuting war criminals.
- In Paris the CDJC, the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, which was founded in 1943 as a clandestine organisation to document the Holocaust, begins to release German documents outlining the fate of French Jews. Their goal is to conduct research, purse war criminals, seek restitution for victims, and become an official repository and archive of Holocaust and Nuremberg trial documents.
- The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum is created by an act of the Polish Parliament and includes the grounds of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration camps. Within these grounds several hundred camp buildings still stand as well as the ruins of the gas chambers and crematoria, more than a dozen kilometres of camp fence, camp roads, and the railroad ramp that was used for selections at Birkenau.

1950

- French and German editions of *The Secret Annex* follow the Dutch publication.
- The second part of the *Oneg Shabbat Archive* is discovered in milk cans buried underground in the former ghetto and is preserved in the Jewish Historical institute in Warsaw. The third and final part of the archive has not yet been found.

1951

- Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, is designated by the Israeli Parliament as a day dedicated to memorial and remembrance, and sober reflection in recognition of the millions of lives lost.

1952

- *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* is first published in English. Two English versions are published, one for Great Britain and the other for the US.
- The Bergen-Belsen Memorial is officially inaugurated with the dedication of an obelisk and inscription wall.

1953

- Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyr's and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, the memorial to the Jews is established in Jerusalem by an act of the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament. It is entrusted with the task of commemorating, documenting, researching and educating about the Holocaust. Hundreds of millions of pages of documentation are now stored in the archives there, and they continue in their efforts to collect the names and stories of every Holocaust victim.

1955

- A dramatic version of Anne Frank's diary is produced in the United States premiering on Broadway. It wins the Tony Award for best play and the Pulitzer Prize for drama.

1956

- After ten years of self-imposed silence regarding his Holocaust experience Elie Wiesel's 900-page memoir *And the World Remained Silent* is published in Buenos Aires in its original Yiddish – *Und di Velt Hot Geshvign*.

1958

- The 120-page French edition of *And the World Remained Silent* is released under the title *La Nuit*.

- Primo Levi's memoir, If *This Is a Man,* is translated into English. It has the title *Survival in Auschwitz* in the United States.

1959

- The film version of Anne Frank's diary is released, based on the Pulitzer-Prize winning play. Although met with mixed reviews it is nominated for eight Academy Awards and wins three.
- An English translation of Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* is published.
- The Ravensbruck Memorial Museum is inaugurated as one of the three major concentration camp memorials of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), along with Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. Ravensbruck was the largest women's concentration camp in the German Reich.

1960

- The Anne Frank House opens to the public. In the mid-1950's the building was threatened with demolition but as Anne's story reached more and more people resistance to those plans grew and the Anne Frank House Foundation was established.
- Elie Wiesel's *La Nuit* is first published in English as *Night*.

1961

- An English and German translation of Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* is published.

1961-62

- The Trial of Adolf Eichmann takes place in Jerusalem. Eichmann is indicted on fifteen counts, including crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and membership in a hostile organisation. The first trial in history to be recorded and broadcast around the world it brings Nazi atrocities to the attention of the global media and puts survivors and witnesses at centre stage to set out the full and complex story of the Holocaust. Eichmann is found guilty on all counts and hanged.

1963-1965

- The Belzec Trial tries eight former SS members of the Belzec camp.

1964

- The Museum of Struggle and Martyrdom is established in Treblinka, the former Nazi death camp, where 900,000 Jews were murdered.

1965

- The Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site, including a new documentary exhibition, is opened.
- Charlotte Delbo's memoir of her life and the post war trauma of survivors, *Auschwitz and After*, is published. Sent to the camp for her resistance activities against the Nazi occupation of France and the Vichy government, Delbo was deported on a convoy which was one of only a few of non-Jewish prisoners from France to Auschwitz as most were sent to other camps for political prisoners.

1974- 1985

- Claude Lanzmann's French documentary film *Shoah* is filmed over the course of eleven years. Over nine hours in length it recounts the story of the Holocaust through interviews with witnesses; survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders. Conducting his own interviews, Lanzmann refused to use a single frame of archival footage.

1976

- The first official monument is installed at the site of the Babi Yar ravine in Ukraine. More than 33,000 Jews were murdered there in 1941 over a period of 36 hours. The Germans continued to use the site as a killing ground for the next two years murdering another 70,000 people including Romani people, prisoners of war and other civilians. The monument is called 'The Monument to Soviet Citizens and POWS shot by the Nazi Occupiers' but remains silent about the relevance of the site to Ukrainian Jews.

1978

- The American television network NBC produces a series, *Holocaust*, starring a young Meryl Streep and James Woods. The television show catapults the Holocaust into public consciousness and conversation in the United States. It then airs in Germany bringing the subject to widespread attention there in a way it never had before.
- President Jimmy Carter establishes the President's Commission on the Holocaust and appoints Elie Wiesel as chairman.

1979

- Pope John Paul II visits Auschwitz-Birkenau and prays for peace from an altar erected over the train tracks that lead into the camp.
- Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum becomes a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- The Holocaust Survivors Film Project begins videotaping Holocaust survivors and witnesses in New Haven, Connecticut. The project began due to a meeting between Laurel Fox Vlock, a television journalist, and Dr. Dori Laub, a child

survivor and psychiatrist, which resulted in a taping session. The collection of testimonies will be donated to Yale University.

1980

- Elie Wiesel becomes the founding chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council which will be instrumental in the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.
- *Maus*, by Art Spiegelman, is serialised in an avant-garde comic magazine, *Raw*, published by Spiegelman and his wife Francoise Mouly. It depicts Spiegelman interviewing his father about his experiences as a Polish Jew and Holocaust survivor.

1985

- Holocaust denial is outlawed in Germany with a penalty of up to one year in prison or a fine.
- The Irish Jewish Museum opens in Dublin. It is housed in a former synagogue and preserves and displays a collection of memorabilia relating to the Irish Jewish communities throughout the country and their associations and contributions to Ireland.

1986

- Elie Wiesel is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and described by the Nobel committee as 'a messenger to mankind' who teaches 'peace, atonement and human dignity.'
- A collected volume of *Maus*, *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History* is published and attracts mainstream attention.
- John Demjanjuk, a Ukrainian immigrant in the United States, is extradited to Israel to face trial for being Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka, a notorious war criminal who worked at the Treblinka death camp. Found guilty, the verdict was later overturned after evidence was uncovered showing that he was not at Treblinka, but was in fact at Sobibor, Majdanek, and Flossenburg.

1987

- Elie Wiesel testifies at the trial of Klaus Barbie, a former SS officer nicknamed the 'butcher of Lyon' who was charged with crimes against humanity including the arrest and deportation of 44 Jewish children rounded up at a foster home, none of whom survived, as well as the arrest, torture and deportation of adult Jews and members of the French resistance. Wiesel never met Barbie or his victims but is called to testify as an expert on the Holocaust.

1990

- French law, while not explicitly criminalising Holocaust denial, makes it an offence to question the existence of 'crimes against humanity' as defined in the Nuremberg Charter to repress any racist, anti-Semitic, or xenophobic acts.

1991

- A second volume of *Maus, Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began* is published. This is one of the first books in graphic novel format to receive significant academic attention. It becomes a New York Times bestseller.
- Having declared independence in Ukraine, a menorah-shaped monument is erected at Babi Yar marking the 50th anniversary of the massacre and the first public acknowledgement of the Jews who were murdered there.

1992

- Art Spiegelman wins the Pulitzer Prize for *Maus*, the first and only graphic novel to win one, as well as a solo exhibit at New York City's Museum of Modern Art.

1993

- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opens to the public occupying a prominent place on the National Mall as America's national institution for the documentation and study of the Holocaust as well as a memorial to the millions murdered.
- Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* is released. Telling the story of Oskar Schindler, a German capitalist and Nazi party member who ultimately saved approximately 1200 Jews during the war, it is shocking in its graphic representation of the lives and deaths of Jews during the Holocaust.
- The International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem in Israel is established to train educators to teach the Holocaust and to develop pedagogical guidelines and resources to be used by teachers.

1994

- Steven Spielberg uses the profits from *Schindler's List* to establish the USC Shoah Foundation to create audio-visual interviews with survivors and witnesses for educational purposes. Currently the collection is made up of more than 55,000 video testimonies conducted in sixty-five countries and forty-three languages.
- Holocaust denial becomes a criminal offense in Germany with the amended law stating that incitement, denial, approval of Nazism, and trivialisation or approval in public or in an assembly of actions of the Nazi regime is a criminal offense with an increased penalty of up to five years in prison. The law provides for

community service for offenders under the age of eighteen, bans Nazi symbols and slogans, and bans the sale of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

1995

- The Fukuyama Holocaust Education Centre opens in Japan about 60 miles from the site of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima. Its museum features a replica of the infamous Arbeit Macht Frei sign at Auschwitz as well as a replica of the annex where Anne Frank hid objects that belonged to her family. The garden is home to a statue of the diarist and a sapling from a tree that once grew outside the building where she and her family hid.

1996

- The two *Maus* volumes are published together as *The Complete Maus* and translated into more than twenty languages.
- The first *Stolperstein* (stumbling stone) is laid in Berlin. This is a small brass cobblestone embedded directly underfoot in the cobblestones of the street. It bears an inscription 'Here lived' followed by the name, date of birth and fate of an individual victim of the Holocaust. Conceived by a German artist, Gunter Demnig, the *Stolpersteine* now constitute the largest decentralised monument in the world with over 70,000 stones laid, in 20 languages and 24 countries.

1998

- The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance is established by former Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson to unite governments and experts to strengthen, advance and promote Holocaust education, research, and remembrance. The Alliance and its member countries recognise that international coordination and collaboration is imperative to strengthen the moral commitment of societies to combat growing Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism.

1999

- *Night* by Elie Wiesel is now a standard high school and college text throughout the United States, selling around 40,000 copies a year.

2000

- The Stockholm Declaration (the founding document of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) is reaffirmed at the International Forum which is convened in Sweden and attended by representatives of forty-six governments. Article 1 of the declaration states 'The Holocaust (Shoah) fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilisation. The unprecedented character of the Holocaust will always hold universal meaning.'

- A large monument dedicated to the 65,000 Austrian Jews murdered by the Nazis is unveiled in Vienna. A stone square with a set of doors at one end it reveals itself as a kind of inverted library on closer inspection with row after row of books. The plinth it stands on bears the names of the camps where Austrian Jews died.
- A five-year legal battle between British historian David Irving and American Holocaust academic Deborah Lipstadt finally comes to court in London in the case of David Irving v. Penguin Books and Deborah Lipstadt. Irving, who became known for his increasingly extreme revisionist views on Hitler such as, denying there were any gas chambers at Auschwitz or even any systematic plan to murder the Jews, sued Lipstadt for libel after she labelled him a 'denier'. The judgement found that Lipstadt had not libelled Irving and that he was a Holocaust denier.

2001

- Holocaust Memorial Day is introduced in the UK. It is one of the first countries in the world to hold such an event.
- The Documentation Centre opens in the grounds of the former Nazi party rally grounds at Nuremberg as a central location to explore the phenomenology of the Nazi regime.
- *Maus* is subject to a staged book-burning in Poland and its publishers accused of 'defaming' the nation.

2002

- Hungarian survivor Imre Kertész is awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature 'for writing that upholds the fragile experience of the individual against the barbaric arbitrariness of history'.
- Holocaust Memorial Day is introduced in Ireland.

2003

- The AJR (Association of Jewish Refugees) which has represented Jewish refugees that fled Hitler to Britain since 1941, begins work on a refugee voices archive, a large-scale video project to record the testimonies of survivors and preserve their stories for future generations.

2004

- The organisation Yahad-In-Unum is founded by Fr. Patrick Desbois, a French Catholic priest, to identify and commemorate the sites of Jewish and Roma mass executions in Eastern Europe during the war. Thousands of eye-witness testimonies are recorded, almost two thousand execution sites identified, and the murder of over two million Jews and Roma documented.

2005

- International Holocaust Remembrance Day is designated by the United Nations General Assembly.
- The Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe in inaugurated in Berlin. Occupying almost five acres in a prominent city-centre location, close to the Brandenburg Gate, it consists of 2711 rectangular concrete slabs of differing heights with no defined boundaries surrounding the memorial.
- The Shoah Memorial is created in Paris. A wall engraved with the names of 76,000 Jewish people who were deported from France during the Nazi regime, it is Europe's first Holocaust archive.
- Shoes on the Danube Promenade is installed along the bank of the Danube River in Budapest. The monument consists of 60 pairs of 1940's style shoes, sculpted out of iron. They depict the shoes left behind by the thousands of Jews who were murdered by the Arrow Cross, forced to remove their shoes at gun point before being shot, falling over the edge into the water.
- Holocaust Education Trust Ireland is established in Ireland to promote awareness of the Holocaust, provide teacher education programmes, and oversee the Memorial Day commemoration each year.
- In a speech Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad labels the Holocaust a 'myth' and a 'fairy tale'.

2006

- Oprah Winfrey chooses *Night* for her book club stating that it should be 'required reading for all humanity'. It subsequently spends 80 weeks on the New York Times bestseller list and Oprah accompanies Elie to Auschwitz for a special filmed presentation to reflect on what he endured there. The episode is watched by schools throughout the United States.
- Largely forgotten since its publication in Italy in 1946, *The Auschwitz Report* by Primo Levi and Leonardo de Benedetti, is translated into English.
- David Irving is jailed for three years in Austria for Holocaust denial. His arrest and trial are based on speeches he had made on a visit to Austria in 1989 and a lecture series when he stated that there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz and no death camps in the Third Reich. He also referred to Hitler as a protector of Europe's Jews.
- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad again denies the Holocaust. Combined with his previous speech and an earlier statement calling for Israel to be 'wiped off the map' it causes a large outcry in the West.
- An Iranian newspaper holds a cartoon contest in Tehran seeking to mock the Holocaust. This is partly in response to the Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad that sparked anger among Muslims world-wide. A conference is held in Iran to question the Holocaust. The roster of speakers includes well-known deniers and is roundly condemned world-wide. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan announces that he deplores any attempt to cast doubt on the reality

of the Holocaust and the European Union's top justice official describes it as an affront to Holocaust victims.

- Tomi Reichental, originally from Slovakia, survived Bergen-Belsen as child losing more than 30 members of his family and made Ireland his home in 1960. After decades of silence about his experience he begins talking to young people in schools all over Ireland.
- Irish writer John Boyne writes *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, a novel for young readers about the Holocaust. It becomes a New York Times no. 1 bestseller, is adapted for a film, play, ballet and an opera, and sells more than eleven million copies worldwide. It is the biggest-selling novel by an Irish writer since records began and is used in schools around the world to introduce students to the Holocaust. It is also roundly criticised by Holocaust scholars and historians for its historical inaccuracies and inconsistencies and the potential damage it could do to Holocaust education.

2007

- A Documentation Centre with a new permanent exhibition opens at Bergen-Belsen.

2008

- Based on the book of the same name, the film *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, is released.

2009

- Elie Wiesel visits the Buchenwald concentration camp along with President Obama and German chancellor Angela Merkel in an attempt to publicly cement the memory of the Holocaust in contemporary American consciousness at a time when Iran is engaging in Holocaust denial.
- The first major documentary about the Holocaust to be made in Ireland, *Till the Tenth Generation*, tells the story of Tomi Reichental. He travels back to Slovakia to recall the life and death of Slovakia's Jews. The Irish Minister of Integration funds the distribution of the film to all Irish secondary schools.
- The Aladdin Project is launched under the patronage of UNESCO with the aim of facilitating knowledge between Jews and Muslims by producing and translating books, films, documentaries and websites on history, religion and culture. The project makes Arabic and Iranian translations of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *If This Is a Man*, and *Shoah*.

2010

- Yad Vashem signs an educational agreement with the People's Republic of China coinciding with an increased interest by Chinese educators, politicians

and tourists visiting the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre. Yad Vashem has since hosted an educational seminar from China every year.

2011

- *Maus* has by now been translated into approximately thirty languages.
- Ireland becomes a member country of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.
- Tomi Reichental's memoir *I Was a Boy in Belsen* is published.
- John Demjanjuk, now 91 years old, is put on trial once again setting a new precedent in Germany. Previously former Nazis were charged with individual murders rather than genocide or mass murder, and as it was difficult to find direct evidence of their roles in specific crimes it was difficult to charge. However, Demjanjuk is charged and found responsible for the murder of 28,060 people at Sobibor where he served as a camp guard.

2013

- A second documentary, *Close to Evil*, is made featuring Holocaust survivor Tomi Reichental. This is the result of an RTE Radio interview when Tomi discovers one of his former jailers at Bergen-Belsen, Hilde Lisiewicz, is alive and well living in Hamburg. A convicted war criminal she claims to be a victim of victor's justice and so Tomi sets out to investigate her claims of innocence.
- Mary Elmes is posthumously awarded the title of Righteous Among the Nations, the only Irish person to hold this honour. This is an award given only to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the war. A Cork woman and Trinity scholar, Mary Elmes left behind a brilliant academic career to volunteer firstly in Spain during the Civil War and then in France during World War II. She saved an estimated 427 children from Rivesaltes camp and deportation to Auschwitz smuggling them to children's homes she had set up in the foothills of the Pyrenees.

2014

- Holocaust survivor Tomi Reichental is named Ireland's International Person of the Year for his tireless efforts educating young people about the importance of remembrance and reconciliation.
- The Crocus Project is launched by the Holocaust Education Trust Ireland as an Irish initiative active across Europe. Yellow crocus bulbs are supplied for young people to plant in memory of the 1.5 million Jewish children who perished in the Holocaust. While it began as an Irish project in 2005, there are now more than 100,000 young people from Ireland and ten European countries taking part. The project is supported by the Department of Education.

2015

- Oskar Groning, a 93-year-old former SS officer at Auschwitz, is charged in Germany as an accessory to the murder of 300,000 people. He is found guilty and sentenced to four years imprisonment.
- Approaching the 70th anniversary of the Allied victory in World War II, (Russia celebrates victory day on May 9th), *Maus* is banned in Russia because of the swastika on its cover, categorised as violating anti-Nazi propaganda laws.

2016

- The film *Denial*, based on Deborah Lipstadt's book *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier,* her story of being sued by David Irving, is released.
- Reinhold Hanning, who served as a SS guard at Auschwitz-Birkenau greeting prisoners as they were unloaded off freight cars and leading them to the gas chambers, is found guilty in Germany of 170,000 counts of being an accessory to murder. He admits to knowing of the atrocities and doing nothing to stop them.
- A commission is formed in Ukraine to establish a more permanent memorial on the site of Babi Yar. The Babi Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre is scheduled to open in 2025/26 but has drawn criticism because of the high-tech interactive museum envisioned by the director.
- Elie Wiesel dies in New York City at the age of eighty-seven.

2017

- A new adaptation of *The Diary of a Young Girl* is published; *Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation*.
- It is announced that nine new Nazi War crimes cases have been turned over to the state authorities in Germany for possible prosecution. The cases involve guards from Auschwitz death camp, and from Mauthausen, Buchenwald, and Ravensbruck concentration camps. All the suspects are over 90 years of age.
- Tomi Reichental's third documentary, *Condemned to Remember*, is released. Once again, he revisits his own experiences in Slovakia but also explores the genocide of over 8,000 Bosnian Muslims at Srebrenica in 1995, empathising with their pain and suffering and emphasising the importance of remembrance.

2018

- The newly designed Junior Cycle History course taught in Irish secondary schools now explicitly includes amongst its intended learning outcomes that students explore the significance of genocide, including the causes, course, and consequences of the Holocaust.

2019

- The Mary Elmes Bridge in Cork opens to commemorate the Irish 'Schindler' and local Cork hero. The bridge was named in her honour after a public vote.
- The Mary Elmes Prize in Holocaust Studies is launched by the Holocaust Education Trust Ireland. This is a competition inviting secondary school transition year students in Ireland to submit a response to Mary Elmes' story with award categories in history, literature, art and music.
- Bruno Day, a former SS guard at the Stutthof concentration camp is brought to trial in Germany accused of contributing to the murder of 5,230 people. He is found guilty and given a two-year suspended sentence.

2020

- The Abraham Accords, a historic set of peace agreements, are signed by Israel and several Arab countries, the UAE being the first followed by Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. This aims to normalise diplomatic relations and promote greater stability, prosperity and hope.

2021

- Holocaust Awareness Ireland is established by Oliver Sears, the son of a Holocaust survivor who has lived in Ireland for 30 years, to provide a forum for a deeper understanding of the Holocaust and to promote informed discourse through the organisation of talks, seminars, exhibitions and panel discussions. His exhibition 'The Objects of Love' tells the story of his family through a collection of precious objects, documents and photographs, mementos that survived the war and is on view in Dublin Castle.
- An exhibition commemorating the Holocaust opens in a museum in Dubai, the first of its kind in the Arab world. The timing of this exhibition is seen as appropriate as parts of the region open and move towards improved relations with one another.
- The illustrator of the graphic adaptation of Anne Frank's diary creates an animated film *Where is Anne Frank*. In her writing Anne addressed her diary as Kitty, an imagined best friend. In this film Kitty is brought to life and goes in search of her best friend Anne Frank who she believes is still alive. In this way Kitty becomes a witness to Anne and her family's last months and to Europe after the Second World War.
- A new Dutch dramatization of Anne Frank's story M*y Best Friend Anne Frank* is released on Netflix. It is focused on the real-life friendship between Anne and Hannah Goslar, their separation when Anne was in hiding, and their brief reunion in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

2022

- Art Spiegelman's *Maus* returns to the bestseller lists in response to a Tennessee County School Board's decision to ban it from their classrooms and libraries. This decision was based on the novel's depiction of mice taking off their clothes at a concentration camp and an instance of language they considered vulgar.
- A Missouri school district also removes *Maus*, along with six other books about the Holocaust geared towards young readers, from their school classrooms and libraries.
- A Texas school district removes *Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation* after a newly elected school board changed its policy on the criteria for including books. However, a committee ultimately votes to return it to their bookshelves but only in middle and high school libraries as it is labelled a young adult novel.
- Egypt takes part in a UN General Assembly session that adopts a resolution condemning Holocaust denial and marks International Holocaust Remembrance Day for the first time.
- A 97-year-old woman, who worked at the Stutthof concentration camp, is convicted for her role in the murder of prisoners at Stutthof concentration camp and given a two-year suspended sentence.
- Josef Schuetz, the oldest person tried on Nazi-era charges at 100 years old, is convicted of being an accessory to murder at Sachsenhausen concentration camp and sentenced to five years in prison.
- An International Holocaust Remembrance Day event is held in Abu Dhabi, the first of its kind in the Gulf region.
- Six *Stolpersteine* are installed outside St. Catherine's National School in Dublin in memory of the Irish victims of the Holocaust.

2023

- The UAE makes a historic announcement that it will begin implementing Holocaust education within its primary and secondary curriculums. The content is being developed in collaboration with Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.
- A Florida high school removes *Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation* after its inclusion was challenged by a conservative advocacy group claiming it minimised the Holocaust, citing the scene where Anne walks in a park and looks at female nude statues and later proposes to a friend that they should look at each other's breasts.
- An eight-episode mini-series, *A Small Light*, tells the story of Miep Gies, who worked for Otto Frank as his secretary and spent two years helping the residents of the annexe when they were in hiding. It was also Miep who discovered Anne's diary after their arrest and preserved it so it could be shared with the world.
- The White House releases the first U.S National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. This intends to advance the relevance of the Holocaust for new generations and build the field of Holocaust education across the U.S.

- Elie Wiesel's memoir *Night* is banned from classrooms in North Carolina's Pitt County Schools and is banned pending investigation in one school district in Texas. A high school librarian in Bucks County, Pennsylvania is forced to take down a quotation by Elie Wiesel.
- The Netherlands moves closer to banning denial of the Holocaust with the Cabinet's plan to amend the Criminal Code making it an offense to 'publicly condone, deny or downplay the horrors of the Holocaust'.
- The Polish city of Warsaw adopts the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism.

Appendix B - My Witnessing Timeline

1992

- At the age of ten I read *I am David* by Ann Holm.

1996

- At fourteen I read *Summer of My German Soldier* by Bette Greene.

1997

- At fifteen I read *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank for the first time.

1998

- I choose History as one of my optional subjects for the Leaving Certificate and I am especially interested in learning about World War I and II.

2000

- I begin a degree in English and History in University College Dublin. Modern European History quickly becomes my favourite class.

2006

- I return to college and begin a Bachelor of Religious Education with Music in Mater Dei Institute of Education. This will qualify me to teach Religion and Music at secondary level. One of the music modules is on music composed in the camps.

2008

- An optional module on offer in the third year of my teacher training is about the history of Israel, from its ancient origins, to British Mandate Palestine, to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. This includes a ten day trip to Israel spending time in Jerusalem as well as in Galilee. I visit Yad Vashem for the first time.

2010

- As part of the Mater Dei Chorale we perform 'Remembering Zion: Music and Words from the Concentration Camps of the Nazi Regime 1939 – 1945'. The

entire repertoire is drawn from music and texts composed and performed in ghettos and camps such as Auschwitz, Majdanek, Buchenwald and Treblinka.

- My teaching career begins in the community college Duiske College, in my hometown of Graignamanagh teaching Religion, Music and History.
- I begin a Masters in Theology in Mater Dei Institute of Education. One of my modules, Anthropology, Politics and Theology, looks at various historical atrocities, including the Holocaust, through a theological lens reigniting my interest in this history. I decide to write about the Holocaust for my thesis which is entitled 'Where was God in Auschwitz? The Shoah and its Implications for Christian Theology'.

2011

- I travel to Berlin with a friend with the intention of visiting a former concentration camp site as part of my research for my masters' thesis. We visit Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp and Memorial. This is a first for both of us and we are overwhelmed by it.

2012

- Inspired by my masters' thesis I embark on a Certificate in Holocaust Education which is offered by Holocaust Education Trust Ireland in conjunction with Trinity College Dublin. It begins with three days of seminars and lectures covering topics such as pre-war Jewish life in Europe, the steppingstones of the Holocaust (its insidious and incremental nature), Kristallnacht and its significance, discovering the Holocaust through historical artefacts, everyday life in the Warsaw Ghetto, the return to life after liberation, prosecution of war criminals after the Holocaust, antisemitism in Germany today, and teaching the Holocaust in the Irish context. It also includes a public lecture in Trinity College by Professor Deborah Lipstadt on Holocaust denial in general and specifically her court case with Holocaust revisionist and denier David Irving.
- The Certificate in Holocaust Education involves a trip to Krakow in Poland and guided tours of Kazimierz (the old Jewish area of the city), the Galicia Jewish Museum, Schindler's factory and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Significantly we also meet with three survivors who share their testimonies with us, my first time meeting survivors.

2013

- I am invited to bring students to the Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration in the Mansion House in Dublin. This is a very moving ceremony which takes place each year involving Irish Holocaust survivors and their families and includes readings, survivors' recollections, candle-lighting and music. Three of my students participate in the ceremony reading from the roll of names.
- I attend the Irish seminar at Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies in Jerusalem as part of the Certificate in Holocaust Education. This is an

intensive two week programme of study and huge learning experience. We have a generous amount of time throughout the programme to explore the Yad Vashem campus including the Children's memorial, the Hall of remembrance, the Memorial to the Deportees, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Memorial, the Righteous among the Nations Garden and Boulevard as well as the Interactive Learning Centre, and have seminars, lectures and workshops on various topics. Some standout moments include a Shabbat evening service in the Kol HaNeshama Synagogue in Jerusalem, a presentation by Professor Yehuda Bauer and testimony by Esther Schlesinger, a child survivor of the Holocaust from Hungary.

- While travelling in Europe for four weeks I visit many interesting and significant sites connected to the history of World War II and the Holocaust, for example, the Jewish Quarter in Venice, the Jewish Museum in Zagreb, the Holocaust Memorial and the Jewish Museum in Vienna, the Jewish Museum in Munich, and the Documentation Centre in Nuremberg.

2014

- I begin teaching at Scoil Mhuire Secondary School in Carrick-on-Suir and am given a transition year module to teach on a topic of my choosing - I choose to teach a Holocaust Studies module.
- I attend the European training seminar 'How to Teach the Holocaust by Bullets' at the Caen Memorial in Normandy, France. Along with the Caen Memorial this is organised by Yahad-in-Unum which is headed by Fr. Patrick Desbois. Yahad-in-Unum seeks out eyewitnesses to the murder of Jews and Roma in Eastern Europe to record their testimonies and identify execution sites and mass graves. They also run educational programmes for university students and educators on how to teach the history of the Holocaust by Bullets. Topics covered include the historical perspective on the Holocaust by Bullets, sources and tools for a pedagogy of Holocaust by Bullets particularly German, Soviet and Polish archives, the genocide of Roma in Eastern Europe, and a rationale for teaching the Holocaust by Bullets. All of the participants are secondary/high school teachers from across Europe and despite the language barriers some fascinating conversations ensue. I am particularly struck by one Eastern European teacher explaining that growing up they learned that World War II (the Great War as they knew it) did not begin with the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939, but not until the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa) in 1941, and the work she has had to do as an educator to relearn this history. This is my first exposure to the reality of the subjectivity of history and how national narratives can diverge.

2015

- I begin work with the Holocaust Education Trust Ireland to create a resource pack for teaching the Holocaust to transition year students. My focus is Jewish

life in pre-war Europe, the Holocaust by Bullets, and other genocides including Armenia and Cambodia.

- The German language teacher in my school organises a trip for senior cycle students to Munich. This will include a visit to Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial and I am invited to accompany them and take charge of that part of the trip. I do so on the condition I have class time with the group beforehand to put the trip in context and prepare them for it.
- I attend the Jan Karski Institute for Holocaust Education at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. This includes many different seminars and lectures on topics such as the history of Judaism, Holocaust art, methodology and content suggestions for teaching the Holocaust, the genocide of the Roma, and trends in collective memory in Germany, and a day at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. We attend a public lecture by Richard Rashke, the author of *Escape from Sobibor* and *Useful Enemies*, and one by Fr. Patrick Desbois (founder of Yahad-in-Unum) on the Holocaust by Bullets. At the end of Fr. Desbois' lecture he takes questions. One audience member asks him how he reconciles the Holocaust with his faith in God, essentially asking him 'Where was God in all of it?' His response, 'I don't have time to look for God, I'm still looking for the bodies' is an astounding moment. We also attend a lecture at the embassy of Israel by the director of the Anti-Defamation League and visit the State Department for a talk by Ms. Lesley Weiss, the Chairwoman of the U.S Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad (protecting historic sites such as buildings, monuments and cemeteries in Eastern and Central Europe associated with the heritage of U.S citizens). The most meaningful experience of this entire trip is receiving the testimony of survivor Irene Weiss (the mother of Ms. Lesley Weiss). Irene had recently travelled to Germany and testified at the trial of former SS member Oskar Groening who was a guard at Auschwitz. The following year she would do the same at the trial of SS member Reinhold Hanning.

2016

- I pilot the materials created with the Holocaust Education Trust Ireland with my transition year students, regularly evaluating the lessons, and providing feedback to the group of co-writers.

2017

- I, and my co-writers, recruit four teachers each to pilot the materials in their own schools.
- My transition year students participate in the Crocus Project, an initiative which provides yellow crocus bulbs for students to plant as a memorial to the 1.5 millions Jewish children murdered by the Nazis. We plant the crocus bulbs in a bed shaped like a star of David, and when they bloom we hold a memorial service there.

- I bring all of my transition year students, as well as senior cycle history students, to a screening of survivor Tomi Reichental's documentary 'Condemned to Remember' in which he revisits his own experiences of the Holocaust but also explores what happened in the genocide in Bosnia, and finds common ground with refugees today. Tomi, and the director of the documentary Gerry Gregg, attend the screening and answer student's questions. For all of my students this is their first encounter with a Holocaust survivor, and their engagement with him and his story is a proud moment for me as their teacher.

2018

- I re-join my friends at the Holocaust Education Trust Ireland for a guided study trip to Berlin. This includes visits to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, The Topography of Terror (former SS and Gestapo headquarters), the House of the Wannsee Conference, the former Jewish quarter, the German Resistance Memorial and Silent Heroes Museum, Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp Memorial Museum, and survivor testimony.
- I travel to Amsterdam and spend a day in the old Jewish quarter which is now known as the Jewish Cultural Quarter. Here I visit the Jewish Historical Museum, the Children's Museum, the Portuguese Synagogue, the Auschwitz Memorial, and the Hollandsche Schouwburg, the Dutch Theatre which was used as a deportation site. Unfortunately I am unable to visit the Anne Frank House as it is undergoing some renewal and renovation work. Entry is by appointment only and none are available.

2019

- The Mary Elmes Prize in Holocaust Studies is created by the Holocaust Education Trust Ireland to allow transition year students to critically and creatively respond to their learning about the Holocaust. Students can respond with artwork, creative literature, musical pieces of any form or genre, or historical essays. I am appointed judge of the musical entries.
- Myself and my father travel to Israel for a week long holiday, his first time to visit there, my third. We visit different sites of Jewish historical significance including the Western Wall, Masada, and Yad Vashem.
- I am accepted on to the doctoral programme in the education department in Maynooth University. This is known as the Doctor of Education with Specialism, allowing practitioners to focus their research on an area in education that is especially relevant to them. I intend to research in the area of Holocaust education.

2020

- I travel to Budapest with friends and spend an afternoon in the old Jewish quarter, visiting the Dohany Street Synagogue, the Holocaust Memorial and Garden of Remembrance, and the memorials for Sir Nicholas Winton and Raoul

Wallenberg, both named Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem. I also visit ‘’The Shoes on the Danube Promenade commemorating the murder of Jews shot into the Danube by Arrow Cross militiamen.

2021

- Having spent time working with my supervisor to define my research question I begin work on my doctoral thesis.

2022

- I visit The Objects of Love exhibition at Dublin Castle. This is an exhibition curated by Oliver Sears, the son of a Holocaust survivor, and tells his family’s story through precious family objects, photographs and documents.

2023

- On a trip to Paris I visit the Museum of the Liberation of Paris which retraces the chronology of France’s experience of World War II with three galleries; Free France, The Inner Resistance and The Deportation. I am taken aback by the repeated use of the phrase ‘German action/measures against Jews’ when referring to the round up and deportation of French Jews to concentration and death camps, and the lack of acknowledgement of the role of French citizens in these measures.
- I attend a talk by David Baddiel, author of *Jews Don’t Count*, in Trinity College Dublin about antisemitism in the present day and the myths that hostility to Jews are grounded in.
- I present a paper based on my doctoral research at the ESAI Curriculum Studies Special Interest Group conference in Dublin.
- I begin work at Dublin City University lecturing student teachers.

2024

- I submit my doctoral thesis.

Appendix C – Textual Sources questions

Name of text:
Author of text:
Is the author an authoritative source? Survivor or eyewitness? Child or grandchild of a survivor? If not is the author a reputable historical researcher/writer?
What is the genre of text? Is it a diary written during the event? A memoir written after a time of reflection? An essay, short story, poem, or a fictional account?
Is it appropriate for your class? Think about this both in terms of descriptions of violence and death, as well as the age of your students and their reading ability.
Is it focused on the Jewish experience? If yes, provide details.

Is the Holocaust represented as a human event, involving human beings rather than mere numbers?
Is it historically accurate or inaccurate? Give examples.

Do you see examples of ‘choiceless choices’ in the text? Give examples. What choices are available? What are the consequences of those choices?
Do you see evidence of the global nature of the Holocaust and its scale and scope in the story?

What framework for response have you created?

Will students be asked to:

- Participate in group discussions
- Journal their thoughts and feelings
- Respond creatively through art or music
- Work on projects individually or in a group
- Geographically map the event
- Create a chronological timeline

Could your students prepare presentations for another class group, or prepare displays for a public space within the school? Note down ideas, themes, resources etc.

In utilising reader response theory to fully engage students in an active reading process can students:

- Set personal goals to achieve through reading the text
- Establish their own personal intended learning outcomes
- Share stories that come to mind as they read the text
- Form small discussion groups
- Consult with one another to plan response activities
- Write book reviews on completion

It is necessary to be mindful of the lived experiences of students, especially any who may have experienced war, oppression and/or marginalisation as a result of their religion, ethnicity or any other aspects of their identity. Therefore consider what supports you can put in place and how you will prepare your class to undertake this work so that collectively you can navigate it with sensitivity and awareness.