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Musical Memories of Terezín in Transnational Perspective

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During the Holocaust, Terezín (Theresienstadt) was designed to function as a so-called “model camp.” At Terezín, the Nazis allowed inmates to hold musical rehearsals and perform publicly; exhibiting such activities was cultural propaganda designed to dupe visiting organizations, including the International Red Cross. Whereas music was performed in nearly all the camps, Jozá Karas asserts that Terezín provided Jewish prisoners with a unique chance to “devote all [their] energy to [a] chosen field” and thus experience “exciting feelings [that] could not be dampened by the unpleasantness and difficulties of... life in the ghetto.” He concludes his evaluation by citing Greta Hofmeister, a survivor who played the role of Aninka in the storied productions of the children’s opera Brundibár: she “exclaim[s] exuberantly,” “Music! Music was life! [emphasis in the original].”

Indeed, many testimonial sources seem to confirm Karas’s assertion. Witnesses describe their involvement in myriad cultural activities—whether as organizers, amateur performers, or audience members—as a means of sustaining and enjoying themselves. As survivor Paul P. describes, “Life in Theresienstadt was for us a little bit like a summer camp. We had enormous freedom inside the ghetto.... I would say that young people had a lot of fun.... We organized life. We had an enormous proliferation of culture.” Others point to the wealth of talent that the Nazis amassed at Terezín, often describing these musical experiences there as a formative part of their cultural education. Survivor Frank B. fondly
recalls the rich musical resources and their impact upon his education: “There were musical instruments galore. There were chamber groups galore. There were plenty of people who could play, and without [them] I wouldn’t know anything about music…. I got to know about Bach and about Schubert. I used to practice a quintet by Schubert…. There were some very good musicians around.” For others, music buoyed the spirit in the face of hunger, disease, and death or served as a subtle means of opposition. Hilda S. smiles as she recalls one such subversive moment: “We used to sing a lot, because that makes the time pass…. Mainly [we sang] the ‘Hatikvah’ [smiles proudly and laughs]. And we especially sang [it] when the Germans walked in…. We didn’t want them to know how we felt…. Maybe it gave us more security.”

As Wolfgang Benz asserts, the redemptive nature of narratives such as these have caused Terezín to become “a legend,” detached from its own reality. “The ghetto is understood… above all as a place where music and painting happened, where notable intellectuals conducted learned debates, where moving children’s productions were created and poetry written.” Such depictions of Terezín appear regularly in performance series and scholarly literature as musical examples of “spiritual resistance” that ultimately obscure the broader multiplicity of survivor experiences. Recent dramatic productions such as Maurice Sendack’s version of Brundibár (now an illustrated children’s novel and a theatrical production) or Murry Sidlin’s reinterpretation of the Verdi Requiem as the “Terezín Requiem” keep this image of the camp alive in our cultural memory, where it serves as a symbol of musical humanism and Jewish strength. Likewise, global scholarship has promoted the Terezín repertory as a “tribute to the indomitable spirit… which somehow flowered in a sinkhole of horror.” Karas’s Music in Terezín, for example, celebrates the professional musicians and composers imprisoned in Terezín, commemorating their activities with reproductions of benign images from the camp’s archives, including programs, portraits, and concert posters.

And yet, as Benz eerily notes, this portrait of Terezín seems “influenced by the clichés of the ‘model camp’—the result of National Socialist propaganda—and is not free from [those] illusions today.” Indeed, more sinister images of Terezín abound in the archives at the Terezín Memorial, including the following two posters for a cabaret performance (Caroussel, figure 3.1) and a marionette show (Cirkus; figure 3.2).

Here, images of lynching, violent intimidation, and manipulated performance betray the seemingly childlike settings of a merry-go-round and a puppet show, suggesting a darker context for the lighter musical performances. Musicologist Eckhard John also notes this undercurrent in the Terezín literature, citing the prisoner Walter Lindenbaum, who wrote: “Although music is chronic here [in Terezín], many live in disharmony.” In this context, how
do we reconcile these images and memories with Terezín's prevailing positive musical narrative?

Barbara Milewski reminds us that no “singular, dominant [theme is] found among the more plentiful survivors’ accounts of music in the ghetto and camps; [the narratives] offered... are, unsurprisingly, as varied as these individuals and their experiences.”¹² Benz concurs, noting that one acquires a vastly different portrait of Terezín from less-considered survivor testimonies, which offer
details that complicate the "[widespread and] stereotypical reception of the ghetto as a place of cultural activities." The incorporation of dystopic memories would therefore allow scholars to reconstruct a more nuanced portrait of Terezín's musical life. Such an approach is supported by historian Christopher Browning, who speaks of the unease that these "conflicting and contradictory"
memories prompt among readers and scholars alike and notes that the “most serious challenge in the use of survivor testimony as historical evidence is posed not by those who are inherently hostile to it but by those who embrace it too uncritically and emotionally.”

He avers that testimonies that deviate from recurring historical patterns often signal the need for a possible connective approach, in which both strands of experience are permissible rather than necessarily exclusionary.

In this spirit, this chapter reevaluates memories of musical and some non-musical activity at Terezín that deviate from the more common, redemptive narratives promoted in both scholarly and public circles. My intent is not to discredit those who remember Terezín’s music making in a more positive light but to posit negative or ambivalent remembrances as being equally valid.

The testimonies that I draw from derive from the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies (FVAHT) at the Yale University Library, and therefore also reveal the impact of transnationalism on German-Jewish memories of Terezín. As Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider assert, transnational accounts, which involve multiple nationalities simultaneously, challenge monolithic portrayals of Holocaust memory: “The Holocaust does not become one totalizing signifier containing the same meanings for everyone. Rather its meanings evolve from the encounter of global interpretations and local sensibilities.”

As transnational memories become subjected to the tropes and discourses of multiple locations and identities, they “produce a multiplicity of histories, communities, and selves” that Steven Vertovec associates with a “refusal of fixity.” The result is a fracturing and recontextualization of self, identity, and memory that requires a transcultural lens tasked with critically examining not only transnational exchanges but also their historiographical consequences.

Dislocated Self-Identification and Witness Memory

After the forced emigration of Jewish populations in Germany between 1933 and 1945, many German Jews, then living throughout the world, refused to return to Germany or to permanently settle there after the Holocaust. Struggling to establish themselves in new countries, many survivors chose not to reference their wartime trauma openly, either as a means of avoiding alienation and facilitating integration or of coping with psychological wounds through repression. For example, Arield Hirschfeld explains the challenges that German Jews encountered after emigrating to Israel, where they “found themselves in a society with which they could not communicate” and were subjected to “more than an element of accusation,” to which “the survivors themselves said nothing; the
callousness of the surrounding culture conspired, as it were, with their desperate need to repress their tragedy so as to continue living.\textsuperscript{19}

For those Jews who did return to Germany after 1945, Terezín was initially a taboo subject to some extent, given the general postwar political and cultural climate. As Robert Moeller convincingly argues, Germans did not suppress the war to the point of forgetting; they "acknowledged that crimes had been committed 'in the name of the German people.' But they paid even more attention to crimes committed against Germans—crimes that, according to some contemporary accounts, were comparable to the crimes of Germans against the Jews."\textsuperscript{20}

The result was a form of selective remembering that persisted throughout the 1950s, ultimately ushering in a more critical phase of Holocaust remembrance beginning in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{21}

In the United States, public attention to the Holocaust was also a belated phenomenon, gaining traction only in 1978, a year Edward Linenthal identifies as "crucial [for] the organization of Holocaust consciousness" in America.\textsuperscript{22} In that year, the public responded vociferously against a Nazi march in Skokie, Illinois; Jimmy Carter established the Presidential Commission on the Holocaust; and the NBC miniseries \textit{Holocaust} aired for four evenings in April. These cultural events prompted two contrasting movements in the United States: a surge in academic study of the Holocaust and a rise in public Holocaust denial.\textsuperscript{23} In response, psychologist and Holocaust survivor Dori Laub, along with Laurel Fox Vlock, founded, in 1979, the Holocaust Survivors Film Project (New Haven, CT) with the intent of collecting survivor testimonies for posterity as well as for use by documentarians. In 1981, all their original testimonial tapes were deposited at Yale University and later consolidated as the FVAHT. Three decades later, the FVAHT remains one of the most respected repositories for Holocaust testimonies, housing a rich collection of memories, including testimonies by German Jews that mention or focus solely on Terezín.

Among these interviews, the impact of multiple dislocations on witness testimony reveals itself in myriad ways. As sociologist Diane Wolf contends, transnational Holocaust stories "speak of cultural multiplicity, of fluid and multiple selves, of a dispersed sense of self, of identity, of... multi-diasporic existences, and of negotiation among the languages of emotion, schooling, nation, wartime experience, and of their new home."\textsuperscript{24} Indeed, post-Holocaust identity politics—namely, how survivors identify themselves as belonging or not belonging to various ethnic, national, or community groups—surface in nearly every testimony surveyed. For one, as previously mentioned, the initial dislocation from German-speaking Europe caused many survivors to avoid discussing their traumatic memories. In America, even after the establishment of interest in the Holocaust after 1978, this evasion had specific motivations.
Indeed, for many survivors, America initially provided a difficult landscape for their memories, with many of them instructed not to bear witness or burden relatives and friends with reports of the extermination. For some, moving to a new continent may have facilitated the coping process, but others felt alienated and silenced by the “upbeat and universalist postwar mood” of American Holocaust commemoration. As Peter Novick explains, American versions of the Holocaust tended to “latch on to the affirmative” and favor more redemptive tales of Jewish resistance, courage, and pride. As evidence, he cites a 1954 report by the New York office of the World Jewish Congress, which suggested that “the imagination and hearts of peoples cling to deeds of courage, sacrifice, [and] heroism... rather than to mourning over general calamities, passive defeatism, and destruction.” This redemptive coloring of Holocaust memory proliferated into other forms of media, including the traditional press and television programming; the epitome was a 1953 episode of the NBC documentary series *This Is Your Life* that celebrated Hanna Bloch Kohner, a survivor of Terezín whose husband and parents had been murdered in the European genocide. The host of the show appeared to skim over these tragedies, emphasizing instead how “the never-to-be-forgotten tragic experiences of [Hanna’s] life have been tempered by the happiness [she] found here in America.” The promulgation of heroic versions of the Holocaust became a trait of American Holocaust memory and such depictions continue to figure prominently in American representations of the Holocaust.

This positive coloring of the Holocaust can create personal (and, arguably, psychological) dilemmas for Holocaust witnesses in the United States. As Sally Grubman, a survivor of Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, explains: “I see an awakening of consciousness [in America], but also some confusion about the reality. American Jewish teachers invite me into their classrooms to speak, but they do not want me to make the Holocaust a sad experience. They want me to turn us into heroes... [But] we are not heroes.” In Grubman’s mind, the search for heroism necessarily results in a further dislocation within Holocaust testimony—the German trauma and its impact now marginalized in favor of American versions that satisfy what Gary Weissman refers to as a “fantasy of witnessing.” The result is an imbalance between the two strands of transnational memory: redemptive and traumatic. With specific regard to music, this phenomenon generally manifests itself in cultural productions or scholarly publications that celebrate acts of “spiritual resistance” and privilege positive imaginings of Terezín and its witnesses. Witnesses with controversial or traumatic remembrances therefore sometimes find their narratives suppressed or ignored.

This redemptive presentation of the Holocaust ultimately reshaped the contours of narratives about Terezín. In some cases, survivors have refashioned their testimonies or omitted particularly traumatic details to better suit the
expectations of their audience. In other cases, survivors have admitted to feeling delegitimized when their memories, which do not conform to the more positive accounts of cultural life, are repeatedly challenged.

Transnational Musical Memories of Terezín

We see the impact of the American coloring of the Holocaust in the testimonies housed at the FVAHT, which correspond roughly to two periods of deportation: pre-1943 and post-1943. Generally, the German Jews who arrived at Terezín before 1943 share positive recollections of musical events there; whereas those arriving after 1943, during a period of cultural decline, paint a more dystopic portrait of musical life at the camp. Within the latter subset, many have no positive memories of music; the decrease in cultural activities from 1944 onward impacted the content of their narratives. Consequently, many of the later witnesses recount more traumatic elements of life at Terezín, including hard labor or the violence they witnessed during the liberation of 1945, and thus tend to reject the depiction of the camp as a cultural oasis within the Holocaust. Deportation at this late stage of the war also meant that many survivors experienced Terezín as an Endlager, or “final destination camp.” As a result, they lack other Holocaust experiences; for them, Terezín epitomizes the violence and trauma of the Holocaust, a perspective that naturally colors memories (or non-memories) of musical performance. As Frank B. explains: “It [Terezín] was awful...And yet, there was music. There were lectures. I could read books.... Compared to Auschwitz it was heaven. I mean, it’s all relative. Yes, it was awful. But it’s all relative in comparison.” As a result, the multiple “generations” of Terezín—derived from its complicated status as a transit camp, ghetto, and labor camp—and their varied experiences complicate the historical reconstruction of music at the settlement. American interviewers have had particular difficulty accepting and reconciling these two generations of Terezín memories. In the interviews, it becomes clear that they are more familiar with the earlier accounts of music in the camp, and that many of them prompted the witnesses with evidence designed to elicit a more positive remembrance of Terezín. Active resistance to this pressure surfaces in some FVAHT testimonies, as survivors openly objected to romanticized visions of Terezín. Janet B., a survivor originally from Berlin, was deported to Terezín in October 1944 and experienced the camp as a final destination. In her testimony, she objects to the romanticization of the “recreational activities” at Terezín in American films and historical exhibits: “I saw this movie at the memorial, the ‘Precious Legacy,’ and they showed a soccer game in the courtyard, and it just made me very angry, because it was not a happy courtyard, where people
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sat around cheering and smiling. There were stairs that led down into it, and a wagon would come and deliver a meal which was usually a barley soup that looked like grey dishwater. At this point, her interviewer actively attempts to redirect her memories toward more positive recollections of Jewish culture in Terezín; Janet’s disgust at the portrayal of a happy soccer game, for example, is countered with the following series of questions designed to elicit an alternative narrative: “There were games?” “Do you remember being happy?” “How did you survive such conditions?” After much provocation, Janet B. finally relents, providing a musical memory of Terezín, but not one the interviewer is expecting.

JANET B.: The male prisoners [were marching to the little fortress]. It was also used, I guess, as a punishment facility. And I can always hear the whips and they always had to sing. And sometimes you could hear a shot being fired. And we would hear things about little fortress, about the horrible things that went on there.

INTERVIEWER: What did you hear? [meaning, what rumors?]

JANET B.: Just beating, torture, hangings. Things like that.... Just those whips going constantly and the singing. And I guess even then I thought, you know, why do they want to sing when they’re being beaten and with the whips.

Although Janet later identifies an element of spiritual resistance in their singing, the memory occupies a traumatic position within her Holocaust narrative, one which lingers with her even now. She describes returning to Terezín with a survivor’s group long after the war and how the memory of torture accompanied by music was incapacitating: “It [the little fortress] was the first place they took us into. And I had a pretty bad case of hysterics because seeing it just brought things back very vividly.... I remembered what it stood for, so I couldn’t...”

In some cases, prompting by the interviewer leads to emotional distress or to distancing on the part of witnesses, who often begin to doubt their own memories. During her interview, Janet B. remembers a visit from the Swedish Red Cross that lasted two days before life returned to the “regular routine.” Excitedly, the interviewer inquires whether Janet had witnessed the making of the infamous propaganda film The Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt. Janet adamantly replies: “No, I never saw anything like that. Also, according to the history there were concerts and all that, but.... none of that happened while I was there. No.” The interviewer persists, again trying to validate the standard Terezín cultural narrative—the one associated with events that preceded Janet’s arrival—by asking about children’s artwork. The tone of the questions is not confrontational, but their troubling impact upon Janet is reflected in her answer, which now begins to take on an apologetic tone: “When I was there, we knew nothing about
that at all. I think by then everything had stopped or was discouraged. I'm trying to think. As I say, what I remember is just very fragmented."

The traumatic clash between expected narrative and witness memory is further apparent in testimony given by Peter D. of Berlin, who was six years old when he arrived in the camp. He describes his memories of Terezin as fragmented and discusses how he resists incorporating Terezin's master narrative into his own:

"Sometimes you hear a lot of stories from the camp, and if I don't remember them, maybe I'm trying to force myself to remember things that I've heard happened, and then tie those two things in. I'm trying not to do that. I want to make sure that I personally remember these things, not the things I've heard. So, it's hard for me to really separate out what I may have seen and heard and what I personally experienced."

When asked about Terezin's musical activities and whether he took part in the children's productions, he answers: "I never saw any of this model camp or things that would have been shown to dignitaries or visitors. They may have been around. I don't remember them. ... I did see people die and people killed—they weren't shielding us from anything. ... We were exposed to it fully and were part of it."

Other survivors admit to tailoring their musical testimonies to the stereotypes that their American interviewers seem to value the most, namely, by reporting those instances in which music helped an individual to survive, acted as a form of cultural resistance, or demonstrated a triumph of the human spirit over evil. But conveying these narratives sometimes causes the witness a degree of psychological trauma or anxiety within the confines of the interview itself, with survivors harboring guilt for having enjoyed Terezin's cultural events or for seeming to diminish Jewish suffering through their specific memories. The testimony of Paul P., a survivor originally from the German-speaking Sudetenland, illustrates how recalling positive musical experiences often provokes deep-seated doubts that lay buried beneath:

"I'm painting a rosy picture.... We had a lot of privileges.... We said, "Maybe that's wrong, to have these privileges."... We acquiesced. Did we acquiesce?... In Theresienstadt, well the whole discussion. If the leadership should have prepared us for resistance, or should we have acquiesced to our relatively comfortable existence in the ghetto. That question was always there. But, I think that we were always, we always thought that we were resisting. I don't think we were really very much resisting, but we thought we were.... We were very obedient Jews. To be so obedient was also in some way made possible by a relatively
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comfortable existence. I’m not saying it was comfortable, really.... We saw some of the horrors, but you have to understand the truly hermetic enclosure of the ghetto. 39

Even memories of friends who participated in cultural activities but died despite their talents become encounters with traumatic ghosts. When asked about whether he had taken part in the musical events of the camp, Frank B., a survivor originally from Berlin, launches into a story about his Hannover barracks bunkmate, a talented musician: “I have to thank the people who I shared the very small room [with] for having widened my horizons absolutely tremendously.” Statements of this kind are common in testimonies about Terezín, and many laud the camp as the best cultural education they had ever received; but Frank’s testimony veers quickly to the traumatic when he remembers the talented musician once again: “And strictly speaking [sighs heavily]... nobody [begins to choke up, his voice going hoarse. He pauses to try to regain control of his emotions]... nobody can afford to lose people like that without really suffering. [blinks back tears]... He was just fantastic. It was awful. We didn’t know where we were going to end up.” 40 This experience of re-traumatization often occurs at the moment when the witness is confronted by positive examples of musical resistance that they do not remember or did not experience. Joan B., a Terezín survivor originally from Mainz, is interviewed by a fact-finder armed with knowledge of musical events that took place during the Holocaust. Joan begins her testimony by recounting the ghettos and camps to which she had been deported before finally arriving at Terezín. The interviewer, possibly trolling for cultural memories, asks Joan how she kept her sanity in Terezín; Joan responds that she became “selfish” and “unconcerned with everything going on.” No musical recollections about Terezín appear in her testimony, despite the fact that her time frame overlaps with documented periods of musical activity and concertizing. This lacuna leads her interviewer to ask about her deportation from Terezín to Auschwitz, again trying to elicit musical details that confirm culturally heroic events:

INTERVIEWER: Your Jewishness. Did you ever hear anyone speak or sing Jewish songs, prayers, going to...
JOAN: ... to the camp? Into the camp? No.... Not Yiddish. No.
INTERVIEWER: Hebrew?
JOAN: Hebrew, no...
INTERVIEWER: Some people said that they used to sing “Ani ma’amin” when they went to the crematorium.
JOAN: Yes. Some people. I know that for instance those that were selected.... I was selected for work.... Those people [she points away
from herself] that were sent to the gas chamber, *they* [points away] said
the prayer of the dead. *Others* [points away] sang “Eli, Eli” for instance.
INTERVIEWER: You remember “Eli, Eli?” You remember them singing it?
JOAN: Yes.
INTERVIEWER: Can you tell us how it goes? Can you sing it?
JOAN: I cannot sing anymore, no.
INTERVIEWER: But just say the words… You remember that? Them singing
it? What did you feel when you heard them sing it?
JOAN: At that time I was already hardened because of my parent’s
death…. And in those camps, *we* didn’t sing, remarkably. *We* were too
tired. 

Here, the interviewer seems bent, not on eliciting *Joan’s* memories, musical or
otherwise, but on substantiating accounts that have become central to the posi-
tive imagining of the Holocaust, regardless of the psychological cost to and per-
sonal experience of the survivor. The interviewer’s goading and the almost cruel
request to have her sing “Eli, Eli,” despite her pointed disassociation with the
selected Jews and her refusal to sing, causes Joan, who is generally loquacious
throughout her testimony, to become terse and disengaged. It is at this point
that she defensively begins to distinguish herself as a *survivor* and the singing
Jews as *non-survivors*—an us/them dichotomy that posits redemptive or spiri-
tual musical activity as antithetical to her Holocaust survival. As a result, trauma
surfaces in her narration. She withdraws and becomes a more passive actor in the
interrogation, again withholding her voice, as she insists she did throughout the
Holocaust. She has reverted to survivor mode.

These examples demonstrate how transnational memories have provided
a captive audience for musical Holocaust witness, but one that actively seeks
out and emphasizes redemptive narratives. Within the United States, Terezin
remains connected to a powerful image of positive cultural activity and resis-
tance, and any negative recollections have been marginalized in the histori-
ography. Moreover, as the above examples illustrate, American interviewers
sometimes either gloss over or actively confront those traumatic memories
of musical experience—a phenomenon with potential psychological conse-
quences for the survivor. Already dislocated from their homeland, these sur-
vivors find that their memories, which do not easily conform to American
expectations, are estranged from the broader musical narrative of Terezín as
well. The tension between these two strands of memory reflects the impact
of dislocation on the FVAHT testimonies, and this dislocation has further
affected transnational memories by challenging witnesses’ sense of identity and
modes of narration.
Conclusion

The German accounts of Terezín housed at FVAHT illustrate the influence of transnationalism on musical Holocaust memories, revealing the crucial role of migration in defining both the witnesses themselves as well as their narratives. More subtly, these accounts reveal a degree of trauma experienced by the interview subjects, many of whom wrestle with the transnational implications of their personal journeys. Geographic dislocation took a personal toll on German Jews, who consequently had to cope with negations of their national and ethnic self-identities. The seeds of this dislocation were rooted in the 1930s, when Jews were politically disassociated from German culture and forced to create separate institutions for performance. As Lily Hirsch has argued in *A Jewish Orchestra in Nazi Germany*, many German Jews “saw German culture as the means of opposition to forced ghettoization.” Thus, when stripped of their citizenship and ability to perform freely, many German Jews experienced a form of traumatic disenfranchisement that ultimately alienated them from a culture they had considered theirs. At Terezín, this cultural dislocation continued with policed repertory lists and the assembly of a polyglot Jewish community that performed in at least three primary languages: German, Czech, and Hebrew. As a result, many Jewish survivors describe the war as a time of personal crisis, in which they were forced against their will to redefine themselves ethnically, religiously, and culturally. For some, the traumatic impact of this forced re-identification cannot be overstated; dispossessed of their former lives, many continued in the postwar period to struggle with confused notions of self-definition, religion, and Jewishness.

The transnational presence of German Jews and their Holocaust memories in America has posed further difficulties, both for survivors and for the historical record. Witnesses cite feelings of terror, anxiety, and anger as among their emotional reasons for rejecting their original homeland, and many note that they distrust the German nation and fear the coming of a second Holocaust in Europe. And yet, the Americanization of musical Holocaust narratives has had consequences for German Jewish memories of Terezín, especially those that do not conform to expected redemptive narratives. As a result, survivors who remember more traumatic musical experiences of Terezín find themselves generally dislocated from popular and historical expressions of its legacy. Such an exclusion sometimes results in emotional trauma and witnesses can experience self-doubt or anxiety when they feel their memories are misunderstood or discounted. Sadly, some choose to remain silent about their negative experiences of music, while others revise their memories accordingly, decisions with dire consequences for the historical record. Moreover,
in promoting certain redemptive narratives about musical life at Terezín, historical scholarship has denied survivors like the ones engaged here their voices and the critical importance of their stories. Their witness becomes a historical “un-story” when interviewers dismiss their testimony as incongruent and thus irrelevant.

And yet, by marginalizing traumatic or non-memories, we do a disservice to Holocaust historiography, which would ideally seek to understand musical activity at Terezín within the fullest context possible, including potential non-contexts. Instead, we promote what Eric Santner refers to as “narrative fetishism,” by which he means “the construction and deployment of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of the trauma or loss that called the narrative into being in the first place.” As such, scholars like Robert Eaglestone and Susannah Radstone worry that these selective, redemptive, narratives “overcode the accounts of the Holocaust with a discourse of healing analysis or therapy.” Our proclivity to want to heal the historical wound is natural, they suggest, but it betrays a deeper scholastic trauma. And yet, as Dori Laub argues, the tendency to migrate toward more positive recollections—an attribute of many of the transnational FVAHT accounts—stems from a broader humanistic failing: “[The] horrible, traumatic past [of survivors reminds us] of our own historical disfiguration…. [Survivors] pose for us a riddle and a threat from which we cannot turn away. We are indeed profoundly terrified to truly face the traumas of our history.” Still, the historical need to interpolate these memories into our understanding of Terezín is great, if for no other reason than to validate the possibility raised by some survivors that “music was [not] life.”

Notes
1. This chapter prefers the contemporary name Terezín over the historical Theresienstadt, a town in rural northwestern Bohemia built as a defensive outpost, which was originally named after Empress Maria Theresa.
3. Ibid., 197.
4. Paul P., Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1454), FVAHT, Yale University Library. All interviews were confidential. Because of privacy concerns, the FVAHT requests that interviewers and survivors not be fully identified, and therefore the approved archival format for citation has been adopted.
5. Frank B., Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2111), FVAHT, Yale University Library.
6. Hilda S., Holocaust Testimony (HVT-707), FVAHT, Yale University Library.
15. Browning, Collected Memories, 43.
26. Ibid., 115.
27. Ibid.
29. Gary Weissman, Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 9. Novick attributes this “fantasy of witnessing” to a “furthered sympathetic attention to the condition of victimhood” stemming from media coverage of the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement. As he argues, “it was against this background, and in this cultural climate that virtually celebrated victimhood, that efforts to firm up faltering Jewish identity were mounted... [into] a fashionable victimhood.” Novick, Holocaust in American Life, 190.
30. In many cases, their dislocation from Germany had been delayed due to special considerations that complicated deportation, such as distinguished military service in the First World War or a blended family tree.

31. Frank B., Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2111), FVAHT, Yale University Library.

32. Terezin's complicated status as a transit camp, labor camp, and ghetto also arises in the testimonies of the survivors, who refer to it interchangeably as a "camp" or a "ghetto." In my own prose, I have standardized the terminology by referring to Terezín as a "camp"; however, I have not changed any quotations or transcriptions of the testimonies, in order to preserve the original language of their witness accounts.

33. Janet B., Holocaust Testimony (HVT-227), FVAHT, Yale University Library.

34. Janet B., Holocaust Testimony (HVT-227), FVAHT, Yale University Library.

35. Janet B., Holocaust Testimony (HVT-227), FVAHT, Yale University Library.

36. Janet B., Holocaust Testimony (HVT-227), FVAHT, Yale University Library.

37. Peter D., Holocaust Testimony (HVT-319), FVAHT, Yale University Library.

38. Peter D., Holocaust Testimony (HVT-319), FVAHT, Yale University Library.

39. Paul P., Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1454), FVAHT, Yale University Library.

40. Frank B., Holocaust Testimony (HVT-2111), FVAHT, Yale University Library.

41. Joan B., Holocaust Testimony (HVT-82), FVAHT, Yale University Library.


46. For a fuller example of Karas's redemptive narrative about Terezín, see his chapter, "Evaluation of the Musical Activities in Terezín," in Music in Terezín, 18.