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HOLOCAUST DIARIES: BEARING WITNESS TO EXPERIENCE IN POLAND, THE
NETHERLANDS, AND FRANCE

by

JESSICA LEAH OLDHAM

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in History
in the College of Arts and Humanities
and in The Burnett Honors College
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ABSTRACT

Most of the Holocaust's victims were never able to tell their stories, and of the millions of victims, only a few hundred were able to write about their experiences. This makes surviving personal testimonies precious in many ways. They provide a rich resource for understanding both individual experience, as well as the ways in which the socio-historical context (i.e. region, gender, and class) greatly influenced each distinctive experience. This study examines six Holocaust diaries, of Jewish victims, taken from three different parts of occupied Europe: from Poland, Janusz Korczak's *Ghetto Diary* and Chaim Kaplan's *The Scroll of Agony*; from Holland, Etty Hillesum's *An Interrupted Life: the Diaries, 1941-1943 and Letters from Westerbork* and Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*; and lastly, from France, Helene Berr's *Journal of Helene Berr* and Raymond Raoul Lambert's *Diary of a Witness, 1940-1943*.

Through an examination of these six diaries, this project analyzes how the personal experience of individuals who witnessed the period and chronicled its events helps us understand both the nature of the Holocaust experience and the specific local political, social, and economic contexts. This project argues that an examination of these texts, when studied alongside the histories of their specific local contexts, can reveal both what all victims shared, throughout Europe during the period, as well as what was localized- how the different horrors experienced, by the victims, created different versions of the same hell.

To the victims of the Holocaust that risked their lives to tell their stories.

To Dad, for teaching me the consequence of perseverance and hard work.

To Momma, for reminding me to just breathe, and always pushing me forward, even when I
pushed back.

And to Dr. Lyons, for never giving up on me.

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INTRODUCTION

In her study, “Different Horrors, Same Hell,” Myrna Goldenberg outlines the idea that, though all Jews were targeted for annihilation and were living in the same hell, not everyone was experiencing the same horrors.¹ Her argument refers to the factuality that The Final Solution and Nazi policies did not occur the same way to everyone everywhere. Throughout the regions of occupied Europe, the events and nature of the period varied.² This project studies and analyzes Goldenberg’s proposal through six diaries of Jewish victims from the Holocaust.³ I have selected diaries from three different countries, making sure to represent both Eastern and Western Europe. Furthermore, apart from being taken from three different regions, these specific diaries were also chosen for their differences in socio-economic backgrounds, class, gender and age. Most of the Holocaust’s victims were never able to tell their stories, and of the millions of victims, only a few hundred were able to write about their experiences. This makes surviving personal testimonies precious in many ways. They provide a rich resource for understanding both individual experience, as well as the ways in which the socio-historical context (i.e. region, gender, and class) greatly influenced each distinctive experience.⁴

Through an examination of six diaries, this project examines and seeks to reveal how the personal experience of individuals who witnessed the period and chronicled its events helps us

¹ Myrna Goldenberg, “Different Horrors, Same Hell,” in *Thinking the Unthinkable: Human Meanings of the Holocaust*, eds. Rogeer Gottlieb (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 327.

² Referring to i.e. in the Nazis’ mentality/racial ideologies and policies, how the Nazis implemented those policies, the war’s timeline, the specific events that occurred at the local level, how the different governments responded, etc. Goldenberg, “Different Horrors, Same Hell,” 327.

³ Goldenberg, “Different Horrors, Same Hell,” 327.

⁴ Zoë Vania Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1.

understand both the nature of the Holocaust experience and the specific local political, social, and economic contexts. This project argues that an examination of these texts, when studied alongside the histories of their specific local contexts, can reveal both what all victims shared, throughout Europe during the period, as well as what was localized- how the different horrors experienced, by the victims, created different versions of the same hell. In order to achieve this, I examine the following six Holocaust diaries, taken from three very different parts of occupied Europe, Poland, Holland, and France: from Poland, Janusz Korczak's *Ghetto Diary* and Chaim Kaplan's *The Scroll of Agony*; from Holland, Etty Hillesum's *An Interrupted Life: the Diaries, 1941-1943 and Letters from Westerbork* and Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*; and lastly, from France, Helene Berr's *Journal of Helene Berr* and Raymond Raoul Lambert's *Diary of a Witness, 1940-1943*. Each of these six texts is a testimonial that chronicles its author's understanding and experience of the Holocaust, and as such, provides personal depictions and descriptions that attest to not only personal experience, but also reveals much about the regional and local contexts, that existed throughout each of the three regions.

From Eastern Europe to Western Europe, many aspects of the war, such as: the timeline and the Nazis' overall scheme (i.e. their overall racial ideologies, goals, policies, and implementations of the various policies) varied. The timeline of the war shows us that Eastern Europe was the first European front affected by Hitler's fundamental goals of lebensraum, which was the Nazis' plan for "race and space."⁵ This was the two-part idea that the Nazis, first, wanted to racially purify Europe by annihilating the Jews and other undesirables, and second, wanted to

⁵ Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: a Concise History of the Holocaust* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 10.

spatially expand their territory and fill it with their ideologically perfect “Aryan” race.⁶

Throughout the occupied regions of Europe, the Nazis’ schemes and policies, both in their fundamental essentials and in the means by which they were carried out, were distinctly and definably different.⁷ Thus, in dealing with this huge diversity of experience, this study addresses three of the major elements that informed experience in three parts of occupied Europe within my limited study of the six diaries. Each chapter delves into and examines the following three major issues that arise in each of the diaries, as well as how these issues directly influenced and affected each of the six diarist’s experiences: how, and why, was experience hugely varied from the East to the West? What was the nature of everyday life throughout occupied Europe? And how did each of the six diarist’s distinctive identity inform and affect their experience?

In terms of the East versus the West: what was the nature of occupation throughout each of the three countries? What does each of the diaries reveal about how- from the East to the West, though both were living under and experiencing the “same hell”- geography played a defining role in determining the “different horrors” and individual experiences witnessed throughout Europe?⁸ Within this discussion, two key questions that I examine are: the variance in the war’s timeline and the significant differences that existed within the Nazis’ racial policies and implementation. What do the diaries reveal about the significance of the variation in the war’s timeline to the victims’ experiences? How did it influence and/or affect the different ways that they witnessed and understood the period? What about the diversity within the Nazis’ racial policies and implementation? What differences existed from the East to the West? What about

⁶ Bergen, *War and Genocide*, 10.

⁷ Saul S. Friedman, *History of the Holocaust* (Portland, OR: Valentine Mitchell, 2004), 115.

⁸ Goldenberg, “Different Horrors, Same Hell,” 327.

any differences that existed at the more specific, local levels? What do the diaries say about what these varied aspects meant for the victims?

A further key question addressed, within this broader debate, is that of the different ways in which the different local governments responded to occupation in Poland, Holland, and France. Each of these three cases were hugely different, and thus, produced diverse reservoir of experience. In Poland, the local governments were completely destroyed.⁹ In Holland, Queen Wilhelmina and her government were forced to flee the country and go into exile.¹⁰ In France, the government fell and was replaced by the collaborative Vichy regime.¹¹ How did each region, in terms of the local governments, respond to the Nazi attack and occupation? What was the nature of the occupation at each local level? How did these three hugely different responses inform the experiences of those living throughout the different regions? What does each diary reveal about the different ways that individuals were affected by these responses to the Nazi war machine?

Furthermore, how did these six cases experience day to day life in their three different parts of occupied Europe: Poland, Holland, and France? How were they different and why? What do the diaries say about the various ghettos and transition camps the six diarists' came into contact with? The various *Judenrats*, or Jewish councils within the ghettos and camps? What about living conditions for the Jewish populations? Possibility of resistance and/or survival via escape, going into hiding, and etc.? Did the diarist's identities (i.e. gender, their social class, age,

⁹ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), 64; and Donald D. Wall, *Germany & World War II* (New York: West Publishing Company, 1997), 41.

¹⁰ Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939-1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Indiana, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 3; Hirschfeld and Marsh, eds., *Collaboration in France: Politics and Culture during Nazi Occupation 1940-1944*, 12.

¹¹ Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 25-35.

specific role in their local society, and etc.) inform and/or affect their experience? Did these factors play a role in shaping experience? If so, what do each of the diarist's say about how, and in what ways?

Chapter I is an examination of the extremity and brutality of the case in Poland. Of the three regional case studies examined, Poland is the only Eastern European nation. This means that, compared to the other two regional case studies, the timeline of the war is unique, as well as the extremity of the Nazis' schemes and policies. In many ways the war in Poland was used by the Nazis as a means to fine tune their plans for spatial expansion and racial purification, and as a result, the invasion and occupation of Poland was especially brutal in nature. The segregation and concentration of the Jewish population is the central focus of Chapter I. From earlier on in the war's timeline, both of the Polish diarists were forcibly relocated to the Warsaw ghetto, where both men spent the majority of the war living and writing from within the walls of the Warsaw ghetto. Entries from their diaries record their experiences of life in the ghetto, and thus, the ghettoization of Warsaw, the Warsaw ghetto, and the ghetto's *Judenrat*, play a central role in Chapter I's examination. By placing both diarists within their proper socio-historical, political, and economic contexts, Chapter I analyzes the ways that Kaplan and Koczak's diaries depict the extensive and extreme brutality of the Polish case. In order to do so the chapter addresses the key issues of their age, gender, class standing, educational background, socio-political roles, and specific geographic location, and in analyzing the importance of their identities, will ask the question: how did both Kaplan and Koczak's particular identities shape their individual wartime experiences? Furthermore, in seeking to understand how the collapse of the Polish government

shaped both diarists' wartime life, the following questions are analyzed: How did the Jewish ghetto shape the nature Nazi-controlled Poland? What did the process of ghettoization mean to the two Polish diarist, Kaplan and Korczak? What do their diaries reveal about how, and in what ways, the Warsaw ghetto shaped both diarists' day-to-day life in wartime Poland?

The second chapter focuses on the wartime experience in the Netherlands with the two Dutch diarists, Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum, at its core. Though the two Dutch diarists led significantly different lives throughout the duration of the war- the Frank family escaped into hiding, and Hillesum was a typist for the Jewish council in Westerbork transit camp- both lived and wrote in the nation's capital, Amsterdam, and spent time in Westerbork.¹² Thus, much of Chapter II focuses on contextual research and discussion of, specifically, Amsterdam and Westerbork. As in the first chapter, Chapter II places both diarists within the proper contexts and attempts to analyze and depict the ways in which each diarist's particular identity as a person contributed to their understanding and experience. In addressing the remaining two larger issues covered in this study, Frank's status as a Jew 'in hiding' and Hillesum's work for the Jewish council takes center stage. To come to an understanding of the difference that her status of 'in hiding' played, in shaping her particular experience, Chapter II asks the key questions: how and in what ways did these two major aspects of their wartime life affect, influence, and define their wartime lives? More specifically, Chapter II seeks to answer the questions: how and in what specific ways did going into hiding definitively shape Frank's understanding and experience of

¹² Westerbork transit camp was the primary transit camp in the Netherlands during the German occupation during World War II. Over 100,000 Jews passed through Westerbork, staying for several days or weeks, "where they had to work before being deported to other camps, primarily Nazi death camps, as part of the 'final solution of the Jewish problem'." 54, 930 of those were deported to Auschwitz, 34,314 to Sobibor death camp, 3, 762 to Bergen-Belsen, and 4, 771 to Theresienstadt- another transit camp . When Canadian troops liberated Westerbork, only 900 Jews still remained in the camp. Encyclopedia Judaica, "Westerbork," The Gale Group, 2008. http://thejewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourse/judaica/ejud_0002_0021_0_20859.html.

World War II? How did Hillesum's job as a typist inform her deeper understanding of the situation for the Jews, as well as her intimate knowledge of and perception of the transportation trains leaving Westerbork daily? Additionally, for Hillesum's particular case, Chapter II attempts to expand on the idea that her role as a typist definitively affected her experience, and it certainly set her apart from other five diarists under examination. In setting out to understand how her role as a typist affected her experience, Chapter II addresses the issues of: did her work for the Jewish council affect her mindset or make her more aware of the Jew's situation? The chapter seeks to draw conclusions

In many ways, the final chapter is an examination of the two French diarists, Raymond-Raoul Lambert and H el ene Berr, understanding and experience of the questions posed by Vichy and the distinctive nature of the case in France. As with each of the previous chapters, Chapter III also provides a brief bibliographic content to work from, and then attempts to analyze the importance of each diarists' identity in shaping their particular experience of the Holocaust. The remainder of the chapter is divided into two major discussions. The first is the role that government's response played in informing the wartime lives of both diarists, and asks the question of how the two French diarists responded to war and defeat. The second examines life in both occupied and unoccupied France, discusses the nature of the occupation in both the occupied and unoccupied zones of wartime France, and seeks to gain an understanding of both diarists' experience of day-to-day life in wartime France.

By addressing these important, but limited set of important issues, this small project hopes to contribute, in a small way, to a much larger historiography, which seeks to better understand the Holocaust experience, of victims, on many different levels. This limited study,

which looks at just some of the elements that informed experience in three parts of occupied Europe, seeks to lend in a small way to the much larger puzzle of this historiography by attempting to better understand what each of these six cases shared, as well as how their local and personal contexts informed their individual experiences.

CHAPTER 1: THE WAR IN POLAND

Nazi Experiments in Brutality, Territorial Expansion, and Racial Purification

Chapter I places the two Polish diarists, Chaim Kaplan and Janusz Korczak, in their proper socio-historical contexts, to examine and reveal how they help us to better understand more about the specific context of the Polish case. Both Kaplan and Korczak were Polish Jews living in Warsaw during World War II. Being male citizens of the Warsaw ghetto around sixty years old, they were of the same geographic location, gender, and generation.¹³ They shared a strong background in education, had worked within the scholastic field of academia, and were well-educated, scholarly individuals. Prior to the war, Kaplan had worked as a Jewish scholar and teacher in Warsaw, and Korczak had been a well-known writer, educator, pediatrician, and children's rights advocate.¹⁴ After Poland's defeat and when the Nazi occupiers established one of their Holocaust ghettos in Warsaw, among those forcibly relocated to the Warsaw ghetto in the fall of 1940, were Kaplan and Korczak. From November 1940 on, both lived, worked, and wrote their diaries (Kaplan's *Scroll of Agony* and Korczak's *Ghetto Diary*) from within the walls of the Warsaw ghetto, and these two texts are invaluable contributions to the history of the Holocaust experience in the region. They help us learn about how, and to what extent, those who

¹³ In 1939, when World War II broke out in Poland, both men had been living in Poland's capital city, Warsaw. At the time, Kaplan- who was born in 1880- was fifty-nine years old; and, born in either 1878 or 1879 (the exact date of which is under contention) Korczak was approximately sixty years old. Betty Jean Lifton, *The King of Children: the Life and Death of Janusz Korczak* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000), 13; and Adir Cohen, *The Gate of Light: Janusz Korczak, the Educator and Writer Who Overcame the Holocaust* (Toronto: Associated University Press, 1994), 13.

¹⁴ Chaim Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, trans. Abraham I. Katsh (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 12-13; American-Isreali Coperative Enterprise, "Janusz Korczak: 1878-1942," 2009, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Korczak.htm>; Cohen, *Gate of Light*, 1; Harald Neilsen and Chris Webb, "Introduction to the Ghettos of the Holocaust: Janusz Korczak," Holocaust Education and Archive Research Team, 2007. <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ghettos/Korczak.html>.

lived through the Holocaust's horrors understood the Nazis' racial policies, were affected by the racial segregation of, relocation to, the abhorrent living conditions rife in the Warsaw ghetto, as well as the nature of the ghetto's administration- the *Judenräte*.

This chapter first provides a brief biography of each diarist, and then attempts to analyze the importance of identity and the different ways that their particular identities shaped their individual wartime experiences. This discussion will include factors such as age, gender, class standing, socio-political roles, geographic location, etc. Both men lived and wrote the majority of their diaries in the Warsaw ghetto, thus this chapter will use these two rich sources to analyze the following issues dealing with the occupation and life in the Warsaw ghetto: Kaplan and Korczak's response to the ghettoization of Warsaw and forced relocation to the ghetto, Kaplan's criticism of the Warsaw *Judenrat*, or Jewish council, and Korczak's depiction of living conditions within the ghetto.

Eastern Europe was the first European front affected by the Nazis' racial ideologies, namely that of their *Lebensraum* ideology or their plan for "race and space."¹⁵ The Nazis viewed the entire Polish race as lesser humans; they cared little for Polish lives in general and even less for the lives of the Polish Jewry. The Nazis had no desire or intent to preserve Polish lives, but rather, wanted to rid the land of the Poles in order to create space for what they considered to be more valued races of people.¹⁶ Upon conquering Poland, the Nazis immediately began seizing

¹⁵ The Nazi racial ideology, *Lebensraum*, was a two-part concept- first, the Nazis wanted to racially purify Europe by annihilating the Jews and other undesirables, and second, they wanted to spatially expand their territory and fill it with their perfect ideological 'Aryan' race. Bergen, *War and Genocide*, 101; and Ihor Kamenetsky, *Secret Nazi Plan for Eastern Europe: a Study of Lebensraum Policies* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1961), 35-41, 49-55.

¹⁶ Nazi Germany's racial ideology, concerning the Poles and Polish Jews, was further compounded by the large numbers of Jews living in the region. In 1939, approximately ten percent of the Polish population was Jewish; this means that of the 33,000,000 people living in Poland, 3,300,000 were Jews. By the end of 1939 in Warsaw alone, where nearly 400,000 Jews were living, the Jewish population outnumbered the entire population of Jews remaining

large numbers of those individuals they deemed subhuman (that is, Jews, Slavs, Gypsies, and handicapped individuals), and began forcing millions of people to move and leave their homes. They resettled those they viewed as desirable peoples or races, while robbing, evicting, enslaving, and/or killing those they viewed as lesser, subhumans or races of people.¹⁷ While meeting with his high command, on 22 August 1939, Hitler announced that relation with Poland had become intolerable and laid his plan for the campaign against Poland to be one of annihilation: “It is not a question of reaching a specific line or a new frontier, but rather the annihilation of the enemy, which must be pursued in ever new ways... Execution harsh and remorseless.”¹⁸ Nazi Germany sought to destroy Poland, as a nation, annex and divide its territories, and run the country as an extension of the Reich.

Poland reacted to the Nazi invasion with a patriotic zeal and dedication, but did so with poor assessment of its militant strengths versus those of Nazi Germany.¹⁹ Lasting over five years, the war in Poland was unmistakably brutal. From September 1939 to January 1945, over fifteen percent of Poland’s entire population perished.²⁰ Wartime Poland was the geographic

throughout the Reich-Protectorat area; this was a regional area defined as the Third Reich, “Greater Germany,” or the wartime Nazi empire, and it included the cities of the Reich and the Bohemian-Moravia Protectorat. These statistics regarding the population ratio clearly depicts just how significant these numbers were. The Nazis’ racial mentality towards the Polish population, combined with the large numbers of Polish Jews in the region, considerably contributed to the brutality of Nazi policies enacted in the region. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 64; and Donald D. Wall, *Germany & World War II* (New York: West Publishing Company, 1997), 136-37.

¹⁷ Henri Lichtenberger, *The Third Reich*, trans. Koppel S. Pinson (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 145-159; and Kamenetsky, *Secret Nazi Plan for Eastern Europe*, 35-41, 49-55.

¹⁸ Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution: the Nazis Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939-1941* (Lawrence, KA: the University Press of Kansas, 2007), 41-42. Prior to invading Poland, Nazi Germany had already mapped out its plans for the country- the Nazis intended to conquer, occupy, and divide Poland into two parts (the incorporated territories and the *Generalgouvernement*). The Jewish populations throughout Poland were to be ejected from the areas of Danzig, West Prussia, Poznań, and Eastern Upper Silesia, which were to become the incorporated territories. This meant that the territories integrated into the administration of the Reich and forced east and south, into the interior territory of the country, which was to become known as the *Generalgouvernement*, or the “General Government.” Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 65-66.

¹⁹ Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 65-66.

²⁰ Approximately 6 million Polish individuals died during the war in Poland. Countrystudies.us/Poland/15.htm

grounds for Hitler's experiments in brutality, territorial/regional expansion, and racial ideologies.²¹ Of the three regions under examination, Poland was the first to be invaded, the first of the three regions to succumb to the brutality of the Nazis war machine, as well as the first to forcibly succeed to Nazi-controlled life via occupation.²² The well developed scholarship on Poland during World War II is a detailed record providing evidence that German rule was much more direct and brutal, in Poland, than in was in Western Europe. Ninety percent of Poland's Jewish population (approximately 3.3 million Jews) perished during the Holocaust, and "virtually all of Poland's Jews came to experience the full force of ghettoization, forced labor, and extermination."²³ Accordingly, this body of literature addresses the unparalleled German control, in its duration and brutality, in wartime Poland, and asks questions about the specific local contexts that contributed to the brutal nature of the war in Poland.²⁴ Much of this scholarship deals with crucial socio-historical factors such as the Nazis' policies, the 'Jewish question,' the 'Final Solution,' responses of victims and bystander, the ghettoization process of Eastern Europe, the Polish ghettos, and the Jewish councils, and how these factors shaped the specific, local case of Poland during World War II.²⁵

²¹ Lichtenberger, *The Third Reich*, 145-159; and Kamenetsky, *Secret Nazi Plan for Eastern Europe*, 35-41, 49-55.

²² Throughout the occupied regions of Europe, the Nazis' schemes and policies, both fundamentally and in the means by which they were carried out varied. Many aspects of the war such as the timeline and the Nazis' overall scheme (that is, their overall racial ideologies, goals, policies, and implementations of the various policies) varied. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 64; and Wall, *Germany and World War II*, 136-137.

²³ Donald L. Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1998), 6-7.

²⁴ When dealing with personal narrative and types of sources, such as diaries of the victims, "Seeing the Holocaust through the eyes of the victims is fraught with difficulties... These difficulties can never be completely overcome, but minimizing them requires some effort to summarize what has been learned so far about Nazi policies and the responses of victims and bystanders... the importance of long-term Jewish-Gentile relations in determining the fate of Jews under Nazi rule." Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival*, 5-10.

²⁵ A few of the key authors and works that will be especially essential to my research regarding Poland are: Yisreal Gutman's, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939-1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt*, Isaiah Trunk's *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe Under Nazi Occupation*, Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Saul S.

Chaim Kaplan and Janusz Korczak: the Importance of Identity

Born in 1880, Chaim Kaplan was fifty-nine when World War II broke out in Poland. A Russian born Jew, Kaplan relocated to and settled in Poland's capital, Warsaw, in 1902.²⁶ There, he founded a Hebrew elementary school that he ran as the principle, for nearly forty years, until the entire Jewish school system was abolished, at the outbreak of World War II. Though Kaplan spent his pre-war life teaching and writing, he is best known for his wartime diary, which is titled *Scroll of Agony*.²⁷ In 1933, Kaplan began to keep a diary, and after the events of 1939, this personal record transformed; from a document of purely personal interest, his wartime record became one that provides a personal narrative of the period in Warsaw, Poland.²⁸ From its first entry, dated 1 September 1939, to its last on 4 August 1942, Kaplan's record of wartime Poland is a consistent, coherent, and detailed chronicle of "a bloody period, of persecution, torture, starvation, deportation, and death," as well as "a record of the Nazi conquest of Poland, the relationship of the Jews and their Polish neighbors, and the internal life of the Jews within the ghetto."²⁹ Kaplan's diary is a record that "mirrors the daily experiences of the author and the ghetto community."³⁰

Friedman's, *A History of the Holocaust*, Tadeusz Piotrowski's *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces, and Genocide in the Second Republic*, as well as Harald Neilson and Chris Webb's study "Introduction to the Ghettos of the Holocaust: Janusz Korczak."

²⁶ Chaim Aaron Kaplan was born in 1880, in Horodyszcze, which was a small city in White Russia and is now the town of Gorodishche in Belarus. Katsh, "Introduction," 12-13.

²⁷ Katsh, "Introduction," 12-13.

²⁸ Israel Gutman, "Forward," in to *Scroll of Agony*, trans. Abraham I. Katsh (New York: the MacMillan Company, 1965), 5.

²⁹ The date of his last entry, on 4 August 1942, marks a significant point in the war's timeline, in Poland- that is, "the time of massive expulsion of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka extermination camp," and is generally agreed that this last entry was composed shortly before his transport to the death camp: Treblinka, where he is believed to have perished sometime between December 1942 and January 1943. Gutman, "Forward," 6; and Katsh, "Introduction," 14.

³⁰ Katsh, "Introduction," 11.

Chaim Kaplan's academic and scholarly background both allowed for and shaped the role that he played during the Holocaust. Kaplan wrote as a European intellectual with an eye for detail. He was well-educated and well-read, as well as fascinated with politics and philosophy.³¹ While in the midst of wartime life in Poland, Kaplan consistently and coherently chronicled his life and experiences. As it was his constant companion within the Warsaw ghetto, Kaplan's diary reveals a great deal about his intellectual life and contains detailed descriptions of his thoughts, information, and conversations he had with friends and acquaintances.³² Kaplan wrote several times a day, and his wartime diary reveals the total dedication with which he composed his observations and comprehension of the war and occupation in Poland.³³ According to Abraham I. Katsh, a leading Kaplan scholar and researcher, Kaplan was "not detached from the scene; indeed, he apparently sought out all possible first hand information, and his descriptions deal with the mood of the time."³⁴ Kaplan's *Scroll of Agony* is incommensurable in magnitude, value, and amount of detail.³⁵ Kaplan's sheer determination to keep a wartime record, as well as his clear intention to have it preserved as a testament, or even a history of the period, most significantly informed and shaped both his wartime experience and chronicle.

³¹ Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 11.

³² Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 11.

³³ Kaplan wrote everyday "in order to include every detail of the horror surrounding him," and according to Kaplan, it was no easy feat to "catch with the pen the knife which cuts down ceaselessly without a drop of pity"- regardless of the difficulties posed in doing so, he continued to write with astonishing regularity and steadfastness. Abraham I. Katsh, "Introduction," to *Scroll of Agony*, trans. Abraham I. Katsh (New York: the MacMillan Company, 1965), 9-11.

³⁴ Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 11. Abraham I. Katsh was a Polish-born Jewish and Hebrew studies scholar, and he is responsible for both the introduction of modern Hebrew to universities throughout the United States and the reproduction and publication of thousands of Jewish documents, that had been under the Soviet Union's control, during the Cold War. He immigrated to New York in 1925, and has, since then translated many crucial Hebrew texts into English. Nadine Brozan, "Abraham I. Katsh, 92, Scholar and Researcher of Judaica," *New York Times*, June 26, 1998, N.Y. /Region Section.<http://www.nytimes.com/1998/07/26/nyregion/Abraham-i-katsh-92-solar-and-researcher-of-judaica.html>.

³⁵ *Scroll of Agony* is "the only major document of the period written in the Hebrew language," and "provides a full account of the beginning of Nazi dominance in Poland, an account that adds immeasurably to our understanding of the methods of Nazi conquest." Katsh, "Introduction," 10.

Kaplan's diary entries make it clear that he considered his diary to be of more significance and value than his own life. According to Katsh, "At the worst moments, on the brink of destruction, Kaplan sustained himself with the hope that his treasure, the diary, would be saved." Emphasizing his argument, Katsh goes on to further emphasize this well-researched theory by continuing on to state that: "His own future worried him little: the fate of his chronicle was his main concern."³⁶ Kaplan composed *Scroll of Agony* with the determined, conscious purpose of recording the events of the period and communicating with others. His diary is a testament to his awareness that he was writing for history.³⁷ Writing as though he is speaking directly to the reader, the way in which Kaplan formatted and wrote his diary's entries inferences that he was intent on having an audience for his composition:

The whole nation is sinking in a sea of horror and cruelty... I do not know whether anyone else is recording the daily events... Anyone who keeps such a record endangers his life, but this doesn't alarm me. I sense within me the magnitude of this hour and my responsibility to it. I have an inner awareness that I am fulfilling a national obligation. My words are not rewritten, momentary reflexes shape them. Perhaps their value lies in this... My record will serve as source material for the future historian.³⁸

Dated 16 January 1941, this entry from his diary absolutely, lacking any doubt, infers that Kaplan wrote to record and communicate with others. Blending his own personal perspective and version of events with the historical contexts of the period, Kaplan's diary provides a detailed record that blends personal experience and socio-political contextual information, and chronicles

³⁶ Katsh, "Introduction," 10.

³⁷ For additional notes, see: Ringelblum's *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, Volume II, pages 339-334; Jacob Sloan, "Introduction," to *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: the Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, trans. Jacob Sloan (New York: the MacMillan Company, 1958), ix-x, xv-xxi; Carmelo Lisciotto and Chris Webb, "Emmanuel Ringelblum: the Creator of 'Oneg Shabbat'," The Holocaust Education and Archival Research Team, 2007, <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ghettos/ringelblum.html>; Katsh, "Introduction," to *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: the Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, trans. Jacob Sloan (New York: the MacMillan Company, 1958), 14; and Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: the Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, trans. Jacob Sloan Sloan (New York: the MacMillan Company, 1958), 92-95.

³⁸ Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 9.

both the history of the period's events and horrors in Poland, as well as his own individual, personal perspective of them.

Janusz Korczak's *Ghetto Diary* was not composed as neatly as that of Kaplan's diary. Korczak's diary is an informative, well-written, and intense account of the period. Sporadic at first, by May 1942, he began keeping a more consistent and regular record of his experiences. Korczak's *Ghetto Diary* is one of the only consistent records of the three-month time period from May to July 1942. It is an astoundingly deep, well-thought out, and well-written record of the brutally intense conditions under which, as inmates of the ghetto, he and his young orphans were forced to live.³⁹ The atmosphere and tone that runs throughout Korczak's wartime record expresses the terrible brutality and inhumanity that he was forced to witness and endure for almost three years. The intensity, honesty, and depiction of events expressed in Korczak's record is both shocking and appalling; there is a conveyance of deep vulnerability, sadness, and tragedy all throughout the record. Korczak's voice as an author- while very different from Kaplan's- is of equal merit, but in terms of deciphering the exact dates in which some entries were composed, there are times throughout the text that it becomes quite unorganized and difficult to discern.⁴⁰ The reasoning for this discrepancy between the two Polish diarists records lies in the essential, contrasting divergence of the two men's specific particular purpose during the Holocaust.⁴¹ Kaplan's entire being and motivation, while living within the Warsaw ghetto, was dedicated to observing and recording the period's events in his diary. Korczak also held an element of sheer determination about him, but unlike Kaplan's focus on writing a history of the events of the war

³⁹ Newerly, "Preface," 79-83.

⁴⁰ Janusz Korczak, *Ghetto Diary*, trans. Jerzy Bachrach and Barbara Krzywicka (Vedder), (New York: the Holocaust Library, 1978), 79-189.

⁴¹ Korczak, *Ghetto Diary*, 79-189; and Igor Newerly, "Preface," to *Ghetto Diary*, by Janusz Korczak, trans. Jerzy Bachrach and Barbara Krzywicka (Vedder), (New York: the Holocaust Library, 1978), 76.

in Poland, Korczak directed his absolute determination towards the orphan children of *Dom Sierot*; more than anything else, this facet of Korczak's wartime life most significantly influenced his wartime experiences.

Though he is relatively unknown in America, in Europe Janusz Korczak's fame rivals even that of Anne Frank's for his renowned life's devotion to the orphaned children of Warsaw. It is for his work with children, as well as his voluntary deportation to the Nazi concentration camp Treblinka, in August 1942, that Korczak is remembered most. This fact is easily represented through the many texts, books and articles that have been devoted to depicting and discussing Korczak's dedication to children. One such example is the following lines written by the Polish scholar, Tadeusz Lewowicki, which are found in his article "Janusz Korczak (1878-1942)": "He set the highest value in his life on the happiness of children, and their smiling, unhampered development. In fact, he devoted his entire life to trying to bring happiness to more and more children."⁴² He was a remarkable man. Janusz, himself, once wrote that "The lives of great men are like legends- difficult but beautiful," and according to Betty Jean Lifton, who is one of the leading Korczak scholars in America, this was true of his life.

By the time he had moved his orphanage into the ghetto, Korczak had received many viable opportunities to escape such a fate, but to each offered opportunity Korczak politely replied that he would rather stay with his orphans.⁴³ From the time of the first Nazi attacks, many of Korczak's highly placed and/or Gentile friends and associates had plead with him to escape what they viewed and understood as the inevitable transportation and destruction of his orphans

⁴² Among his other credentials, Lewowicki is the Professor of general education at Warsaw University. Tadeusz Lewowicki, "Janusz Korczak(1878-1942)," *Prospects: the Quarterly Review of Comparative Education* 24, no. 1/2(Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education, 2000), <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/publications/ThinkersPDF/korzake.PDF>, 1.

⁴³ Lifton, *The King of Children*, 262-265.

and orphanage. One such example is in the following excerpt from Betty Jean Lifton's text, *The King of Children*, which is a transcribed and translated conversation between Korczak and his close friend, Igor Newerly:

‘Everyone’s worried about your going into the ghetto with the children,’
Newerly told him, ‘Just say the word and we’ll get you false identity papers to
live on our side.’
‘And the children?’
‘We’ll try to hide as many as we can in monasteries and private homes....’
‘But can you guarantee me that every child will be safe?’⁴⁴

When Newerly's response affirmed to Korczak that there could be no absolute guarantee of all of the children's safety, Korczak simply responded: “My Friend, it is best that I keep the children with me.”⁴⁵ Even after witnessing the destruction of his long-time home and the terrible conditions making its mark upon Warsaw and its population, Korczak stayed strong and passionate in his determination to continue caring for the children under his care. When offered opportunities to escape, go into hiding, and essentially save his own life, Korczak's only reply *ever* seems to have been: “And the Children?”

Kaplan and Korczak's: the Ghettoization of Warsaw and Forced Relocation to the Ghetto

As inmates of the Warsaw ghetto in central Poland, both Kaplan and Korczak were witnesses to the region's bloody war of persecution, deprivation, torture, starvation, extreme suffering, deportation, and genocide, and their diaries are a testament to the “the Nazi conquest of Poland, the relationship of the Jews and their Polish neighbors, and the internal life of the

⁴⁴ *The King of Children* is a biography-type text centered around Korczak and his life's work with and for children. Lifton, *The King of Children*, 262.

⁴⁵ Lifton, *The King of Children*, 263.

Jews within the ghetto.”⁴⁶ The ghettoization of Warsaw began in fall 1939, the Warsaw ghetto was established in October 1940, and by the end November 1940, the ghetto was segregated and sealed off from the non-Jewish population.⁴⁷ The concept of the ‘ghetto’ was coined and originated in the Middle Ages as a means to confine the Jewish populations living throughout Christian Europe and Islamic Asia to specific residential areas, and beginning in Western Poland in the fall 1939, Nazi Germany revived the concept in a new form.⁴⁸ During the five years of war and occupation, over 350 ghettos were established in Nazi-occupied eastern Europe, and they were most often found in slums and were overcrowded with Jews- local Jews from the closest villages nearby, and usually, Jewish ‘stateless’ refugees from Germany and Western Europe.⁴⁹ Nearly all of the ghettos established by the Nazis were governed by *Judenrätes* (Jewish councils), which were in turn governed and controlled by the Nazis, were poorly supplied with necessary food and medical resources, and experienced high mortality rates.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ The date of his last entry, on 4 August 1942, marks a significant point in the war’s timeline, in Poland- that is, “the time of massive expulsion of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka extermination camp,” and is generally agreed that this last entry was composed shortly before his transport to the death camp: Treblinka, where he is believed to have perished sometime between December 1942 and January 1943. Gutman, “Forward,” 6; and Katsh, “Introduction,” 14.

⁴⁷ The General government, “officially called the General Government of Occupied Polish Territories,” was composed of the four districts: Krakow, Lublin, Radom, and Warsaw (a fifth, Galicia, was later added). In October 1939, Warsaw was established as one of four districts in the General Government (Generalgouvernement), which was comprised of the areas of Poland that were directly controlled. The result was the exploitation of Warsaw’s “human, agricultural, and industrial resources to the benefit of the Reich,” and “this exploitation involved forced labor at home or in Germany, near starvation resulting from confiscation of agricultural products, and destruction of their cultural and educational institutions.” For the Jewish populations throughout the General Government, this meant that, in addition to being exploited in these ways, “they were also ghettoized starting in 1940 and sent to extermination camps two years later.” Niewyk and Nicosia, *The Columbia Guide to the Holocaust*, 20-201, 212-213.

⁴⁸ In the early ghettos of the Middle Ages, “some were walled in, but most were not. At the time Jews did not find them objectionable since they, too, wanted to minimize contact with their neighbors. By the nineteenth century, ghettos had disappeared from Europe.” Donald Niewyk and Francis Nicosia, *The Columbia Guide to the Holocaust*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 227.

⁴⁹ Holocaust ghettos were also established in “Transnistria, Greece and Hungary. There were no true ghettos in Germany or Western Europe, with the exception of Theresienstadt in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Niewyk and Nicosia, *The Columbia Guide to the Holocaust*, 227.

⁵⁰ The Jewish councils, of the eastern European ghettos, “were granted a degree of autonomy as long as they followed German orders.” Niewyk and Nicosia, *The Columbia Guide to the Holocaust*, 227.

Kaplan's *Scroll of Agony* is a record that "mirrors the daily experiences of the author and the ghetto community."⁵¹ As a man who approached keeping a diary as a task similar to keeping an essential history of the period, Kaplan's diary is filled with many personal references to the political, social, and economic structures, conditions, and events that made up and maintained both the ghettoization process and the ghetto. In the months preceding the establishment of the Warsaw, Kaplan's entries are filled with ruminations on the potential threat of a ghetto coming to Warsaw. On 26 September, he wrote: "The business of the ghetto is cropping up again... we are seized by fear. When we remember what happened to the Lodz ghetto, we are seized by fear. We must have some consolation in the fact that Warsaw, unlike Lodz, has not been made a part of the Reich," and on 3 October: "The fear of the ghetto has passed. A rumor is widespread that the matter has been postponed- some say for a month, other say for three months... we don't feel ourselves saved. It is not yet complete redemption."⁵² These two entries are remarkable in that Kaplan employs the personal pronoun, "we," not "I." Seemingly, speaking as the voice of the Warsaw Jewish community, he wrote about the fear and confusion that was plaguing them.

In the 3 October entry, Kaplan continued: "But the very thought of a ghetto has left an impression on our nerves. It is hard to live in a time when you are not sure of tomorrow, and there is no greater torture than waiting. It is the torture of those condemned to die."⁵³ Kaplan consistently wrote in this way, and not once in either of the two entries does he make use of "I" or even reference how he felt, he only discusses the Jewish community as a unit- he and them, together as one, in fear of persecution. In doing so, he revealed not only the level of fear and

⁵¹ Katsh, "Introduction," 11.

⁵² Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 200-203.

⁵³ Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 213.

confusion that was being stirred up over the possibility and posed threat of a ghetto, but also a sense of unity within the Warsaw Jewish community. On 21 September 1939, the head of the Nazi Security Police, Reinhard Heydrich, ordered the forced concentration of the Jewish population, located throughout the occupied territories of Poland, in large cities, and less than one year later, on 12 October 1940, a new decree was put in place that announced that a ghetto would be established in Warsaw. This ghetto decree required all Jews living in the city to relocate to the stipulated, designated area. When the ghetto edict made clear that a ghetto was certainly coming to Warsaw, in his historian-like style, Kaplan recorded his thoughts and understanding of the edict's terms and emphasized the racial segregation of the ghettoization process.

Referencing the edict for the first time, on 12 October, Kaplan addressed the edict's stipulations, saying: "Before the thirty first of October the Jews who live in the streets outside the walls must move lock, stock and barrel to the streets within the walls; and all the Aryans (read Poles) living in the streets within the walls must move to the Aryan quarter."⁵⁴ He follows this technical information about the edict with his personal understanding of the Nazi persecutor's intent behind the edict: "Nazism wants to separate everyone- the lords by themselves, the underlings by themselves, the slaves by themselves. The blessed and the accursed must not mingle."⁵⁵ This brief statement shows Kaplan acknowledging and accentuating the racial segregation that was central to the Ghettoization process, and in his inference that the Jews were accursed slaves, he reveals the anti-Semitic sentiments and racism inherent in the edict's stipulations. In the time span of just under two months, readers see Kaplan

⁵⁴ Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 208.

⁵⁵ Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 208.

reveal his response to the Ghettoization of Warsaw and the Nazi racial policies that were being implemented in the region.

Kaplan continues this discussion by identifying the horrible possibility of compressing a large sector of Warsaw's society into a small portion of the city: "A hundred and twenty thousand people will be driven out of their homes and will have to find sanctuary and shelter within the walls. Where will we put this great mass of people?"⁵⁶ Statistically speaking, the established Warsaw ghetto only covered approximately 2.4 percent of the city, whereas approximately 30 percent of the city's population was Jewish. Therefore, even from the outset, as Kaplan's question suggests, the ratio of the ghetto's land coverage to that of the number of people that were to be forcibly relocated into its walls was one worthy of concern.⁵⁷ In another entry, dated just two days later on 14 October 1940, while the ghettoization process in Warsaw was still relatively new, Kaplan further emphasized the growing population problem: "This quarter of narrow, crowded streets is full to capacity with refugees from the provincial towns. There is no room in the ghetto- not an empty crack, not an unoccupied hole."⁵⁸ Thus, Kaplan's diary reveals that within the first week of the spread of common-knowledge of a ghetto coming to Warsaw, concerns over population were already rising.

Like Kaplan's diary, Korczak's diary also contains his response to the Ghettoization of Warsaw. Korczak became the director and main-leader of the Warsaw Jewish children's orphanage, *Dom Sierot*, in 1911.⁵⁹ From its inception, *Dom Sierot* was located on 92 Krockmalna Street in a three-story spacious building. In November 1940, when Jewish relocation became

⁵⁶ Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 208.

⁵⁷ Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 60.

⁵⁸ Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 209.

⁵⁹ Lifton, *The King of Children*, 31-32, 39-42; Elie Wiesel, "Introduction," 1-2; Lewowicki, "Janusz Korczak," 5-6, 7-8; Nielsen and Webb, "Janusz Korczak;" and American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, "Janusz Korczak."

forced, Korczak moved his orphaned children, with him, into the ghetto.⁶⁰ In May 1942, Korczak directly references sixty boy and sixty girls living in two different dormitories, but he also indirectly references others: “The door to the boys’ dormitory is open. There are sixty of them. A bit farther east are sixty girls... The rest are on the top floor. It is May, and although it has been cold the older boys can, in a pinch, sleep in the top-floor hall.” Not only does this excerpt provide us with an approximation of the number of children in his care, but it also is a record of the same issue of overcrowding that Kaplan depicted in his diary. Sixty children in one dormitory cannot have provided nearly enough living space. Korczak’s statement that, though its cold, “in a pinch,” some of the older children can sleep in the hall upstairs, is an honest and terribly sad depiction emphasizing the overcrowded conditions within the ghetto- it also serves as a clear delineation of the affects and changes that forced relocation into the ghetto had in Korczak’s life and in the lives of those he observed and oversaw.

Living in a place where “half a million people were squeezed in on top of one another without sufficient food, housing, or heat, and where typhus had decimated those who had not succumbed to malnutrition and cold,” Kaplan wrote: “I am convinced that in a future rational society the dictatorship of the clock will come to an end. To sleep and eat when you feel like it... I do not like to sleep at night because then I cannot sleep in the daytime. Bread and water taste better at night. It is nonsense to put a child to bed for ten hours of uninterrupted sleep.”⁶¹ In addition to thoughts and ponderings about his children, life, and death, Korczak also seemed to struggle with the terrible reality that his freedom and liberty as a human being had been stripped

⁶⁰ Zeitlin, “The Last Walk of Janusz Korczak,” 28, 31; Lifton, *The King of Children*, 263; American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, “Janusz Korczak;” and Nielsen and Webb, “Janusz Korczak.”

⁶¹ Korczak, *Ghetto Diary*, 23.

from him, as well as his new position in Warsaw's social order as less than a person: "How lucky that the doctors and police cannot prescribe how many times I may be allowed to breath per minute, how many times my heart has the right to beat." This excerpt clearly points to the curfew and time-related restrictions that were a part of his new life in the ghetto.

Unlike Kaplan's record, Korczak's is more about his struggle as a "spiritual and moral man" who was struggling to protect the innocent young victims, in his care, from the atrocities and horrendous living conditions taking shape all around them.⁶² Most days, he seems to have made an attempt to keep his spirits up to some degree- writing about the difficult day ahead of him or the tremendous amount of responsibility hovering directly over his head- but some days, he goes as far as to ruminate on the idea of suicide: "There can be nothing no experience) more loathsome than an unsuccessful attempt at suicide... I could have taken my own life. What then... I would fall asleep so full of mental anguish that a protest would rise within me."⁶³ Clearly, after living within the ghetto for almost two years, ghetto life was taking a great toll on Korczak, and over time Korczak's entries began to discuss sickness and death with increasing frequency.⁶⁴ Korczak began writing his entries with a kind of desperation in his voice. In the same entry in which Korczak discussed his daydreams and thoughts about taking his own life, he also referenced the growing number of children under his care because of the war and occupation: "For rest and relaxation I moved to the children's hospital. The city is casting children my way, like little sea shells- and I am just good to them. I ask neither where they come from, nor for how long or where they are going, for good or evil... Children recover, or die- as

⁶² Lifton, "Who was Janusz Korczak," in *Ghetto Diary* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2003), xi.

⁶³ Korczak, *Ghetto Diary*, 37-38.

⁶⁴ Lifton, "Who was Janusz Korczak," x.

always in a hospital.⁶⁵ This entry not only raises the issue of the growing number of orphaned children living in the Warsaw ghetto, but once again, readers see Korczak contemplate death.

Korczak once referenced the Warsaw ghetto as the “district of the damned,” which is a true revelation of his spirits and mentality during much of the period.⁶⁶ On 15 May 1942, Korczak wrote: “When cut off from Warsaw I fell fiercely nostalgic. Warsaw is mine and I am Warsaw’s. I’ll say more- I am her. Together with her I have rejoiced and I have grieved, her weather was my weather, her rain, her soil mine as well... Lately we have grown apart to some extent. New streets, new sections have been built which I no longer understood. For years now I’ve felt like a foreigner.”⁶⁷ These lines portray Korczak’s deep connection with Warsaw, as well as his genuine sadness at being cast out from the city’s society. Interestingly he writes about the ghetto as though it is not a part of the city, and a few entries later, he continued along these same lines: “The Polish language knows no such work as ‘homeland.’ Fatherland is too much and it is difficult. Is one only a Jew or perhaps a Pole as well? Perhaps not fatherland but a little house with a garden? Does not a peasant love his fatherland?”⁶⁸ Though the essence of Korczak’s text is very different from Kaplan’s it still reads as a wartime diary attesting to the period’s atrocities as its author saw and understood them. Korczak’s *Ghetto Diary* is a testament to the change wrought by the ghetto edict and forced relocation to the Warsaw ghetto, not only to his own existence, but also to that of the lives of the over one-hundred children under his care.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Korczak, *Ghetto Diary*, 39.

⁶⁶ Lifton, “Who was Janusz Korczak, x.

⁶⁷ Korczak, *Ghetto Diary*, 29.

⁶⁸ Korczak, *Ghetto Diary*, 37.

⁶⁹ There is no definite date for this entry because Korczak’s diary does not reference exact days. Often he provides no date, at all, but other times he provides the month and year- as he did with this particular entry. Korczak, *Ghetto Diary*, 11-12.

Kaplan's Criticism of the Warsaw *Judenrat*

The wartime Jewish ghetto was a complex system and structure. In each region the process varied, but in general terms, ghettoization was the concentration and segregation of Jewish communities all throughout Eastern Europe. The resulting product, the ghetto system, was a major step for the Nazis programs of spatial expansion and racial cleansing.⁷⁰

Fundamentally, ghettos were structures that were segregated from the outside, non-Jewish populations and forced to comply with housing restrictions, movement regulations, identification measures, and the establishment of a new type of solely-Jewish administration that was totally subordinate to and controlled by the German authorities.⁷¹ From October 1940 till August 1942, talk of the Warsaw ghetto, ghetto-life, and the *Judenrat*, make up most of Kaplan's wartime discussions. His diary reveals a personal history. Kaplan's diary is a record of the establishment of the Warsaw ghetto, its quarantine from the public, and the mass transportations leaving the ghetto.

Through the *Judenrats*, or "Jewish Councils," the ghetto was the dispenser of administrative services, a social and economic experiment, as well as a state of mind in which its principle characteristic was the segregation of its Jewish inhabitants from the rest of the non-Jewish population.⁷² On 20 March 1941, Kaplan recorded his feelings towards the Warsaw ghetto's political and governmental head, the Warsaw *Judenrat*. The entry reflects the corrupt nature of the ghetto's political sphere, society, and even economic structures:

To our disgrace the *Judenrat* [Jewish Council] used it [the Labor Battalion] for its own needs and its own budget. The *Judenrat* was ordered to furnish a certain

⁷⁰ Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 41.

⁷¹ Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 42.

⁷² Hilberg, "The Ghetto as a Form of Government," 100.

contingent of youths for work, several thousand daily. But a postscript was added to the whole ugly project: If you give a ransom you can go free. Someone who has no money will take your place.⁷³

Kaplan is both recognizing the existence of, and expressing his disdain for, the *Judenrat*'s abuse of power and monetary corruption. Kaplan provides a personal and particular take on the Warsaw *Judenrat*'s exploitation and monopoly of the Labor Battalion to suit its own needs, endemic acceptance of bribes, and distribution of personal value based on societal status or monetary worth. The entry reflects the historical accuracy that abuses of power and corruption were common within the *Judenrat*'s administration. Bribery was a more successful means than the legal methods of 'petitioning/appealing' and/or 'intercessions/negotiations.' Bribes were both widespread and highly prevalent within the ghettos. Offers to influence the transfer of a particularly bothersome or worrying policeman or other official, the payment of a ransom on young girls to release them from forced prostitution, and the tender of money to avert one's, or one's family's, transport (i.e. "resettlement") were commonplace bribes prevalent in the ghettos.⁷⁴ Kaplan's claim that, "if you give a ransom you can go free," provides his historically accurate, particular understanding of the bribery system within the Warsaw ghetto.⁷⁵

Kaplan's statement, "Someone who has no money will take your place," also has a significant resonance. With the beginning of mass deportations, Jews all throughout Eastern Europe were being forced to take extreme measures.⁷⁶ The fact that the councils were usually responsible for organized confiscations, forced labor, and even delivering Jewish victims for transport to the death camps emphasizes the extremity and hopelessness of the Jewish case. The

⁷³ Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 258.

⁷⁴ Hilberg, "The Ghetto as a Form of Government," 103.

⁷⁵ Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 258.

⁷⁶ Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 258.

councils believed that cooperating with the Nazis and delivering a part of the community, or a number of individuals specified by the Germans, meant that they could save the majority of the population and allow them to choose the “less worthy.”⁷⁷ Furthermore, Kaplan’s March 1941 entry also sheds light on the concepts of the criticism and scrutiny of the ghettos system and the establishment itself. The *Judenrats* were established to be a device meant to implement and carry out Nazi orders and policies regarding the Jews. The council the authority that distributed food, apportioned apartments and work, administered public services, and collected taxes. In March 1941, an announcement appeared in the *Gazeta Żydowska* that informed the ghetto public that “in accordance with instructions from the authorities, Jews in Warsaw may turn to a representative of the regime only through the auspices of the *Judenrat*.”⁷⁸ This meant that the *Judenrat* the solitary means by which hundreds, even thousands, of Jews could reach the authorities or the outside world.⁷⁹

As a complex and integral part of the ghetto, it is understandable that the *Judenrat* came under much scrutiny. In his March 1941 diary entry, Kaplan clearly and obviously attacks the Warsaw *Judenrat*’s shortcomings. According to Yisreal Gutman, “evaluations of the *Judenrat*’s policy and comments on the people who headed it are among the most frequently developed subjects in the chronicles and diaries written in the [Warsaw] ghetto.” The strongest of all indictments made was against the *Judenrat*’s social policy. The council’s social policy was particularly attacked for its allocation and arrangement of the tax burden and their methods of mobilizing enlistments for labor camps. Under the despairing and cruel conditions within the

⁷⁷ Hilberg, "The Ghetto as a Form of Government," 103.

⁷⁸ The *Gazeta Żydowska* was a Polish publication under the influence and sway of Nazi Germany. It, like nearly every other aspect in and of Poland, was certainly under the Nazis control. Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 473; for original source, see: *Gazeta Żydowska*, 46 (December 27, 1940); 21 (March 14, 1941).

⁷⁹ Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 77-79.

ghetto, it is understandable that the general population aimed its venom and unhappy feelings at the institution that was the representative and mediator for the occupational regime that was inflicting all of their burdens and hardships upon them.⁸⁰

Reflecting Gutman's argument that the *Judenrat* was often criticized for its under management, and its seemingly derelict administrative policies, Kaplan criticizes the *Judenrat* for using the Labor Battalion for its own purposes rather than using it to help meet the growing needs of the ghetto's inhabitants. In another, later entry, on 29 July 1942, Kaplan even more disdainfully criticizes the *Judenrat*, the Jewish police, and their rampant corruption:

The Nazis are satisfied with the work of the Jewish police, the plague the Jewish organism, and the police too are satisfied...because they are lining their pockets. Besides taking bribes, they also steal and rob. How? This criminal police force is the child of the criminal *Judenrat*... With their misdeeds they besmirch the name of Polish Jewry which was stained even without this.⁸¹

Further reinforcing his criticism of the *Judenrat*, Kaplan calls the organization of the "Jewish police" the criminal child of the *Judenrat*, and even worse, "the Jewish plague." Further emphasizing his disdain, he continues: "the policemen traffic in bread. These loaves of bread, which the police force get in abundance free of charge, are sold to the oppressed captives at 80 zloty a loaf... they are growing rich on these profits."⁸² Depicting their bribery and thievery in vivid detail, Kaplan leaves no question as to his opinion the Warsaw ghetto's administration.

Korczak's Depiction of Living Conditions within the Warsaw Ghetto

Excerpts from Korczak's diary reveal that growing hunger, starvation, and overcrowding were serious issues plaguing the Warsaw ghetto, and while discussing the endemic and

⁸⁰ Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 78.

⁸¹ Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 329.

⁸² Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 329.

significant lack of food in the ghetto and his orphans' resulting malnutrition and drastic monthly weight loss, in one such excerpt, dated in May 1942, Korczak addresses these problematic elements of the ghetto's living conditions: "The day began with weighing the children. The month of May has brought a marked decline."⁸³ The widespread lack of food and prevalent issue of starvation that existed amongst the Jewish populations in the ghetto was a product of several important factors that influenced daily life in the Warsaw ghetto. Partly to blame, is the fact that every part of ghetto life was controlled, and its walls created a barricade between the Jews and the outside channels which supplied food and other necessary resources.⁸⁴ In addition, the Jewish population was subjected to the highest level of discrimination within the rationing system, and the official Jewish rations distributed in wartime Poland equated only approximately fifteen percent of what is considered the normal daily minimum requirement.⁸⁵ Where Germans were apportioned 2,613 calories per day and Gentile Polish individuals received 699 calories per day, the Jews were only provided with food-rations equating around 184 calories per day.⁸⁶

Though these statistics are approximations, taken from a questionnaire found in a Polish source

⁸³ Korczak, *Ghetto Diary*, 45.

⁸⁴ The Warsaw ghetto was surrounded by walls topped with barbed wire that were approximately 11 miles, or 18 kilometers, long and 10 feet, or 3 meters, high. Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 60.

⁸⁵ These statistics come from a questionnaire that was secretly filled out in the Warsaw ghetto that established the daily caloric value of food consumed by the various social strata in the ghetto was as follows: *Judenrat* and Supply Authority Officials= 1,665 calories... Statistics and quantities listed are according to the questionnaire on consumption in the ghetto. Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 66-67, 436 (note #7). For original source, see: *Blter far Geshikhte*, II: 1-4 (1949), 277, From the Yaad Vashem Archive, O-33/258 (Szymkowicz's diary; Polish), p. 90. Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 66-67, 436 (note #7).

⁸⁶ Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 66, 436 (note #6), 474. For original source, see: Madajczyk, Czestaw. *Polityka III Rzeszy w Okupowanej Polsce*. Vols. I-II. Warsaw 1970 (specifically Vol. II, p. 71). This questionnaire was in the Polish source Czestaw madajczyk's *Polityka III Rzeszy w Okupowanej Polsce*. Most commonly known by its abbreviated name, *Polityka III Rzeszy*, this publication's name came to be translated as "politician (politics; policy) III crowd (reich) in occupied Poland." For translation, see: ECTACO, Inc. Handheld Dictionaries and Translators, "Polityka III Rzeszy," Stream Translation Technologies, LingvoBit (English-Polish translating system), poltran.com (accessed December 2009); Translation from: Poltran.com. Stream Translation Technologies: LingvoBit (English-Polish translating system) which is powered by ECTACO, Inc. Handheld Dictionaries and Translators- © 1990-2009 Ectaco, Inc.

dated in 1941, they provide reasonably accurate numbers that attest to the discrimination that the Warsaw ghetto's Jews were facing in terms of ration distribution. Scholarship from the fields of science and medicine provides clear, concise evidence that human beings must receive a certain proportion of calories per day to survive, and an important question to address is, how long could an individual survive off of such meager provisions? According to the American College of Sports Medicine, daily caloric intake levels should never drop below 1200 for women and 1800 for men.⁸⁷ Without some form of relief or the receipt of food from some other source, these numbers as they are represented in the statistics of wartime rations in Poland, do not even come close to equaling/equating a survivable measurement of food over any long duration of time. Thus, compounding the overwhelming shortage of food and other necessary resources, the Jewish population was banned from purchasing food on the free market and prohibited from receiving food in any way other than the 'official' Nazi-distributed rations.⁸⁸ By enacting policies of discrimination within the rations system and stipulating such a prohibition, the Nazi occupiers guaranteed the abhorrent conditions of hunger and starvation that prevailed throughout the Warsaw ghetto,

The increasingly problematic issues of overpopulation and severe overcrowding also further lent to the distress caused by shortages of necessary food and resources. In the same May 1942 entry, Korczak reasoned that the growing number of restrictions imposed on the Jewish populace was creating a problematic situation of overpopulation within the Warsaw ghetto: "And the restrictions imposed by official regulations, new additional interpretations and overcrowding

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⁸⁸ Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 66-67.

are expected to make the situation still worse.”⁸⁹ Not just Warsaw’s Jewish population, but also Polish Jews from other cities and towns located all over the Warsaw District were being forced to relocate to the Warsaw ghetto. The population density of the ghetto reached 128,000 people living in a square kilometer; this equates over 200,000 people living in a square mile, and at the height of its population density, there were an estimated 9.2 people living in each of the ghetto’s rooms.⁹⁰ This overpopulation only further contributed to the already considerable shortage of resources, supplies, and living space.⁹¹ The entirety of the Warsaw ghetto was composed of approximately 435 acres, only approximately 375 acres assigned as residential space. Additionally, only 73 of the city’s 1,800 streets composed the ghetto’s interior, and most of these were only partially located within the ghetto’s walls. This meant that 30 percent of the total Warsaw population was living in only a meager 2.4 percent of the city.

Conclusion

A product of his education and academic background, Kaplan was an observer of wartime life, especially ghetto life, in wartime Poland. This is reflected in his determined purpose to have his diary not only serve as an observer’s record of the period, but also, in his clear intent and extreme anxiety in regards to the preservation of his diary. Kaplan’s diary is a testament to his awareness that he was writing for history.⁹² Blending his own personal perspective and version of events with the historical contexts of the period, Kaplan’s diary

⁸⁹ Korczak, *Ghetto Diary*, 45.

⁹⁰ Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 60.

⁹¹ Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 66-67.

⁹² In the last days that are chronicled in his diary, Kaplan addresses his ‘awareness that he was writing for history’ outright. In his honest, knowing, and steadfast voice, Kaplan unwaveringly states: “I feel that continuing this diary to the very end of my physical and spiritual strength is a historical mission which must not be abandoned. My mind is still clear. My need to record unstilled, though it is now five days since any real food has passed my lips. Therefore I will not silence my diary!” Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 384-385; and Katsch, “Introduction,” 11

provides a detailed record that blends personal experience and socio-political contextual information, and chronicles both the history of the period's events and horrors in Poland, as well as his own individual, personal perspective of them. Through his employment of precise dates, specific details, and his cultivated, enlightened discussion of the period's events, Kaplan's diary is very much the history of Kaplan's wartime life, and therefore, is a piece of the history of the war in Poland.

As is expressed from the first page of his record, Korczak loved his orphaned children, and wanted to keep them safe; but so is his understanding that such a task was growing more and more increasingly impossible. He was a man overwhelmingly haunted by his deep love for *Dom Sierot*'s orphans and his incapacity to continue to keep them safe. The following lines from the text, "Versions of Holocaust," by Theodore Ziolkowski, best represent Korczak's *Ghetto Diary*'s haunted atmosphere and tragic tone:

Korczak... was a thinker subtle enough to recognize the tragedy of his situation and a writer perceptive enough to analyze his thoughts and feelings as he herded his wards towards their inevitable fate... The Korczak who peers out at us from the front piece of *Ghetto Diary* is a haunted man whose anguished eyes have looked into a hopeless future.⁹³

This depicts the haunted man that can be found within the pages of Korczak's diary, and the message that he was not under any disillusion is clearly conveyed. Accordingly, it seems fair to make the argument that he held no false hopes: "Korczak may have been a visionary and a dreamer, but he was also a pragmatist who had no illusions about human nature."⁹⁴ Korczak was

⁹³ Theodore Ziolkowski is an American scholar who specializes in the academic fields: German studies and comparative literature. He has won many academic honors and awards both in the U.S. and abroad (i.e. the Jacob-und-Wilhelm Grimm Preis- DAAD- and the Order of Merit- First Class- by President Johannes Rau of the Federal Republic of Germany). Since 2001, to the present, he has served as Professor Emeritus at Princeton University, with previous positions served at both Yale and Columbia. Ziolkowski, "Versions of Holocaust," 682.

⁹⁴ Lifton, "Who Was Janusz Korczak, xi.

a thinker, and he paid attention to his environment, which resulted in him understanding better than most that the future was grim.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Lifton, "Who Was Janusz Korczak xi.

CHAPTER II: THE OCCUPATION OF THE NETHERLANDS

The Nature of the War and Occupation in Amsterdam

Chapter II places the two Dutch diarists, Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum, in context and seeks to analyze and reveal what they tell us about the specific context of the Dutch case. Both Frank and Hillesum were Jews living in Amsterdam when the war came to the Netherlands. Anne Frank was a young girl of thirteen, and Etty Hillesum was a young woman of twenty six. Anne's experience was most essentially shaped by her status as a 'Jew in hiding,' Etty's by her work as a typist for the Jewish council, and both recorded their observations during the war and occupation in the Netherlands in their wartime diaries- Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* and Hillesum's *An Interrupted Life*. They help us learn about the nature of the occupation and daily life in Amsterdam, the persecution and conditions that the Jews in Amsterdam were facing, what it meant to be a Jew in exile and a Jew in hiding, the degradation of living conditions within Westerbork transit camp, and the major transports leaving the camp, over-filled with Jews, every day

This chapter first provides a brief biography of both Dutch diarists, and then attempts to analyze and better understand the roles that each diarist's particular identity played in informing their unique wartime experiences. This will involve a discussion of age, gender, geographic location, socio-political roles, etc. As both Frank and Hillesum were observers of the localized war in Amsterdam, this chapter will utilize their diaries to analyze and discuss the following issues dealing within the occupation and life in wartime Amsterdam: Frank and Hillesum's depiction of daily life in and the occupation of Amsterdam, the possibility of escape and what it

meant to be a ‘Jew in hiding,’ and Hillesum’s depiction of the transportation trains leaving Westerbork every day, filled with Jews, for the concentration camps in Eastern Europe.

In May 1940, forced to capitulate and surrender, the entire Dutch government fled into exile and the Nazis gained complete control of political, social, and economic life in the Netherlands. No group in the region suffered more than the Dutch Jews. In 1940, approximately 100,000 Dutch Jews- of Holland's total Jewish population of 140,000- perished- this statistic depicts a mortality rate of over 70 percent. Even taking into account the Holocaust and war throughout the rest of Europe, this is an extraordinarily high percent of the population.⁹⁶ After the Netherlands were forced to capitulate to the German Nazi forces, and the entirety of the Dutch government was forced into exile, the Nazis gained complete control of political, social, and economic life in the Netherlands; and therefore, with no domestic force remaining to stand in the Nazis’ way, the first anti-Jewish measures enacted against the Dutch Jewish population were seen as early as the fall of 1940. On 29 May 1940, the Austrian Nazi, Artur Seyss-Inquart, was made the *Reichskommissar*, and with this appointment, he assumed all of the powers that were normally entrusted to the Dutch monarch and Parliament. This means that, for all intents and purposes, Seyss-Inquart was the new head of the Nazi occupation in the region. That summer, directly following Holland’s capitulation, Seyss-Inquart gave a speech in which he stated that:

The Jews, for us, are not Dutch. They are those enemies with whom we can come to neither an armistice nor to peace. The *Fuhrer* declared that the Jews have played their final act in Europe, and therefore they have played their final act.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Friedman, *History of the Holocaust*, 108.

⁹⁷ Friedman, *History of the Holocaust*, 108-109; see: Friedman’s note on page 418: “IMT, *Trial of Major War Criminals*, V, p. 350.”

These lines said by Seys-Inquart show that, in the summer of 1940, Holland had already witnessed the the Jews being identified and labeled as both 'Jews' and 'enemies of the state.' Then, in August 1940, there was a movement by Prime Minister Gerbandy's government to define and label Dutch Jews, and in October this movement became an implemented policy when a decree defined a 'Jew' as anyone “with three Jewish grandparents or, if he or she were observant, two Jewish grandparents;” and a further, even more noteworthy, decree announced on 18 October, stated that all employed individuals in the region were required to fill out forms regarding their racial backgrounds.⁹⁸ These forms are known as the ‘Aryan Attestation,’ and directly following the legislative requirement of registering racial backgrounds, via these forms, Dutch Jews were systematically dismissed from various positions and job holdings- such as the police, universities, unions, newspapers, as well as various orchestras and the film industry.⁹⁹ Thus, within five short months of the invasion, the consensus-process and labeling of the Jewish population was already well underway.

By the end of 1940, the Dutch Census Office had registered 160, 820 individuals and hundreds of businesses.¹⁰⁰ This identifying, labeling, stigmatizing, and ousting of the Jews was the first, and most innocent, of all Nazis racial policies and anti-Jewish measures that were to be implemented throughout the Netherlands. After the Nazis’ proud implementation of these earlier, preliminary policies, measures against the Jews became more pronounced and took on the new form of isolation from the rest of the Dutch population, involuntary relocation into ghettos, transportation to transit camps, and/or ultimately removal to the concentration camps located

⁹⁸ Friedman, *History of the Holocaust*, 109.

⁹⁹ Presser, *Ashes in the Wind*, 19-24; and Friedman, *History of the Holocaust*, 109.

¹⁰⁰ Friedman, *History of the Holocaust*, 108-109.

throughout Eastern Europe.¹⁰¹ Any Jews who had been unable to either escape or go into hiding, by the beginning of 1942, were systematically sent to the death camps where more 100,000 Jewish individuals perished.¹⁰² The body of scholarship dealing with World War II in the Netherlands chronicles the escalation of Nazi crimes against the Jewish population, the situation within the transit camps located throughout the country, and especially focuses on the high mortality rate of the Jewish population located throughout Holland. This literature often provides a narrative of the war in the Netherlands within the context of a discussion of Western Europe, and Holland's place within the war's history, and asks questions about the specific local contexts that contributed to and shaped the nature of the occupation in the Netherlands.¹⁰³

Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum: the Importance of Identity

The first Dutch diarist, Anne Frank, was a young girl, and the second Dutch diarist, Etty Hillesum, was a young woman.¹⁰⁴ Both lived in Amsterdam during World War II, came from well-to-do backgrounds, and died in concentration camps; Anne Frank perished in Bergen-Belsen and Etty Hillesum in Auschwitz-Birkenau.¹⁰⁵ These two extraordinary individuals “left behind diaries, letter, and stories that have inspired novels, documentaries, music, plays, and various forms of art.” Their wartime lives shared as many commonalities as contrasts. Most of the young Miss Frank's wartime life was spent as a ‘Jew in hiding,’ whereas Etty Hillesum's experiences were most essentially shaped by her work for the Jewish council in Westerbork

¹⁰¹ Presser, *Ashes in the Wind*, 16.

¹⁰² Last and Wolfswinkel, *Anne Frank and After*, 9.

¹⁰³ Some of the key authors and works essential to the research of this chapter are: Wolfswinkel and Last's *Anne Frank and After*; Dr. Pressler's *Ashes in the Wind/ the Destruction of the Dutch Jews*; Lee's *Anne Frank and the Children of the Holocaust*; Enzer and Solotaroff-Enzer's *Anne Frank: Reflections on her Life and Legacy*; and de Costa's “Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum: Diarists.”

¹⁰⁴ Costa, “Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum: Diarists,” 214.

¹⁰⁵ Costa, “Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum: Diarists,” 214.

transit camp. Anne was a young girl of thirteen living in Holland's capital city, Amsterdam, when World War II began, and her wartime experience was most significantly shaped by her status as a young Jewish girl, entirely dependent on her family, and as a 'Jew in hiding.'¹⁰⁶ Anne Frank, was born in Frankfurt, Germany in 1929, and in late 1933, when she was four years old, a sense of foreboding led her father, Otto Frank, to remove his family from their original German home, away from what he saw as the coming dangers posed by the Nazi threat. He relocated his family to the Netherlands.¹⁰⁷ There, the Frank family was transplanted into Dutch life in Amsterdam, where Otto Frank continued his work trading in commodities, and the Frank family became German-Jewish refugees.

On 12 June 1942, Anne's thirteenth birthday, her father bought her a "bright-colored plaid" diary, and within the following month, the Frank family had disappeared into hiding. Though she was destined to never know it, many years after her death, this birthday present would become one the most well-known of all Holocaust diaries.¹⁰⁸ Internationally recognized and most widely read of all testimonial-type texts, Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* is a exemplary record of what she was facing as a young Jewish girl in the region, and as such, it makes for an excellent and distinctive representation of what it meant to be a young Jewish individual living in the war-riddled Netherlands region.¹⁰⁹ Though she was young, Anne's account resembles that of a woman well beyond her years. Frank's diary is a detailed record of one young girl's

¹⁰⁶ Costa, "Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum: Diarists," 215.

¹⁰⁷ "Sixty-three thousand Jews left Germany in 1933... Those who emigrated had to leave behind their way of life, their language, their culture, their relatives, and their friends. Not all countries welcomed Jews, and as the number of refugees grew, escape routes began to close down as Britain, the United States, Holland, and France- among several others- set limits on how many refugees they were willing to take in." Carol Ann Lee, *Anne Frank and the Children of the Holocaust* (New York: Puffin Books, 2006), 34-35.

¹⁰⁸ Friedman, *History of the Holocaust*, 115; and Lee, *Anne Frank and the Children of the Holocaust*, 83.

¹⁰⁹ Sandor Katz, *Anne Frank: Voice of Hope* (New York: Chelsea House, 1996), 8, 53.

experience, living as a Jew, while hiding in the Netherlands, and her entries date from 12 June 1942 to 1 August 1944.¹¹⁰

Initially, it seems that Anne wrote in her diary solely for her own amusement, but in an entry on 29 March 1944, she discusses a radio broadcast that she heard given from London by Gerrit Bolkestein. Bolkestein was a member of the Dutch government in exile, and in this broadcast, he announced that he hoped to compile personal accounts of Dutch suffering under the Nazi occupation and prosecution. He stated that he hoped the personal diaries and memoirs would be made public after the war was over which he claimed would attest to the sufferings of the Dutch people. This broadcast marks a turning point in Anne's diary. From the day she heard the broadcast, she began discussing her hopes of it becoming a public source of her family's suffering.¹¹¹ The tone of her diary, as well as her awareness, perceptively changed. She began to talk more specifically about the persecution and conditions that the Jews in Amsterdam were facing and about her family's lives and experiences while living in their 'secret annex.'¹¹² This change seemed to bring about a determination in Anne to tell her story, and it is this determination to bear witness to the events and conditions going on all around her, that makes her diary a valuable historical source.

Though older than Frank, aspects of the second Dutch diarist's life were strikingly similar to the young girls. Etty Hillesum was born on 15 January 1914, and this meant that she was a twenty-six year old, adult woman, living in Amsterdam, when the war came to the Netherlands. From a decidedly middle-class background, Hillesum was both well-written and well-

¹¹⁰ Mirjam Pressler, "Preface," in *The Diary of a Young Girl*, trans. B.M. Mooyaart-Doubleday (New York: Random House, 1952), vii.

¹¹¹ Pressler, "Preface," vii.

¹¹² Mellissa Müller, *Anne Frank: the Biography*, trans. Rita and Rodney Kimber (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998), 163; and Neuberger, eds, *Anne Frank in the World* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2001), 107-108.

educated.¹¹³ First published in the Netherlands in 1981 as *An Interrupted Life*, the entries of Etty Hillesum's diary are a record from March 1941 to August 1943 in Amsterdam, and it tells the story of her life as a typist for a department of the Jewish council and her transport to Westerbork camp.¹¹⁴ On 15 July 1942, Hillesum began working as a typist, within the department of 'Cultural Affairs,' for the Jewish council in Amsterdam. Only working within this department for two weeks, Hillesum requested a transfer to Westerbork to work for the council's department, "Sociale Verzorging Doortrekkenden."¹¹⁵ Working for the Jewish council provided her with special privileges, one of which was a special travel visa- this allowed her to visit Amsterdam several times during the period. Her entries express her clear vision of the world and situation in which she was living. On 3 July 1942, she wrote:

Very well then, this new certainty, that what they are after is our total destruction, I accept it. I know it now and I shall not burden others with my fears. I will not be bitter if others fail to grasp what is happening to us Jews. I work and continue to live with the same conviction and I find life meaningful.¹¹⁶

Even with her clear understanding that the situation for the Jews was not a hopeful one, she continued to write- doing so because she both retained some sense of hope, while at the same time, also accepting that she would very likely not survive the period's events: "Ten thousand have passed through this place, the clothed and the naked, the old and the young, the sick and the

¹¹³ Her father, Dr. Louis Hillesum, worked as teacher of Classical studies until 1928, when he became the rector of "*Stedelijk Gymnasium*" in Deventer, and her mother, Rebecca Hillesum-Bernstein was originally from Russia. Etty Hillesum enrolled in Law studies at the local University in 1932, and she completed her degree I Law studies in 1939. Smelik, "Etty Hillesum Onderzoekscentrum."

¹¹⁴ Gaarlandt, "Introduction," xiii. This two year period marked the final years leading up to Hillesum's transportation to Auschwitz. Auschwitz was the largest and most notorious of the Holocaust concentration camps. It was located in Poland, and had been used as an Austrian military base before it became the death camp most synonymously associated with the genocide of the period. The camp's first set of 'prisoners,' composed of 200 Jews and 30 Gentiles, arrived in May 1940. Friedman, *A History of the Holocaust*, 369; and Smelik, "Introduction," xv.

¹¹⁵ Smelik, "Etty Hillesum Onderzoekscentrum."

¹¹⁶ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 130.

healthy- and I am left to live and work and stay cheerful. It will be my parents' turn to leave soon."¹¹⁷ Etty continues discussing her parent's upcoming transportation date, and while remarking on her younger brother's, Mischa, poor state of mind and his demands that he be allowed to join them; she responds to Mischa's pleas, saying: "And I must learn to accept this as well... I shan't go, I just can't... It is not fear of Poland that keeps me from going along with my parents, but fear of seeing them suffer... We are being hunted to death right through Europe."¹¹⁸

Taken from two different time periods in her diary- the first, from July 1942, and the second, from July 1943- both entries reflect the idea that, though it is generally accepted that most of the Jewish population was unaware of their ultimate fates and horrible extent of their situation, Etty was different and possessed a much deeper understanding of the Jewish question. Clearly, Hillesum was very much aware of the intended fate of the Jews. She seems to have had an uncanny understanding of what was really going on. Both entries clearly reveal that she had a keener and deeper understanding of her and her fellow Jews' situation in the Netherlands, and the essential question is, why? She seems to have become more knowledgeable, even earlier on, about what the Nazis were intending, and her role as a typist for the Jewish council seems to have played a significant role in shaping her deeper understanding.

The relationship between Hillesum's work for the Jewish council and her deeper knowledge of the situation is central to her unique experience. There is no questioning that this aspect of her identity, and who she was as an individual, largely defined and influenced the shape of her wartime experience. Etty Hillesum wrote her diary to be a testament to her experiences during the Holocaust. It is an incredibly detailed chronicle of her surroundings, and as a member

¹¹⁷ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 200.

¹¹⁸ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 200, 214.

of the Jewish council's workforce, she seems to have been privy to many aspects of Westerbork's day-to-day life and conditions. Emphasizing this argument is the fact that one of the most central themes, that consistently runs throughout her diary is that of the degradation of living conditions within Westerbork transit camp. Another major theme is her frequent discussions on the major transports leaving the camp, over-filled with Jews, everyday. Like the Polish diarist, Korkzak, Hillesum refused her friends pleas to help her escape into hiding. In her diary, she makes it clear that she had no desire to escape, but rather, she wanted to return to Westerbork to remain with her people, saying: "After all, why should I be spared from what has happened to thousands of others?"¹¹⁹ In July of 1942, the first big street round up took place in Amsterdam, and it was then that Etty voluntarily joined the trapped Jews headed to Westerbork, where she remained until 7 September 1942, when she was further transported to Auschwitz, where she died on 30 November 1943.¹²⁰

Frank and Hillesum's Depiction of Daily Life: the Nature of Occupation in Amsterdam

Both Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* and Hillesum's *An Interrupted Life* are valuable sources that tell us something about the nature of the occupation of Amsterdam, as well as daily lives, the persecution, and the conditions that the Jewish population in Amsterdam were facing under the occupation. The following excerpt, written on 29 March 1944- the same day Anne heard Bolkestein's broadcast- represents how Anne's diary works as an accurate historical source by reflecting some of the ongoing events and changes that were taking place in the Dutch Jewish community. The excerpt provides a unique and individual perspective on both the morale,

¹¹⁹ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 198.

¹²⁰ Westerbork was a transit camp in the eastern portion of the Netherlands, located near the German border.

conditions, and repercussion that the Dutch Jewish community was forced to face after their government was forced into exile and the Nazis had successfully gained complete and total control of Holland:

Moral among the Dutch can't be good. Everyone's hungry... a week's food ration doesn't last two days. The invasion's long in coming, the men are being shipped off to Germany, the children are sick or undernourished, everyone's wearing worn-out clothes and run-down shoes. A new sole costs 7.50 guilders on the black market. Besides, few shoemakers will do repairs, or if they do, you'll have to wait four months for your shoes, which might very well have disappeared in the meantime.¹²¹

By the date in which this entry was composed, Anne and her family were already living in hiding in their "secret annex," and though the entry is relatively short, it is filled with events and aspects that reflect their history. Regardless of the entry's brevity, its contents are succinct and concise and filled entirely with the young girl's personal viewpoints and opinions of her surrounding war-time environment. Rather than being a descriptive compilation of its author's day-to-day life, as many of her other entries are, it revolves entirely around the harsh conditions that the Dutch Jews were living and dying under. In the same tone, Anne continues on to reveal several factors, conditions, and terrors that the Jewish communities living throughout the region were being forced to endure. The following is a brief excerpt in which young Miss Frank addresses several crucial issues:

One good thing has come out of this: as the food gets worse and the decrees more severe, the acts of sabotage against the authorities are increasing. The ration board, the police, the officials- they're all either helping their fellow citizens or denouncing them and sending them off to prison. Fortunately, only a small percentage of Dutch people are on the wrong side.¹²²

¹²¹ Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, 244-245

¹²² Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, 244-245.

In this single, brief entry alone, Frank raises the issues of hunger/starvation, rations, the hoped for invasion by Britain, the men that were being forced from their homes and relocated to Germany, sickness, malnourishment, the lack of resources (i.e. clothes and shoes), and the Nazi decrees. This entry, filled with Anne's localized understanding of her experiences, is not composed of rhetoric, irony, propaganda, or fiction, because each of the aspects being discussed were serious, historically documented problems being faced by Dutch Jewry during the wartime occupation. Evidence attesting to these hugely significant aspects of the day-to-day life of occupied Holland can easily be gleaned from an analysis and discussion of Anne's 29 March 1944 entry. For instance, her statement that "the men are being shipped off to Germany," is supported by historical facts from the period.

Though Anne's entry is dated on 29 March 1944, the shipment of Jews out of the Netherlands to Germany was not new concept in the region. This is because the relocation of Jews (i.e. their segregation and transportation) was integral to the Nazis' "Final Solution" program. By the later part of 1941, this relocation of the Dutch Jewish population had already begun as a concept, and as early as June 1942, it had become an actuality. With the apparent impossibility of emptying the region of its Jewish population all at once, the Nazi authorities in Berlin convened and decided that the Netherlands were to supply approximately one-thousand Jews a week- a rate which would have, in less than three years, resulted in the transport of entire Dutch Jewish population to their deaths in Poland.¹²³ The first outright and public implementation of this conceptualized relocation of the Dutch Jewish population was seen on 26 June 1942, when the representatives of the Amsterdam-region's Jewish council were informed of

¹²³ Last and Wolfswinkel, *Anne Frank and After*, 55.

a partial-untruth: they were told that Jewish individuals between the ages of 16 and 40 were to be relocated to and employed in Germany under police protection. The fallacy and deception in this lay in the fact that, though many Dutch Jews were to be transported, the Nazis had no intention of taking them to Germany or placing them under protection. Most of the Jews transported out of the Netherlands were taken, first, to Westerbork transit camp, and then finally to their deaths at the concentrations camps- most often, notably, Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen.¹²⁴

Etty Hillesum's diary also sheds light on the nature of the occupation in Amsterdam through her discussions of the degradation of living conditions within Westerbork transit camp. In one such discussion, on 8 July 1943, Etty wrote: "At the moment I am lying in the middle of a battlefield of sick women. The wrong kind of bacillus is raging through our barracks, we have all got the 'runs,' as it is poetically termed," and she concluded this train of thought with: "I am quite pleased to be immobilized; it gives me a change to write."¹²⁵ Hillesum's detailed depiction of sickness and disease, as "lying in the middle of a battlefield of sick women," is especially poignant in the imagery that it paints, and her statement about finding pleasure in the illness, because it gave her an excuse to take time to write, is simply disturbing. In the same entry, Hillesum chronicles that, "In Westerbork there is only one service that's equitable: the water supply. It provides water for 10,000 Jews, and each one gets the same amount," but the most poignant statement made in the entry is, arguably, Hillesum's statement that: "One should be able to write fairy stories here. It sounds strange but if you wanted to convey something of Westerbork life, you could do it best in that form. The misery here is so beyond the bounds of all reality that it has become unreal... One would have to be a very great poet indeed to describe

¹²⁴ Last and Wolfswinkel, *Anne Frank and After*, 55; and Müller, *Anne Frank*, 273.

¹²⁵ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 303.

them; perhaps in about ten years I might get somewhere near it.”¹²⁶ Each line is a striking depiction of Etty’s observations in Westerbork, and they serve to provide details about the everyday nature of life within the transit camp.¹²⁷

Westerbork was originally created by the Dutch government’s Ministry of the Interior to function as a ‘Central Camp for Refugees,’ but on 1 July 1942, it came under German control and was declared a transit camp. In *Destruction of the Dutch Jews*, Dr. J. Presser defined the state of life within the transit camp:

Westerbork was another word for purgatory. There was nothing to sustain one, materially or spiritually. Each was thrown on his own resources, utterly alone. Desperation, total and absolute, seized everyone... The true character of the new regime was recognized in Amsterdam as soon as it became known that the Germans had put barbed wire around the camp.¹²⁸

As a testament to the desperate situation of the inmates of Westerbork, sadness, desperation, and suicide are also common themes that run throughout the entries of Hillesum’s diary. Hillesum often remarks on the sad images of babies and children crying from illness, hunger, etc. On 11 August 1943, Etty wrote:

To those abandoned children whose parents have been sent on transport, and who are ignored by the other mothers- who have worries enough with their own brood, what with the diarrhea and all the other complaints, big and small... you should see these poor mothers sitting beside the cots of their wailing young in blank and brute despair... surrounded by children whose thoughtless screaming.”¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 304.

¹²⁷ In July 1942, the Nazi German “administration took over command of the camp. A high barbed wire fence- later electrified- was put up, observation towers were built at intervals of every 200 meters, and these were manned by SS men, armed with machine guns.” Last and Wolfswinkel, *Anne Frank and After*, 76.

¹²⁸ J. Presser, *The Destruction of the Dutch Jews*, trans. Arnold Pomerans (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1969), 407-408.

¹²⁹ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 326-327.

Etty's diary is filled with images such as these that are a testament to the degradation of living conditions and the situation within Westerbork transit camp. Again, little more than a week later, on 24 August 1943, Etty recorded her observations of such suffering: "But the babies, those tiny piercing screams of the babies... the babies are easily the worst," and continuing on: "that paralyzed girl, who didn't want to take her dinner plate along and found it so hard to die... "the terrified boy: he had thought he was safe, that was his mistake, and when he realized that he was going to have to go anyway, he panicked and ran off. His fellow Jews had to hunt him down. If they didn't find him, scores of others would be put on the transport in his place."¹³⁰ In this way, all throughout the entirety of her diary, Etty depicts the horrendous living conditions, within Westerbork, and the despair that was gripping mother, children, and entire families alike.

In the same entry, from 24 August, Hillesum continues on to remark on the occurrence of suicides within Westerbork, stating that: "A few beds farther along I suddenly catch sight of the ash-gray face of a colleague. She is squatting beside the bed of a dying woman who has swallowed some poison and who happens to be her mother."¹³¹ As Dr. Presser stated in his study, total and absolute paralyzing desperation consumed the daily lives of those living within Westerbork. The entirety of Hillesum's diary is a testament to the appalling conditions of the transit camp, and while living in hiding, in the Frank family's secret annex, it is clear that Anne Frank was also aware of the depressing state of affairs for the Jewish community living in Amsterdam. Living within the same city, under vastly different circumstances, both individuals were witnessing and depicting the same harsh treatment and endemic desperation that was gripping the Jews in the Netherlands during the occupation.

¹³⁰ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 341.

¹³¹ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 334.

Anne Frank and the Possibility of Escape: Status as a Jew in Exile- 'Jew in Hiding'

Anne Frank's wartime experiences were almost entirely defined by her family's decisions to relocate to Amsterdam in 1933 and later, in 1942, escape into hiding. Her identity as a young girl, entirely dependent on her family, also played a significant role. On 5 July 1942, less than a month after receiving her diary, a policeman hand delivered a registered envelope to the Frank family's doorstep, and it contained a summons ordering Anne's sister, Margot Frank, to report to the SS the next morning.¹³² At the end of 1942, the Nazi occupation ordered the deportation of 4,000 Jews living in Holland to 'German work camps,' and Margot received her summons, during the first round of mass call-ups, on 5 July: "Most of those receiving the call-up on July 5 were German Jews, like Margot, aged fifteen and sixteen."¹³³ Though unknown to the Jews living in the region at the time, this polite means of summons was just the beginning of their relocation because shortly after the first rounds of summonses, the Nazis began their mass round ups in the streets of Amsterdam.¹³⁴ The result of Margot Frank's summons

¹³² "At the end of June of 1942, Adolf Eichmann had informed all departments involved in the Final Solution that in July, mass deportations to the extermination camps in the East would begin... The notices didn't explain where they were going or what they could expect; all that was included was a list of clothing to be taken in a back pack. The Jewish council in Amsterdam urged people to obey the call-ups, fearing what might happen if too many resisted, and advised them to comply," stating that it was in their own interest to do so. Lee, *Anne Frank and the Children of the Holocaust*, 108-109.

¹³³ The first major summonses of Jewish individuals for 'relocation began in the summer of 1942, and the first groupings were called for so-called transportation to 'work camps' in Germany on 5 July 1942. They were summoned by a special delivery received through the postal service, and Anne's family felt the growing pressure of the Nazis when her older sister, Margot Frank received one of the summonses. Her summons was what ultimately led to Anne's father's decision to take his family into hiding. Last and Wolfswinkel, *Anne Frank and After*, 56; and Lee, *Anne Frank and the Children of the Holocaust*, 108-109.

¹³⁴ Last and Wolfswinkel, *Anne Frank and After*, 58.- get info from middle of the pg about the big street round ups

was that, within a month of receiving her diary, Anne's family had decided escape the coming onslaught and persecution by going into hiding.¹³⁵

In general, "the position of exile was one of the most dominant aspects of life and work of Anne Frank," and she "became fully aware of her position as an exile when the secret annex was broken into."¹³⁶ On 11 April 1944, Anne wrote: "We have been pointedly reminded that we are in hiding, and that we are Jews in chains, chained to one spot."¹³⁷ German by birth, but cast out and considered an enemy of the state for her identity as a Jew, Anne wondered where her place was in society, and her "words reflect the theme of the eternally hunted Jew, the eternal fugitive."¹³⁸ The Frank's seem to have been among the lucky Jewish families and individuals that were able to escape, and in her study *Anne Frank and the Children of the Holocaust*, Carol Anne Lee phrases the possibility of escape and the situation for Jewish refugees best:

The situation for the Jews in the occupied countries was desperate, and many wanted to get out while they could. But they were not given much help. In July of 1938, representatives from a number of countries met to discuss how many Jews they were willing to take in. All of the countries wanted to keep the number of refugees as low as possible, claiming that giving shelter to Jews might give rise to anti-Semitism. This refusal to help the Jews led to millions of Jewish families becoming trapped when the Nazis closed the borders of the countries they occupied.¹³⁹

From document's, such as Lee's, that attest to the condition and situation for Jewish refugees in Europe- both during and leading up to the war- you get a sense of confusion, fear, and panic. Jewish relocation was happening on a massive scale, and for many, the

¹³⁵ Friedman, *History of the Holocaust*, 115.

¹³⁶ Denise de Costa, "Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum: Diarists," in *Anne Frank: Reflections on her Life and Legacy*, eds. Hyman Aaron Enzer and Sandra Solotaroff-Enzer (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 215.

¹³⁷ Costa, "Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum: Diarists," 215.

¹³⁸ Costa, "Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum: Diarists," 215.

¹³⁹ *Anne Frank and the Children of the Holocaust*, 47.

possibility of escape was the most significant factor in informing and shaping their wartime experiences.

Hillesum's Depiction of the Major Transportation Trains Leaving Westerbork

Of all of the diarists and diaries under examination in this study, Etty Hillesum's *An Interrupted Life* offers the most detailed chronicle of the transportation trains leaving her home. Etty's diary is an intense and disturbing chronicle of, not only the transportation trains leaving Westerbork every week, but also of the individuals on the transports. Etty recorded details of the transports, including the number of individuals on the transports, as well as descriptions of some of the individuals and their states of mind. In doing so, her diary's depictions of these transports are incredible eyewitness accounts that reveal the nature of life in Westerbork, as well as the nature of the Nazis' occupation of the Netherlands. The following two entries were taken from the same week of entries in her diary, and reveal the immense detail of Etty's record of the transports. On 3 July 1943, Etty wrote:

One night last week a transport of prisoners passed through here. Thin, waxen faces. I have never seen so much exhaustion and fatigue as I did that night. They were being 'processed': registration, more registration, frisking by half grown NSB men, quarantine, a foretaste of martyrdom lasting hours and hours. Early in the morning they were crammed into empty freight cars.¹⁴⁰

She concluded this excerpt with the question: "How many, I wondered, would reach their destination alive?"¹⁴¹ Again, three days later, on 6 July, Etty wrote: "This morning yet another transport of 2, 500 left. I managed with difficulty to keep my parents off of

¹⁴⁰ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 293.

¹⁴¹ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 293.

it, but things are getting quite desperate... Slowly but steadily the camp is being sucked dry.”¹⁴² These two entries provide much that reveals what life in Westerbork must have been like. Etty recorded her observations of ‘the prisoners,’ the way that they were handled and treated once arriving in Westerbork, the exact number of Jews transported out of Westerbork, and Etty’s precise understanding of the transports.

Earlier on in this chapter, it was remarked that over 100,000 Jewish individuals passed through Westerbork during the war- some staying for hours, some for days, and others for weeks- and Etty’s entries are a precise record of many of the transports that were coming and going out of Westerbork.¹⁴³ The next three excerpts provided were taken from Etty’s 24 August 1943 entry- one of her longest entries- and each is more harrowing in its detail than the next. Approximately, half way through the entry, Etty recorded her thoughts on the transport that left Westerbork earlier that day: “What will this young woman, already in a state of collapse, look like after three days in an overcrowded freight car with men, women, children, and babies all thrown together, bags, and baggage, a bucket in the middle their only convenience. Presumably they will be sent on to another transit camp, and then on again from there. We are being hunted to death all throughout Europe.”¹⁴⁴ In these lines, we see Etty detail the conditions within the transport. She remarked on the “overcrowded freight car,” which in itself would not have been nearly as disturbing without the emphasis of the recollections that followed it- Jews of all ages piled into a freight car with all of their luggage, no room to move, and only a bucket to relieve them.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 301.

¹⁴³ Presser, *The Destruction of the Dutch Jews*, 407-408.

¹⁴⁴ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 348.

¹⁴⁵ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 348.

Several pages later, in the same entry, Etty wrote down her intense observations of the same transport leaving Westerbork: “My God, are the doors really being shut now? Yes, they are. Shut on the herded, densely packed mass inside. Through small openings at the top we can see heads and hands, hands that will wave to us later when the train leaves... The train gives a piercing whistle. And 1, 020 Jews leave Holland.”¹⁴⁶ Again, Etty employed precision in her dealing with the details provided in the entry. The excerpt provides exact details and depictions, which are strong enough to conjure the most vivid, harrowing images in readers’ minds. Etty concluded her 24 August entry, by summing up her depictions with an analysis of her understanding of the day’s events:

This time the quota was really quite small, all considered: a mere thousand Jews, the extra twenty being reserves... This is what has been happening now for over a year, week in, week out. We are left with just a few thousand. A hundred thousand Dutch members of our race are toiling away under some unknown sky or lie rotting in some unknown soil. We know nothing of their fate. It is only a short while, perhaps, before we find out, each one of us in his own time. For we are all marked down to share that fate, of that I have not a moment’s doubt.¹⁴⁷

The transports coming and going from Westerbork were responsible for carrying Hitler’s ‘prisoners’ to their final destinations and deaths in the concentration camps, located all throughout Eastern Europe. Thus, these entries are significant to the history of the region in that they provide historians with details of the transports leaving Westerbork with, the number of Jews on them, the Jews themselves, and the conditions that thousands of Jews were forced to face when it was their turn for transportation- for most, to unknown destinations. They are a record of the fear, desperation, and confusion that the transports conjured in their victims.

¹⁴⁶ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 353.

¹⁴⁷ Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 353-354.

Conclusion

Both Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum's diaries are essential sources to the history of the war in the Netherlands. The two diarists lived very different experiences during the same war, and accordingly their lives are a testament to the complex multiplicity of the wartime experience. Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* offers personal depictions of what it meant to be a Jew in hiding, and is therefore an important source to the history of the possibility of escape, in the region, as well as significant to the understanding of that it meant to be a 'Jew in exile,' in the Netherlands during World War II. Anne's diary is an impeccable record of what it meant to be a young Jewish girl living in Amsterdam, during the Nazis' occupation of the Netherlands, and offers a record of all that she saw and understood during the war. Her diary is a testament to the nature of the occupation, the conditions that the Jewish populace in Amsterdam was facing, as well as a source attesting to the moral of the Jewish community.

Etty Hillesum's diary, *An Interrupted Life*, is a source of equal significance. Through her employment of precision in her record, providing details, times, and vivid descriptions of her wartime observations, she provided readers with a chronicle that attests to the nature of the period. Her record is especially significant in terms of the history of life within Westerbork transit camp. Etty's diary is a record of the nature of life within the camp, the lives of the inmates, themselves, living conditions, and the transportation trains that were constantly coming and going from Westerbork. By attesting to their personal lives and observations during the occupation of Amsterdam, these two incredible individuals have provided today's historians with a wealth of details both chronicling and attesting to the specific context of the war in the Netherlands.

CHAPTER III: THE CASE OF FRANCE

Geographic Divisions, the Collaborative Vichy Regime, and State Anti-Semitism

Chapter 3 examines both of the French diarists, Raymond-Raoul Lambert and H  l  ne Berr, in context and seeks to analyze and discuss the factors that contributed to the distinctive nature of the case in France, the problems posed by Vichy France, as well as reveal something about the nature and complexity of experience throughout wartime, occupied Europe. Among the several hundred-thousand Jewish individuals, who witnessed the events of World War II in France, suffered persecution not only at the hands of the Nazis but also the new Vichy Regime. Both experienced the war as native-French Jews from prominent, socially established and assimilated families, and shared the same middle-class background. Though sharing factors of commonality, they were also very different individuals. Lambert and Berr were of different genders, generations, geographic backgrounds, and their lives prior to the war comprised different experiences. The wartime experiences of these two extraordinary individuals have been preserved in their wartime diaries- Lambert's *Diary of a Witness, 1940-1944* and Berr's *The Journal of H  l  ne Berr*- which chronicle their experiences during the Holocaust and serve as representations of the horrors that they faced. They help us understand better the divided nature of the occupation of wartime France, the ways in which this divided nature informed experience throughout the region, the role that the collaborative Vichy regime played in the victims' experiences, as well as how, when, and to what extent, those who lived through the Holocaust's horrors understood what was taking place.

This chapter, first provides a brief biography of each diarist and seeks to analyze the importance of identity, as well as the ways that their particular identities shaped their individual wartime experiences. This examination will discuss age, gender, class standing, socio-political roles, geographic location, etc. The second major issue addressed is that of how both diarists responded to war and defeat, and the last examines life in both occupied and unoccupied France. This last portion is a larger discussion composed of two smaller discussions that cover both the context and nature of the occupied and unoccupied zones, as well as an analysis of the two French diarists' experience of day-to-day life in wartime France.

Few governments could have been less prepared to deal with the chaos provoked by the 10 May 1940 Nazi invasion of France as its own government proved to be. Not only did the original World War II government, the Third Republic, collapse, but it was also subsequently replaced by the collaborative, anti-Semitic Vichy Regime.¹⁴⁸ By 14 June, a little over a month after the commencement of true war in France, German troops marched triumphantly into Paris. Within the course of the following week, on 22 June, the French government had signed the Armistice Agreement with Germany which made France “a legally constituted organ of the Third Reich.”¹⁴⁹ The Franco-German armistice signed between the French and Nazi German governments greatly shaped the course of events in wartime France in that it, first, geographically divided France into two major zones: the occupied zone in northeast France and

¹⁴⁸ Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1972), 3, 20-21; Ian Ousby, *Occupation: the Ordeal of France 1940-1944* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998), 34; and Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 42.

¹⁴⁹ By the signing of this Franco-German alliance, “Despite claims that the armistice was intended as a brief respite before returning to war against Germany, every sign points to overwhelming acceptance of two strategic assumptions: the war was over, and Germany had won... Franco German relation dominated her future... the victor... could choose... ‘a new peace of collaboration’ or a ‘traditional peace of oppression’.” Paxton, *Vichy France*, 6-8, 10-11, 72; and Zuccotti, Susan, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews*, 43.

the unoccupied zone in the south, and second, allowed France to retain an illusion of sovereignty and control by stipulating that the “French government was to have sovereignty over the entire country while acknowledging and respecting ‘the rights of the occupying power’.”¹⁵⁰ This concession of allowing France its own semi-autonomous national government- even if it’s *supposed sovereignty* was only an illusion- served German interests as much as it served the interests of France; in fact, “it served the interests of the Reich at France’s expense.”¹⁵¹

The large body scholarship of scholarship on wartime France largely centers on this crucial issue of Vichy France and its collaboration with Germany.¹⁵² Collaborating with the German occupier, the Vichy government played a significant role in the persecution of the French Jewish communities- both native and foreign.¹⁵³ In wartime France, of the 270,000 Jews living throughout the country- half of which were stateless refugees- approximately 90,000, or thirty-three percent, were lost to Nazi brutality.¹⁵⁴ The political coup d’etat and establishment of the new Vichy Regime, in the summer of 1940, created a distinctive situation, in that, it was not only the foreign invader (i.e. the German occupier) attempting to persecute the Jewish population

¹⁵⁰ More precisely, “Article 3 provides that the French government assist the German authorities in exercising the ‘rights of an occupying power’ in the Occupied Zone. In particular, it ordered French officials and public services ‘to conform to the decisions of the German authorities and collaborate faithfully with them’.” Paxton, *Vichy France*, 19, 48-49; Marrus, *The Holocaust in History*, 105; Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews*, 42; Jackson, *France: the Dark Years 1940-1944*, 127; and McKale, *Hitler’s Shadow War*, 165.

¹⁵¹ Ousby, *Occupation: the Ordeal of France 1940-1944*, 71.

¹⁵² Collaboration- “Fateful word. *Collaboration*, a banal term for working together, was to become a synonym for high treason after the occupation had run on for four years.” Paxton, *Vichy France*, 19. A few of the key authors and works that are essential to my study of France during World War II are: Robert O. Paxton’s *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944*; Michael R. Marrus and Paxton’s *Vichy France and the Jews*; Susan Zuccotti’s *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews*; David Carroll’s “What It Meant to be ‘A Jew’ in Vichy France;” Jaques Adler’s “The Jews and Vichy,” and Vicki Caron’s “Prelude to Vichy.”

¹⁵³ Carroll, “What It Meant to be ‘A Jew’ in Vichy France: Xavier Vallat, State Anti-Semitism, and the Question of Assimilation,” *SubStance* 27, no. 3 (1998), 38. www.jstor.org.

¹⁵⁴ Fieldman, *A History of the Holocaust*, 131; Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews*, 3.

and annihilate its influences from society.¹⁵⁵ Alongside the Nazi victors, the new French government played an active, key role in the persecution of its Jewish communities.¹⁵⁶ As was represented by the new regime's active approach, Vichy France cooperated with Germany more so than the other occupied governments across Europe and began to attack the Jews of France even before the Germans asked or demanded them to do so.

During the four year, Vichy reign of terror, which lasted from 1940 to 1944, its administration passed "some four hundred laws, amendments to laws, decrees, and police measures directed at Jews."¹⁵⁷ Through the course of the war and occupation, these pieces of legislation: "began with a definition, went on to counting, dispossession, ration books and identity papers stamped 'Juif', the obligation to wear a distinctive sign in the occupied zone, and isolation from the rest of the populations, and ended with transfer to camps for deportation."¹⁵⁸ Bearing striking resemblance to those introduced in other regions of occupied Europe, these measures are significant because, not the Germans, but rather, the French government, itself, introduced them. The State anti-Semitism, which became the new law of the land, indisputably continues to pose one of the most burning, contentious questions associated with the historiography of Vichy France; and though the issues of Vichy's collaborative, anti-Semitic sentiments has been much disputed by a wide-range of fields, academics, scholars, and

¹⁵⁵ Paxton, *Vichy France*, 136-139, 168-170; and Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1981), 73-76.

¹⁵⁶ Carroll, "What It Meant to be 'A Jew' in Vichy France," 38. As aforementioned in Chapters I and II, the Jewish communities throughout both Poland and the Netherlands were brutally attacked by the foreign force, Nazi Germany; in France, however, not only the foreign occupier desired the expulsion and annihilation of the Jewish populace, but even domestically, the French Jews- both foreign and native- faced persecution. Carroll, "What It Meant to be 'A Jew' in Vichy France," 39; and Vicki Caron, "Prelude to Vichy," *Journal of Contemporary History* 20, no. 1 (January 1985), 157. www.jstor.org.

¹⁵⁷ Jaques Adler, "The Jews and Vichy: Reflections on French Historiography," *The Historical Journal* 44, no. 4 (December 2001), 1068. www.jstor.org.

¹⁵⁸ "While most measures were new, some were inherited from the Third Republic." Adler, "The Jews and Vichy," 1068.

specialists, “it is now generally accepted that Vichy anti-Semitism was a French invention... the reasoned, calculated policy of the Vichy State itself, a policy which, for at least two years, the French population generally seemed to accept with relatively little resistance.”¹⁵⁹ In his study: “Vichy or Free France?” Rene Cassin phrased the exceptional case best:

The course of events in France was different. Nazi Germany did not claim to have annihilated the French State. The Vichy government occupied a *de facto* position in France which was not at first challenged seriously. And principle foreign powers did not dispute its claim to represent France in international relationships.¹⁶⁰

Clearly attesting to the distinctive case in France, Cassin references the significant role that the political movements of new administrative machine played in defining the Holocaust in France. In October 1940, the first explicitly anti-Jewish law was passed in France; the law banned Jewish individuals from all government positions, teaching jobs, and from participating in the French armed forces. This law marked the first occurrence of a racially based law being passed in modern France.¹⁶¹ Adding insult to injury, within two months of signing the armistice with Germany, Vichy France rescinded the law that made it a crime to attack people because of their race or religion thus officially making it legal to attack the Jewish population solely for being Jewish.

Raymond-Raoul Lambert and H el ene Berr: the Importance of Identity

Beginning in the 1930s and throughout World War II, Raymond-Raoul Lambert was a significant leading figure of French Jewry. As the head of the French Jewish council: the Union

¹⁵⁹ “This brings us to the blackest mark on the whole Vichy experience: anti-Semitism. It is vital to expose the French roots of early Vichy anti-Jewish measures, for nowhere else has the claim of German pressure and French passivity been more insistent.” Paxton, Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France*, 173; *Vichy France and the Jews*, 23-25; and Carroll, “What It Meant to be ‘A Jew’ in Vichy France,” 38.

¹⁶⁰ Rene Cassin, “Vichy or Free France?” *Foreign Affairs* 20, no. 1 (October 1941), 110. www.jstor.org.

¹⁶¹ Carroll, “What It Meant to be ‘A Jew’ in Vichy France,” 38.

Générale des Israélites de France (UGIF), Lambert played a key role acting as a Jewish link to the Vichy government.¹⁶² Lambert's wartime experiences were marked by his identity as a French Jew with military experience, a fierce nationalistic driven ideology, and love of his home. Descendant from a notable French Jewish Family from Metz, Lambert was born outside Paris, in 1894.¹⁶³ As was the nineteenth-century trend amongst French Jews, his family had established itself within Parisian society two generations earlier, and accordingly, was already well integrated into and immersed within French society.¹⁶⁴ In his diary's second entry, on 15 July 1940, Lambert wrote: "I still have confidence that France cannot accept just anything, and it is not for nothing that the bones of my family have mingled with its soil for more than a century- and that I have served in two wars."¹⁶⁵ Representing both his pride as a Frenchman, as well as the incredible degree to which his identity, as a human being, had been assimilated into French society, Lambert reveals his deep connection with the country from both a political and military standpoint, Lambert saw himself as, above all, a Frenchman.

In addition, two factors shaped his wartime diary and reflections: Lambert's roles as a family man and an educated individual. His references to his family's safety in Bellac, where his wife and three sons had been living since 19 May, are exceedingly prevalent and striking.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶²Though- as a "nationwide organization representing all Jews and controlling all institutions"- the UGIF was meant to be the Vichy equivalent to the *Judenrats* (Jewish councils) of Eastern Europe, "neither of the two councils [one council was located in each of the two zone] became... the infamous *Judenrate* of the kind operating in Eastern Europe. At no time were they given the same powers not the same responsibilities." Adler, "The Jews and Vichy," 1075-76; and Cohen and Szajkowski, "A Jewish Leader in Vichy France, 1940-1943: The Diary of Raymond-Raoul Lambert," 291

¹⁶³ Cohen and Szajkowski, "A Jewish Leader in Vichy France, 1940-1943," 292.

¹⁶⁴ Cohen and Szajkowski, "A Jewish Leader in Vichy France, 1940-1943," 292.

¹⁶⁵ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 9.

¹⁶⁶ Though the Lambert family originated from Paris, when the hostilities began on French soil, R. Lambert felt that in the interests of his wife and children's safety they should leave the city: "On May 19 I decided to have Simone and the children evacuated to Bellac, more because of the danger of air raids than the strategic situation." Lambert, *Diary of a Witness, 1940-1944*, 4.

Especially, in the beginning months of his diary, when he was still serving as an army officer and was, thus, not physically with his family, Lambert continuously referenced his fear for them. While detailing the events of 15 June, whence he had been passing through Bellac with his troops, Lambert wrote, “We were to spend the night at Bellac, to the astonishment of Simone and my dear boys.” Then, reminiscing of the moment in which he spotted his loved ones, Lambert continues, by emphatically stating: “How I wanted to take my sons and my wife with me, since I feared from now on anything might happen to them... But they were still far away from the Loire here, and I swore to come back and get them if necessary.”¹⁶⁷ Being a family-man very much informed his experience of World War II. He emphasizes this fact himself in the line, written on 22 October 1940: “I am so ashamed of my country. Ah! If I didn’t have a wife, three sons, and graves to care for on this soil... how well I would know the way to action, to revolt and struggle for what makes life precious.”¹⁶⁸ Particularly, from his first wartime entry on 15 June, until his 25 June entry- marking the day that hostilities throughout France had ceased, and the armistice had been signed- Lambert’s entries are rife with expressions of confusion, uncertainty, and most especially fear. In terms of his ponderings on the fate of France and French Jewry, during this period of the wartime calendar in his diary, Lambert’s understanding of the events taking place were marred by a prevalent atmosphere of collapse, disorder, and ambiguity.

As to his intellectual capacity as an author, within one month of the armistice being signed, Lambert’s profound understanding of the political situation clearly shines through in his entries.

¹⁶⁷Lambert, *Diary of a Witness, 1940-1944*, 14. As a result of being unable to record the events on their prospective days, Lambert’s entry on 21 June 1940, is a chronicle of the events from 15 June to 5 July. The entry outlines and provides details for each of the days during the period. Thus, these two quotes are, actually, taken from his 21 June entry.

Lambert, *Diary of a Witness, 1940-1944*,

¹⁶⁸ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 22.

Well before H el ene Berr, and many other Jews, began to understand the consequences of the French government’s response to the Nazi threat- let alone began chronicling her experiences and understanding in a diary- revealing his incredible intelligence and capacity for observation that greatly shaped his understanding of the Holocaust, Lambert was in a position to record an early period in the war’s timeline. On 15 July 1940, exemplifying this incredible astuteness, he wrote: “After the military ceremony yesterday, I went to services at the little synagogue... In the prayer for our country, “France” was substituted for the word “Republic.”¹⁶⁹ Though seemingly brief and of no real consequence, Lambert seems to recognize the substitution for what it is. He continues: “French Jewry is enduring a particular kind of anguish... [it] dreads the discrimination the enemy may demand.”¹⁷⁰ First, in terms of his life, it reveals the incredible man behind the writing as an astute observer and chronicler. As a well-educated and well-positioned individual, Lambert seemed to have an above average grasp on the political atmosphere in France, and at times, even, the looming fate yet to come; second, as such, his diary makes for a remarkable document. Written by an learned, well-written, acutely observational man of forty-six years, who was politically, culturally, and socially experienced in the time period, his entries make for a true, personal history of the period that attests to both his personal, distinct experience and the historical contexts in which it was composed.

Born on 27 March 1921, David Bellos described the second French diarist, H el ene Berr, as a “passionate, intelligent, and musically gifted woman” from a prominent, cultivated, and

¹⁶⁹ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 9.

¹⁷⁰ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 9.

well-assimilated French Jewish family.¹⁷¹ In the spring of 1942, when Nazi occupation had been long established in France and Berr was just twenty-one years old, she began to keep her diary, *The Journal of Hélène Berr*. It is a record of the period from 7 April 1942 to 15 February 1944. It serves as an important eyewitness account of the last two years of the occupation. Most especially from the summer of 1942 onwards, it became an incredible source depicting Nazi cruelty and policies aimed at the annihilation of the Jewish population throughout France.¹⁷² In reading her entries, it soon becomes apparent that she both feared for her life and hoped to have her diary- and the memories which it contains- preserved. Thus, her growing fears and sense of foreboding led her to, at regular intervals, give pages to a close family acquaintance, Andrée Bardiau, with the instructions to pass them on to her fiancé, Jean Morawiecki, if she were to be arrested. This shows that she hoped to have the pages of her diary preserved even if she was not to live to see the end of the war.¹⁷³ The twenty-three year old, Hélène Berr died, tragically, in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp five days before its liberation by British armed forces.¹⁷⁴

A part of the Parisian social scene, Berr's young age and roles as a student and socialite were fundamental factors of her identity that hugely lent to shaping her experiences of the Holocaust in France. Unlike Lambert, she had no established political background, nor did she serve any leadership-type role, yet her diary is considered to be of remarkable value- so much so, that upon her diary's original French publication in 2008, she has been called "the Anne Frank of

¹⁷¹ David Bellos both translated and composed the introduction to Berr's diary. He is arguably the leading and most knowledgeable scholar on Berr's life and diary, who also wrote the article "France and the Jews," which is contained in his English translation of Berr's diary. Bellos, "Introduction," 2.

¹⁷² Bellos, "Introduction," 1.

¹⁷³ Job, "A Stolen Life," 270-271.

¹⁷⁴ Hélène managed to survive her deportation for over a year, but still met with a tragic demise at a very young age: "In early November 1944, she was transferred from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen. One morning, five days before the camp was liberated by the British army, Hélène, sick with typhus, could not get up from her bunk for reveille. When her fellow inmates returned to the hut, they found her lying on the floor. She had been brutally beaten. The last spark of life she had clung to had gone out." Job, "A Stolen Life," 272-273.

France.”¹⁷⁵ Barely an adult, and still very much dependant on her family for survival, Berr’s identity as a young woman lends an interesting feature to any analysis of her experience. Striking a distinct contrast from Lambert’s identity- who was forty-six years old when he began chronicling his wartime diary- at twenty-one Berr was still, in many ways, a young girl. She is the voice of a different generation from wartime France. In terms of what her age meant to her understanding of the period, it lent a different mentality and perspective. Being a student certainly shaped the different horrors that she faced, in that, in the occupied zone, Jewish individuals were banned from taking part in any kind of academic life when the first Jewish statute was enacted in October 1940.¹⁷⁶ Her education played a significant role in shaping her understanding of the events in which she was living and in the composition of her diary, was her academic background and intelligence. She was a thoughtful individual, and as such, her life was informed by an academic, intellectual-type approach. This influence is seen in the writing style of her entries and, in many places, her thought process. Like Lambert, this factor of her identity informed and affected that way she witnessed the period.

Lambert and Berr’s Response to War and Defeat

Both Lambert’s *Diary of a Witness* and Berr *Journal of Helene Berr* serve as a testament to its author’s response to war and defeat in France. As early as the fall of 1940, Lambert’s diary begins to expose the ways in which the French government’s response, to the Nazis’ invasion and occupation of his country, had begun to inform his wartime experiences. For instance, on 2

¹⁷⁵ Originally published, in its original French form, in 2008, the English translation was published the same year. The late publication date of her diary was a product of its passing hands after her death; as Berr had ordered, her diary was passed over to her fiancé, Morawiecki, and he later presented Berr’s niece, Marietta Job with the text. It was not until 2002 that Berr’s diary was pulled out of Paris’ Memorial de la Shoah (Holocaust Memorial Museum) and prepared for publication. Dowling, “Helene Berr’s Holocaust Diary Flies Off the Shelves.”

¹⁷⁶ Bellos, “France and the Jews,” 284.

October 1940, referencing the first statute against the Jewish population, Lambert wrote: “One of the most depressing memories of my life... [the] finalization of the *Statut* on the Jews... it is possible that within a few days I shall see my citizenship reduced.”¹⁷⁷ Then, trying to make sense of it all, he continues, “France is no longer France. I repeat to myself that German is in charge here, trying still to excuse this offense against an entire history- but I cannot yet realize that it is true.”¹⁷⁸ His response to the restrictions and anti-Jewish measures being taken against the Jewish population was to attempt to come to terms with the situation. Lambert continued to write on 19 October 1940, saying: The Marshall and his team, on Hitler’s orders, have my person and the future of my children in their hands... Racism has become the law of the new state... Because of my blood I am no longer allowed to write, I am no longer an officer in the army... If I were a secondary school or university teacher, I should be dismissed because I am a Jew.”¹⁷⁹ Speaking of the publication of the *Status des Juifs*, Lambert is clear in his depiction of a) his government’s response to Nazi Germany’s success, demands, and occupation; b) his astute understanding of its response and subsequent actions; and c) the way in which its response was affecting his life, as a ‘Jew.’

Nearly, exactly two months later, Lambert address this issue once more, writing on 20 December 1940, “today I should find myself dismissed as an unsavory character, despite having served in two wars, because of my Jewish background.”¹⁸⁰ Called to active duty, Lambert had served during World War I, and had fought in the two celebrated battles: *Campagne* and *Chemin des Dames*. Awarded the prestigious *Croix de Guerre*, for his bravery, in the latter, and appointed

¹⁷⁷ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 21.

¹⁷⁸ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 21.

¹⁷⁹ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 23.

¹⁸⁰ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 48.

to the Legion of Honor, he had an impeccable military record. A French nationalist, on 15 July he remarked, “I cannot imagine life in another climate; pulling up these roots would be worse than an amputation.”¹⁸¹ As a man who cared very deeply for his country, the entirety of Lambert’s diary- especially after the signing of the armistice and the beginning of the occupation- is filled with his internal conflict and struggle to understand and come to terms with the new regime and vision in France. He continually questioned how France could endure the new ideological revolution of the Vichy regime and discusses his pain and disgust at the regime’s efforts to turn him and his fellow Jews into pariahs within the society and country he so cherished. Even earlier on in the war, we see this struggle developing- when, on 20 December 1940, Lambert passionately espouses his beliefs as a true Frenchman, stating: “It is so true that I am still completely French in my heart, in my mind, as a family man... I am French in my culture, in my blood, and by inclination. I am being made less than that. It hurts me terrible.”¹⁸² His immense feelings of nationalism, his love of France, and earlier on, the pride he takes in being a Frenchman, factors which made up so much of his identity, only serve to make his story an even more tragic one.

Berr’s social life in Paris shaped the way that she understood and experienced the period. The ways in which she understood, during the various intervals of the war, seem to have been determined by her witnessing the circumstances of either those she loved or those she knew. In the same entry, she continued on to discuss a phone call that her family received from her father’s arresting officer, recording that, “It was very strange listening to an outsider telling the story. It made it true, gave it the ring of authenticity. Up to that point it could only be something

¹⁸¹ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 9.

¹⁸² Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 25-26.

that belonged to us that perhaps did not really exist. But from then on we knew it had really happened. Something irremediable had happened.”¹⁸³ It is possible to make the argument, then, that it was only as a member of the middle-class that Berr was able to escape noticing the dramatic changes occurring around her. In other words, it was not until she began to see the latent affects of the occupation affecting the upper class Jewish communities that she began to understand. Throughout the spring of 1942, H el ene struggled to come to terms with the growing anti-Semitism and animosity towards the Jews in France was affecting her life. It was not until the implementation of increasingly cruel and deliberate acts of oppression and cruelty by the Nazis, enacted in the summer of 1942, that Berr began to admit that the persecution of the Jews was an imminent threat and problem in her French home. At this period in her diary, it becomes apparent that her family had become targets of Nazi and Vichy persecution.¹⁸⁴

Her strong, close bond with her family, as well as her social ties played an interesting, informative role in molding her experience of the Holocaust in France, and these social groups held enormous sway over the shape of Berr’s experiences, during the war.¹⁸⁵ Through her writing, readers can easily see the product of this influence where it most obviously reveals itself: in the evolution of Berr’s perspective and understanding. In her 24 June 1942 entry, she depicts the circumstances of her father being arrested and taken away to Drancy transit camp; the entry serves as an excellent representation of how her close family ties influenced her experiences and sparked the evolution in her understanding of the ongoing circumstances in

¹⁸³ Berr, *The Journal of H el ene Berr*, 71.

¹⁸⁴ Bellos, “Introduction,” 1-3.

¹⁸⁵ Bellos, “Introduction,” 2.

France.¹⁸⁶ In the entry, she writes: “I realized they had come and arrested papa... I was in a kind of fog... unable to speak.”¹⁸⁷ She continues on to write, “Maman remained seated in the armchair. She put her hand to her forehead, saying over and over: ‘I’ve gone numb.’ I knew what she meant. The difference is that she has now realized, and I still have not.”¹⁸⁸ In these lines, the singular entry briefly depicts the remarkable influence that Berr’s familial and social ties held over her.

Lambert and Life in Unoccupied, ‘Free,’ Vichy France

In discussing the geographical divisions of France, Lambert and Berr’s diaries make for interesting sources of comparison. With Lambert living within the free zone, and Berr in Paris, the two figures’ diaries pose an interesting compare-contrast scenario and offer a great deal to the question of life on either side of the line. In the Unoccupied zone, the Germans did not have much to enforce because the Vichy regime’s *de facto* control in the area had things in hand. Even in the unoccupied region, where *supposedly* Vichy France maintained control, Jews were growing increasingly more and more persecuted. Arguably, this was largely because of the anti-Semitic policies being enacted and legislation being passed, which were being enforced by the Vichy government, itself. Seemingly, more often than not, the Nazi occupier had no need of forcing anti-Semitic legislation and/or policies on the French government in power because it was acting accordingly without having to be told to do so; at times the Vichy regime even

¹⁸⁶ Her father was arrested for improper placement and stitching of his Jewish label, the yellow Star of David, which as of... was required attire for all Jewish individuals living within the occupied zone. Berr, *The Journal of Hélène Berr*, 71.

¹⁸⁷ Berr, *The Journal of Hélène Berr*, 69-70.

¹⁸⁸ Berr, *The Journal of Hélène Berr*, 71.

elaborated on or added to already enacted Nazi policies.¹⁸⁹ In terms of the Jewish populace located throughout the free zone, this meant that, “Since they were deemed to be religiously, culturally, and ethnically different, the state would legally affirm their difference by taking away their citizenship or classifying them as a special type of ‘citizen’, by eliminating almost all of their rights, and keeping them under surveillance and tightly under control.”¹⁹⁰ While referencing some of the earliest measures implemented in the unoccupied portion, the supposedly “free zone” under the control of Vichy France, Lambert discusses the introduction of censorship and propaganda to Vichy France.

On 6 November 1940, Lambert mused: “Even in the free zone we are living under German rule.”¹⁹¹ He states that even Vichy is under German control, where: “The press is being told what to do,” and “No free spirit has any way of being heard,” and then, in the last remark made in the entry, asks: “Is it symbolic to see the censors cut out several sentences about Descartes from a purely literary article.”¹⁹² The latter half of this quotation, from his diary, Lambert reveals just how stringent the censorship measures are, already, only a few short months after the signing of the armistice. In the same entry from 6 November 1940, Lambert continued on to discuss the already ongoing issues of food shortages, stating that, “the restrictions under which my wife suffers... in getting food for the children, that fact that no oil or potatoes are to be had in the market, etc... and the official radio broadcasts of my country continue to preach hatred of Jews... All those formulations current in Germany since 1933, have now been adopted

¹⁸⁹ Carroll, “What It Meant to be ‘A Jew’ in Vichy France,” 45.

¹⁹⁰ Carroll, “What It Meant to be ‘A Jew’ in Vichy France,” 45.

¹⁹¹ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 24.

¹⁹² Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 24.

in France.”¹⁹³ Again, in early 1941, Lambert depicted the issue of food shortages, on 25 February, when he chronicles: “Food is becoming scarce... Part of the population no longer has enough to eat. With the ration cards and the complimentary tickets, every housewife must become an accountant... If Simone didn’t have a priority card for a large family... she would have to spend who days in line. On Saturday she managed to get two eggs, and for this meager ration women were waiting in line for two hours.”¹⁹⁴ These excerpts, from Kaplan’s diary clearly depict the massive shortages that have become a part of daily life in unoccupied France.

Berr and Life in Occupied France

As to Berr’s record of daily life in the occupied zone, in the earlier portions of Berr’s diary her life, at least on the surface, relatively unchanged.¹⁹⁵ In the occupied zone, the intensity of the Nazi troops presence depended very much on both time and place. Though the German choose to establish their main headquarters and embassy in Paris, all of the big towns on the German controlled side of the demarcation line had areas with strong concentrations of German troops. Generally, highly motorized, they “clustered around ports, railways, and main roads.”¹⁹⁶ An instance of the unchanged nature and tone of diary can be seen in her 30April 1942 entry, where Hélène began her day’s entry by saying: “I had a wonderful afternoon,” and again, in her next entry dated the following Sunday, she opens by stating: “An extraordinary day. But I didn’t do anything.”¹⁹⁷ The brief excerpts reveal that, in many ways, life for Berr was remarkably unchanged. It is incredible that, even after the armistice, the geographical division of France, and

¹⁹³ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 24.

¹⁹⁴ Lambert, *Diary of a Witness*, 30.

¹⁹⁵ Bellos, “Introduction,” 1-3.

¹⁹⁶ Viven, *The Unfree French*, 113.

¹⁹⁷ Berr, *The Journal of Hélène Berr*, 36-37.

Nazi occupation, H  l  ne continued her studies and music without any overt inconvenience. This is best seen in her earlier entries, particularly those written in the spring of 1942, and especially in those that center on the daily lives of her family and friends. Throughout 1942 and portions of 1943, as a young, single, and socially eligible woman, Berr wrote about her various suitors and love interests. The musings center around two suitors, in particular: G  rard and Jean Morawiecki, and her affections quickly evolve.¹⁹⁸

David Bellos depicts this evolution best, in his statement: “H  l  ne tries to analyze her feelings for one young man, G  rard, whose background is similar to her own, then slowly realizes that she has fallen in love with another, handsome Jean Morawiecki.”¹⁹⁹ An analysis of two consecutive, earlier entries depicting such discussion- dated 29 and 30 April 1942-reveal compositions more akin to those kept by any other young woman of her social background and breeding, rather than entries composed while living under a belligerent’s occupation. In the first of the two entries she wrote, “I woke very early after dreaming about G  rard. I carried on thinking about him until I got up, and I was very happy,” and then, in the second, “I felt very shy about going to listen to records with that quite unknown young man... Jean Morawiecki walked me home. He’s going to come on Sunday and bring a Beethoven quartet.”²⁰⁰ These two short excerpts reveal that even though she was living in the occupied zone, which the Nazis had been in control of for almost two years, since the summer of 1940, throughout the spring of 1942, Berr’s life and chronicle were unchanged in many ways.

¹⁹⁸ G  rard’s last name is not included in any references to him- because Berr only ever refers to him as such; she never references his full, nor do any sources provide any additional information.

¹⁹⁹ Bellos, “Introduction,” 1. Bellos is both the editor and translator of the English publication of Berr’s diary; he wrote both the introduction, to the diary, as well as the article: “France and the Jews,” which is included in his edited version of Berr’s diary.

²⁰⁰ Berr, *The Journal of H  l  ne Berr*, 36-37.

All throughout 1942, the tone of Berr's diary continues to express the unchanged nature of her life and feelings, but by late 1943, the entirety of her diary's nature, tone, and contents drastically change. An example of this evolution is found in 14 February 1944 entry, where Berr wrote: "More than a week ago I stopped writing this diary, wondering if I had reached a turning point in my external life... During the alert the other day, thirty people with stars were arrested, sent to Drancy and deported, just because they were out and about... 'Aryans' who break curfew get fined 1,500 francs, others are deported."²⁰¹ Clearly, the circumstances had changed, and Berr's life and mindset was very different from the young woman discussing the possibilities of love. This entry comments that thirty people 'with stars' had been arrested. This remark is referring to the yellow Star of David that all Jewish individuals were required to wear as a sign of their status as a Jew, and thus as an enemy of the Nazi state. Berr then stated that these thirty Jewish individuals were deported to Drancy 'just because they were out and about,' and unlike the non-Jewish populations, if a Jew was found 'out and about' after curfew, they were arrested and deported. Berr is visibly referencing the fact that the Jews of France- like the Jews throughout the regions of occupied Europe- were less than second class citizens.

The occupation was showing clear signs of its existence, most of which were aimed directly at the Jewish population, and thus, it is not surprising that Berr's 14 February entry definitively states her recognition that, unlike the 'Aryan' population, the Jews had no rights, and that even the smallest of violations against the new Nazis measures enacted in the occupied zone was grounds for arrest and deportation. In the occupied zone, there was an eleven o'clock curfew

²⁰¹ Berr, *The Journal of Hélène Berr*, 256.

in place, large scale seizures of Jewish properties, and mass shortages of food and petrol.²⁰² In less than two years, Berr's eyewitness account of daily life in occupied France had evolved. Over the course of twenty-two months, from April 1942 to February 1944, her understanding of the Jewish population's position and situation in her home, in the occupied zone of France, had apparently evolved both quickly and drastically. In her next entry from the following day, 15 February, she continued to remark along the same lines recording the day's events- as she saw and understood them- that were occurring throughout the occupied zone:

Now tragedy has become unrelievedly dark, and tension is a permanent condition. Everything is shrouded in gray; there is nothing but unending, monotonous worry, all the more dreadful for being the monotony of anguish... I was frightened... for the people who are being arrested day after day, for all those who have already been through it... The thing itself hurts me, the monstrosity of organized persecution, deportation in itself.²⁰³

Her entry remarks on the 'monotony of anguish,' the daily arrests happening in the occupied zone, the 'monstrosity of organized persecution,' and the deportations that she was hearing of and witnessing in her home. Historical documentation from the period tell us that the years of occupation, in both the occupied and unoccupied zones of France, were marred by massive scale arrests and deportations of the Jewish population: "a total of 75,721 Jews were deported from France," and an additional "4,000 Jews died in French camps or were executed in France."²⁰⁴ In all, these statistics approximate somewhere around 80,000 Jewish victims of the Holocaust in France, of which only 3.5 per-cent (or 2,500 individuals) survived, and from the change that is absolutely present in her diary, it is clear that Berr was affected by the Nazi belligerent control of

²⁰² Jackson, *France: the Dark Years 1940-1944*, 362.

²⁰³ Berr, *The Journal of Hélène Berr*, 261.

²⁰⁴ This first estimate, of 75,721, includes "those from the Nord/Pas-de-Calais, which was attached to Belgium." Jackson, *France: the Dark Years 1940-1944*, 362.

her home.²⁰⁵ Her statements about the ‘monotony of anguish’ and the ‘monstrosity of organized persecution’ plainly reveal the pain and the affects that the war and occupation were causing Berr, and her discussions of arrests, deportation, and the death camp, Drancy, reveal that her eyes were definitively open to the changes in the atmosphere and the conditions of wartime France, as well as her, and her fellow Jews, situation.

Conclusion

Though both were native-French Jews from prominent, socially established and assimilated families, Raymond-Raoul Lambert and H el ene Berr suffered persecution, not only at the hands of the Nazis, but also the new Vichy Regime in France. The wartime experiences of these two extraordinary individuals as was preserved in their wartime diaries serve as representations of the horrors that they faced during World War II in France, and are a testament to the local French government’s response to war and defeat, the geographically divided nature of the war in France, as well as the role that these factors played in shaping the localized experience during the period. Represented by the new regime’s active approach, Vichy France cooperated with Germany more so than the other occupied governments across Europe and began to attack the Jews of France even before the Germans asked or demanded them to do so. By collaborating with the German occupier, the Vichy government played an active, key role in the persecution of the French Jewish communities- both native and foreign, and the case in

²⁰⁵ “Approximately 24,000 (32 per cent) of those deported were French Jews and 56,500 (68 per cent) foreign. This represented approximately 12 per cent of French Jews and 41 per cent of foreign Jews in France.” Jackson, *France: the Dark Years 1940-1944*, 362.

France clearly reveals how geographic location and local government response informed the localized wartime experience in France.²⁰⁶

Geography was the most obviously significant factor in shaping Franco-German relations. Until November 1942, the demarcation line, separating the two major zones in France, informed the occupation and the experiences of those living on either side. Both sides of the line were marked by endemic confusion, widespread arrests and deportations. Jewish populations suffered on both sides, where even for the general non-Jewish public, there were extensive shortages of food, labor, and petrol. Official rations became commonplace and were very limited and rarely amounted to enough to support life.²⁰⁷ Curfews were put in place, transit camps were set up, and various black markets popped up all over the major cities in France.²⁰⁸ These defining factors of life in wartime France varied from one part of the country to another- being more extreme in some areas and nearly non-existent in others- and the widespread shortages “created a new sort of society,” where “German power depended partly on the ability to control access to food and warmth.”²⁰⁹ Lambert and Berr’s diary’s serve as a part of this history that tells the story of the wartime experience, in both the occupied and unoccupied zones, in France.

Lambert was an outspoken figure on the issue of French-Jewish relations, a fierce loyalist to the French state, and very much a critic of Vichy’s state anti-Semitism: “Lambert’s life offers a microcosmic look into the world of native French Jews from the time of the Dreyfus Affair through Vichy;” Illustrating “the irresistible hold of France on native Jews,” his life and military career movingly and tragically portray his inner sense of belonging to, and being a part of, the

²⁰⁶ Paxton, *Vichy France*, 360-364; and Carroll, “What It Meant to be ‘A Jew’ in Vichy France,” 38.

²⁰⁷ Viven, *The Unfree French*, 218.

²⁰⁸ Paxton, *Vichy France*, 363, 366, 369-371; and Viven, *The Unfree French*, 223.

²⁰⁹ Viven, *The Unfree French*, 216.

French nation.²¹⁰ Both thoroughly French and consciously Jewish, Lambert “nimble balanced between the two worlds, finding succor in both.”²¹¹ Accordingly, the publication of his personal Holocaust diary, *Diary of a Witness 1940-1943*, is important in terms of the history of French Jewry in the southern, unoccupied, “free,” zone in wartime France.²¹²

Comprised of two un-paginated, handwritten notebooks, Lambert’s diary serves to enhance “the growing knowledge about the variegated figures who stood at the head of the Jewish councils during the Third Reich,” as well as contributes foundation of knowledge built around the evolution of Jewish life and society during Vichy France.²¹³ More than twenty years after its original French publication in 1985, the English translation of Lambert’s wartime diary was published in 2007.²¹⁴ Kept safe till his diary’s much later publication date, by his late cousin- Maurice Brenner, Lambert’s wartime diary is a record of just over three years; it begins with his first entry on 12 July 1940, only one month after France signed the armistice with Germany, and ends with his last on 20 August 1943, marking the day before he and his family’s arrest, deportation, and imprisonment in Drancy.²¹⁵ Lambert’s diary is an exemplar piece of documentation from the period for a multitude of reasons, though it is particularly so because of what it reveals about the Holocaust experience.

Hélène Berr’s wartime account provides us with a contrast from Lambert, not only in terms of occupied versus unoccupied France, but also in that she stands as the voice of a younger

²¹⁰ Cohen, “Preface,” xviii.

²¹¹ Cohen, “Preface,” xviii.

²¹² Cohen and Szajkowski, “A Jewish Leader in Vichy France, 1940-1943,” 291; and Cohen, “Preface,” vii.

²¹³ Cohen and Szajkowski, “A Jewish Leader in Vichy France, 1940-1943,” 292.

²¹⁴ Cohen, “Preface,” xi.

²¹⁵ Cohen and Szajkowski, “A Jewish Leader in Vichy France, 1940-1943,” 291-292. From Drancy, Lambert, his wife and four children were further deported to Auschwitz on 7 December 1943, where, three days later, they all perished in an Auschwitz gas chamber.

generation from the period. Lambert had served as the head of the UGIF and had a long history of political and militant participation in the country. Berr had no established political background of any kind, and when the war in France began, she seems to have continued living her life as best she could- all the while attempting to either ignore or genuinely misunderstand the wartime threat that was looming ever closer. David Bellos phrases the significance of this best: “The *Journal* is a precious and perhaps unique record of denial- of H el ene’s initial unwillingness to see what was staring her in the face. For that reason, it is also a historical document showing just how the Final Solution was imposed: by incremental stealth, by secrecy, in an atmosphere of utter confusion.”²¹⁶ Unlike Lambert, who from an early date seems to have understood the shape of things to come, Berr’s denial lends her narrative an interesting twist and also shed light on an interesting feature of the wartime experience in France: “It explains and demonstrates how so many people really did not know what was going on before their eyes. It was just as impossible for H el ene Berr to know what Auschwitz meant as it is impossible for us not to know.”²¹⁷ As such, Berr’s diary is an important piece of the history of experience, during the Holocaust in France. It lends to a better understanding of the wartime experience by providing a narrative of the specific, local horrors experienced by one young woman living in occupied France and attest to her experiences and understanding of the period.

²¹⁶ Bellos, “The French and the Jews,” 290.

²¹⁷ Bellos, “The French and the Jews,” 290.

CONCLUSION

Living during the same hellish historical phenomenon, these six victims' stories, as transcribed in their diaries, speak to the diverse layers of detail that existed on the local level during World War II. All three regions under examination experienced war, defeat, and occupation. Polish, Dutch, and French Jewish communities, alike, were persecuted and targeted for annihilation. Each of the six diarists- Chaim Kaplan, Janusz Korczak, Anne Frank, Etty Hillesum, Raymond-Raoul Lambert, and Helene Berr- lives were dramatically altered by wartime events and the Nazis' occupation of their homelands, but each was affected by the war in a unique way, and no two diarists experience was the same. The overall conclusion of this study, then, is that, though the war was affecting each of the three regions and six diarists' lives, diverse layers of distinction in the wartime experience can be drawn.

Examination of the six diarists' lives via their diaries reveals that several important factors played significant, fundamental, and definitive roles in shaping and informing both the same hell and the different horrors during the war and occupation of their homes. Though this study is a strictly limited analysis, it does reveal that the diarists' identities as individuals played a role; that is, who each diarist was as a human being, their exact geographic location, age, gender, specific wartime roles, position within their respective societies, and how their homeland's local government responded to the Nazi threat were fundamental aspects that lent to shaping the victims of the Holocaust's wartime experiences.

This fact is clearly depicted in the war and occupation in Poland. Chapter I, of this study, provided evidence attesting to the facts that, of the three nations being examined, the war in Poland began first, lasted the longest, and is generally thought to have been one of the most

brutal occupations during World War II. As the Nazis' premier trial for their *Lebensraum* ideology, as well as their plans for the Final Solution, Jews living in Poland were the first to be segregated and cut off from the non-Jewish population, Jews living in Polish ghettos were the first to be deported, and during the war the Jewish community in Poland suffered the weightiest number of deaths. These historical facts are detailed in both Kaplan and Korczak diaries, *Scroll of Agony* and *Ghetto Diary*, as are the living conditions and problems posed by forced relocation to one of the country's most notorious Holocaust ghettos. They are a record of the internal strife and hardships of hunger, starvation, persecution, corruptions, and sickness that were prevalent in the Warsaw ghetto; and each diary is a testament to what both Polish victims shared, as well as the specific "different horrors" that each faced during their time as inmates in the ghetto.²¹⁸ As was depicted in chapter I, both lived within the ghetto, were of similar ages, and of the same gender, yet they lived very different wartime experiences that directly correlated to the differences in identity.

The two diaries from the Netherlands, Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* and Etty Hillesum's *An Interrupted Life*, are also a testament to the diversity of experience on the local level in the Netherlands. Both Dutch diarists experienced the war and occupation from the same city, Amsterdam, yet Frank spent most of her wartime experience as a 'Jew in hiding,' while Hillesum lived and working in Westerbork transit camp. Each Dutch diarist's record is a testament to their unique and varied experience. Frank's diary is a detailed chronicle that address the nature of the occupation in Amsterdam, as well as a record that addresses the crucial issue of what it meant to be a Jew in exile during the Holocaust; whereas Hillesum's diary is a record of

²¹⁸ Goldenberg, "Different Horrors, Same Hell," 327.

the horrors within Westerbork, and includes details of living conditions, inmate moral, and a precise record of the transports that were constantly coming and going from the camp.

Chapter III's examination of the two French diarist's texts, Lambert's *Diary of a Witness* and Berr's *Journal of Helene Berr*, are a record of the differences produced the wartime factors: Vichy France, the State anti-Semitism, and geographical divisions that defined the war and occupation in the region. As a man deeply attached and connected to France, his diary is a tragic tale of Jewish persecution by the Vichy government and what it meant to be a Jew living in the 'free zone' of war time France; and Berr's diary is a testament to a younger generation struggle to come to terms with the war's repercussions on the Jewish community and life in the occupied zone. The significance of the six diaries lie in each diarist's unique depiction of events and that each reveals specific details attesting to the complex multiplicity of experience during the Holocaust. Each case shares the common larger themes of war, defeat, occupation, Jewish persecution, and the genocide of the Holocaust, but each regional case study also reveals the distinctive nature of experience, on the local and individual level, that composed the "different horrors" portion of Goldenberg's argument.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ Goldenberg, "Different Horrors, Same Hell," 327.

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