



The Fourth Child

By Hilel Schwartz

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Abstract: *The author reflects on his own experiences encountering David Roskies in the 1960s and collaborating with him in Holocaust remembrance at a very different time than our present context for the memory and commemoration of the Holocaust.*

The Holocaust in 1966 was not then as it is now. Half a century ago the Six Million were already iconic, although Raul Hilberg had recently arrived at 5,100,000 in his *Destruction of the European Jews* (1961). That same year, attending the trial of Adolf Eichmann, Hannah Arendt was the first to put such accountancy itself to metaphysical question. Today, researchers of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum have identified 980 Nazi concentration camps, 30,000 slave labor camps, and revised the total of murdered civilians to 15-20,000,000 Jews and non-Jews. No longer statistically or rhetorically exclusive, the Holocaust now has multiple sectors: Jews; Roma; homosexuals; anarchists, socialists, communists; pacifists, Jehovah's Witnesses . . . And it encompasses now both the dead and the permanently displaced. First through the doors of the Holocaust Memorial Museum when it opened in 1993 was the Dalai Lama.

The Holocaust in 1966 was not then as it is now. The majority of those who died in the Holocaust would otherwise have still been alive. Yet, in 1966 thousands of Holocaust survivors, young enough to conceive children, did not always self-identify as "survivors." The first study of the psychological well-being of children of these "survivors" appeared as a three-page article in Canada in 1966,¹ just as Robert Jay

¹ Vivian Rakoff, John Sigal, and Nathan Epstein, "Children and Families of Concentration Camp Survivors," *Canada's Mental Health* 14 (1966): 24-26. Cf. Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* (New York: Putnam, 1979).

Lifton was finishing *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (1967). Terence Des Pres's *The Survivor* would not appear until 1976. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) entered the APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* only in 1980.²

In 1966, then, despite survivor testimony during the Eichmann trial and documentary footage of concentration camp inmates in Stanley Kramer's oft-replayed film, *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961), the Holocaust was not yet framed in terms of residual trauma or the problems of survivorship. Except, that is, with regard to the problem of the survival of upper-echelon Nazis who had either escaped to new lives in distant places, like Eichmann, or reinvented themselves and become integral to the economic and intelligence machinery of the postwar West and Soviet East. The former—those who had eluded capture—were pursued by the likes of Simon Wiesenthal; the latter—top-level Nazis in new public garb—had been problematized since Marshall M. Knappen's *And Call It Peace* (1947).

Most problematized as of 1966 were neither Jewish nor Nazi survivors but the reach and perdurance of sympathies for the Third Reich. In 1963, Rolf Hochhuth's play, *The Deputy*, had attacked the complicity of the papacy and of industrialists who had abetted the systematic murder of Jews, or looked determinedly away. That German POW scientists had been imported into the US rocket program was no secret, but Stanley Kubrick's parody of recurrent Nazism was as bitter as it was cinematic in *Dr. Strangelove, Or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Love The Bomb* (1964), throughout which Peter Sellers as Strangelove cannot prevent his prosthetic arm from giving Nazi salutes as he drives the world toward nuclear annihilation. Here conjoined at the height of the Cold War were black comedy, Holocaust and holocaust: a conjunction impossible today, given the rampages of genocide.

"Genocide" itself was a word coined half a generation earlier by the Polish Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin, in refuge at Duke University. In his *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (1944), he used "genocide" to describe "the destruction of a nation or an ethnic group" as distinct from the destruction of military targets entailed by normative strategies of war. His definition would be accepted by the UN when the General Assembly adopted the 1948 Convention on Genocide, but he died in 1958 exasperated that the community of nations had refused to endorse his broader sense of genocide as the physical *and/or* psychological and sociocultural devastation of a people.³

If "genocide" was a word of comparative narrowness and novelty in 1966, the Hebrew word *Shoah* was yet narrower and newer as one of two equal signifiers in the memorial day legislated in Israel in 1950/51 and inaugurated, along with Yad Vashem, in 1953: *Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah*, "Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day." Recalling the Six Million, *Yom haShoah* (in brief) enshrined also those 750 men and women who had battled two Nazi battalions during the Warsaw

² Michael R. Trimble, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: History of a Concept," in *Trauma and Its Wake*, ed. C.R. Figley (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1985), 5-14.

³ Raphael Lemkin, *Totally Unofficial: The Autobiography of Raphael Lemkin*, ed. Donna-Lee Frieze (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

Ghetto uprising of 19 April -16 May 1943. As instituted, *Yom haShoah* was more defiant and admonitory than grief-stricken.⁴

Although the sense of *Shoah* shifted further from “obliteration” toward a “destruction that failed of totality” after the Six-Day War of 1967, an upper-case Holocaust was still aborning. While “holocaust” bore Latin reference to fires consuming sacrificial victims on ancient altars, and had been used in France with reference to World War I, the upper-case had scarce anchorage.⁵ He who has been credited with erecting the upper-case was one who understood genocide as broadly as did Lemkin. Elie Wiesel, who claimed to have begun speaking about “the Holocaust” during the late Fifties, had earlier published a memoir, *Un di velt hot geshvign (And the World Remained Silent, 1956)*. In 1963, with precedent in news accounts of the Eichmann trial, he wrote “Holocaust” into a review of Joseph Bor’s *Terezin Requiem*.⁶

The time was ripe for the upper-case. Ripe in two respects, the first categorical, the second imperative. Categorically, the accumulation of titles concerning the Nazi attempt to obliterate Jews had become sufficient to warrant its own permanent call-number on library shelves—not just that sliding cabinet behind which lay numerous translations of Anne Frank’s *Diary* (1947). Available in English by 1966 were many of the “First Hundred Books” listed by David G. Roskies and Naomi Diamant in their *Holocaust Literature: A History and Guide*⁷: books by Bassani, Hersey, Kaplan, Ka-Tzetnik 135633, Katzenelson, Kosinski, Langfus, Levi, Lind, Lustig, Malaparte, Rawicz, Schwarz-Bart, Semprun, Sutzkever, Volakov, Wiesel (and not on their list: Jean-Paul Sartre, Peter Weiss). Two years later, in 1968, when the Library of Congress instituted the category, “Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945),” a dozen more of these First Hundred had become available. The warrant for a call-number and category was all the stronger given the press of less “imaginative” works on the Holocaust neglected by Roskies and Diamant but also in print by 1968: memoirs, children’s books, essays, film documentaries and, to be sure, histories—book-ended by Jacob Robinson’s *Hitler’s Ten Year War on the Jews* (1943) and Seymour Krieger’s *Nazi Germany’s War Against the Jews* (1947), on the early side, and by Nora Levin’s *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry, 1933-1945* (1968).

Imperatively, from the Sixties on, the upper-case became crucial as a means of distinguishing the “Holocaust, Jewish” from other genocides competing for global recognition, genocides perpetrated on Chechnians (1944-48), Tibetans (1950 to the present), Indonesians (1965-66), Nigerian Igbo (1967-70), Equatorial Guinean Bubi (1969-79), Cambodians (1975-79) and, terribly, on and on. As much as the movements for nuclear disarmament, civil rights, women’s rights, environmental protection, and freedom of speech may have inspired the “Freedom Seders” organized since 1968,⁸ it

⁴ Cf. James E. Young, “When a Day Remembers: A Performative History of Yom ha-Shoah,” *History and Memory* 2,2 (1990): 54-75. No “stages of grief” could be invoked until Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’s *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

⁵ Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman, “Why Do We Call the Holocaust ‘The Holocaust?’ An Inquiry into the Psychology of Labels,” *Modern Judaism* 9,2 (May 1989): 197-211.

⁶ On Wiesel see, *Ibid.*, 202-03.

⁷ David G. Roskies and Naomi Diamant, *Holocaust Literature: A History and Guide* (Waltham, Mass: Brandeis University Press, 2012).

⁸ Yakov Illich Sklar and Anya Quilitzsch, eds., *Guide to the Papers of Arthur Ocean Waskow*,

was anger and despair over the intransigence of racism and the recurrence of genocide that made Exodus a generic model for redemption-within-history. The difference in tenor between the *Night and Fog* of the 1955 film by Alain Resnais and Elie Wiesel's 1966 *Gates of the Forest* lay not so much in qualities of hope as with an embrace of the transformative in lieu of melancholia or existential angst. In parallel ran the depth psychology of Erich Fromm, who since fleeing Germany in 1933 (as the grandson and great-grandson of Talmudic scholars) had drawn the most sensitive of lines between security and tyranny, self-affirmation and self-absorption.

A number of refugees, fleeing the Nazis, arrived in Waltham (MA) to teach in opposition to the Authoritarian Personality and expand the analyses of the Frankfurt School, translating critical reflections on personal liberty and collective anxiety into lectures on mass society. So the Holocaust in 1966 at Brandeis University was not then as it is now. Then, Brandeis was a harbor for the first decade of refugees from the Third Reich: the Maimonidean scholar Alexander Altmann, the Jewish historian Nachum Glatzer, the sociologists Lewis A. Coser (born Ludwig Cohen) and Kurt Wolff. Founded in the same year as the State of Israel, with similar ambitions to be modern, secular, independent, democratic, and Jewish, Brandeis was indebted to the same constituencies that sent funds to Israel to assure its health as an emblem of triumphant survival. Where Middlesex University's Medical and Veterinary School (1937-47) had been a last resort for Jews and Blacks denied access to U.S. medical schools, so its campus when secured by the Albert Einstein Foundation for Higher Learning was intended for a non-denominational university that would restore justice and Jewish access in the wake of world war. Students who came to Brandeis during the Fifties and early Sixties were actively engaged in campaigns for justice, notably civil rights. They joined picket lines outside a segregated store in Greensboro, NC (1960) and marched in Martin Luther King Jr.'s March of the 10,000 in Frankfort, KY (1963). Eighty per cent of the student body participated in Freedom Fast Days (1963-64) to send money to SNCC and CORE food distribution centers. Some focused on the *de facto* segregation of Boston schools, others on voter registration in South Carolina.⁹ Albert Axelrad, who went to Alabama to march with King shortly after he was appointed (Reform) Brandeis rabbi in 1965, had not heard of *Yom haShoah* before he met David Roskies.

Fifty years ago, then, and there, and thereabouts, the Holocaust was not what it is now—then, in 1966, and there, at Brandeis, and . . . thereabouts? Yes, for “Holocaust” during the Sixties had to contend with states of apartheid bristling with emergency, massacres in Vietnam, and staccato assassinations felt more sharply on campus than any survivor's tale. Ron Hollander and his fellow Brandeis volunteers, working for integration and unionization in Mississippi, had known Medgar Evers before he was killed in June 1963. Each next bullet—Malcolm X (21 February 1965), Che Guevara (9 October 1967), Martin Luther King, Jr. (4 April 1968), Robert F. Kennedy (5 June 1968)—had powerful repercussions on campus.¹⁰

1948-2009, P-152, Addenda 2, “Freedom Seder, 1969-1976,” American Jewish Historical Society, at <http://digifindingaids.cjh.org/?pID=364752>.

⁹ Kita Miyuki, “Seeking Justice: the Civil Rights Movement, Black Nationalism and Jews at Brandeis University,” *Nanzan Review of American Studies* 31 (2009): 101-20.

¹⁰ David Cunningham, “Mississippi Smoldering,” *Brandeis Magazine* (Fall 2011).

The thousands of English-language texts sampled by Google Ngram Viewer show that a reader in 1966 would come across “assassination” ten times as often as “genocide,” the word “massacre” eight times as often, with all three terms *rising* to intersect only at the turn of the millennium. After 1973, “Holocaust” itself began its climb toward a presence twenty-five times as great as “pogrom.” And what of “trauma”? Exactly in the years 1966–68, it veered upward and away from the flatline of “survivor.”

Enter David Roskies from Montreal by way of Vilna and Hillel Schwartz from Santa Monica by way of Chicago. Both born in the natal year of Brandeis and Israel, both assigned in fall 1965 to the same dormitory, the pair were prompted toward a lifelong friendship neither by cues Jewish nor courses academic. Synanon it was that brought them together: Synanon of the Santa Monica beach; Synanon, “the coolest corporation in the world,” whose business was junkies, whose profit was rehab. According to the trailer for *Synanon*, a 1965 Columbia release starring Edmond O’Brien, Chuck Connors, Stella Stevens, and Eartha Kitt, Synanon was the place where “only the damned want in,” where dope fiends going cold turkey “screamed the truth” (in encounter sessions that intrigued Sixties writers and intellectuals).¹¹

I was one of those aspiring writers and intellectuals. Having abandoned the high school tennis team for a senior seminar on “Love, Death, and Self-Identity in the Western World” whose syllabus steamed with Plato’s *Symposium*, Nietzsche, Eugene O’Neill, and *Wozzeck*, I had become hooked on Synanon as a place to hear jazz, to line-dance with former prostitutes and hustlers, to face the straight talk of the Black street scene. But when I brashly organized a student trip to the Synanon house in Westport (CT) that fall, all Synanon wanted was our money, and all we learned was a suspicion of thaumaturgy, even of such healing as might come of radical honesty and packs of Camels—a suspicion confirmed as Synanon swiftly downshifted from the cinematic and utopian to the cultic and dystopian.

Our long, disappointing bus trip had as denouement, however, a mutual turn from thaumaturgy to dramaturgy as David and I, seatmates, plotted a Warsaw Ghetto Memorial Evening. This was David’s idea, for good reason. Four good reasons. First off, David was first generation, the youngest child of émigré parents whose core experiences lay in interwar Eastern Europe among the Vilna Jewish elites. Secondly, his second languages were Polish, English, Hebrew, French; his mother tongue was the rich Yiddish of those writers and scholars who composed the earliest poems and annals of the *khurbn*, the catastrophe-not-yet-known-as-the-Holocaust. Thirdly, David had in his bones the trifold psychodynamics of drama, for his mother was a theatrical personality who played out her conflicts, crises, and postludes at the piano among a salon of writers and artists who passed through their living room on Pagnuelo Street. Fourthly, as the fourth and last child of parents who had born offspring in Europe and North America, and therefore at greatest familial distance from the intimate if cosmopolitan world of his forebears, it seemed incumbent upon him to arouse Jewish youth around the globe to

www.brandeis.edu/magazine/2011/fall/featured-stories/mississippi.html; Ron Hollander, “Letter to the editor,” *Brandeis Magazine* (Spring 2012), www.brandeis.edu/magazine/2012/spring/letters.html

¹¹ Richard Quine (dir.), *Synanon* (Columbia Pictures, 1965), trailer at www.youtube.com/watch?v=MytNvs3qJos; Rod A. Janzen, *The Rise and Fall of Synanon, A California Utopia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

resume High Yiddish culture in hopes of sustaining a continuity across generations of which he himself was an ember. So he arrived in Waltham already the co-founder and editor of *Yugntruf*, an international newsletter advancing the use of *mame-loshn*.¹² And he arrived already impressed by a Bundist tradition of annual Warsaw Ghetto memorials (*geto-akademyes*) that had momentum apart from the Israeli-generated *Yom haShoah*. As he writes in his preface to *Holocaust Literature*, at fifteen he had heard his friend Khaskl's uncle read aloud an epic poem, "*Lekh-lekho*," by a martyred poet from the Łódź Ghetto whose lines "rhymed the way that Yiddish folk songs rhymed, and there wasn't one word or reference that eluded me...."¹³

Why would any of this draw me in? I was second generation, an émigré from the Midwest to California, an oldest child on whom Simkha-Bunim Shayeveitch's poetic references would have been lost. I was also an outsider to the working-class Yiddish into which my parents were born and to which their Ukrainian-Lithuanian parents clung as they mended old clothes, hauled sacks of potatoes, peddled ties door-to-door in diaspora Chicago. My language was the English of Robinson Jeffers and Dylan Thomas, of MacLeish's *Job* and the free verse of Don Marquis's *Archie & Mehitabel*. Hebrew school was a bust, as was my parents' youthful Labor Zionist dream of pioneering in Israel. My literature was Dostoevsky, Dos Passos, and science fiction; my theater was Beckett, Brecht, Rostand, Shakespeare, *Playhouse 90*, and Burton and O'Toole in *Becket*; my music was Leonard Bernstein and Rodgers & Hammerstein, Joan Baez and Theodore Bikel, Edgar Varése, snatches of Liszt—and Penderecki's *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*. I was most moved by dance, by the joyful tapdancing of Gene Kelly and Jerry Lewis, the jazzy *Steam Heat* of Gus Giordano (with whom I'd studied), the gut-wrenching contractions of Martha Graham's *Night Journey*.

Even my heritage of war was different. My father had been a radio operator on a B-29 bomber stationed in Guam. His crew had flown seventeen missions over Japan. Notwithstanding his taciturnity, Hiroshima was more present to me than Auschwitz. Certainly many of my kin around Kiev and Lemberg were murdered, but I knew few of their names, none of their faces.

We should have gone our separate ways, had I not a slight grasp of, and strong attraction to, the notion of resistance, gathered from Hersey's *The Wall*, Uris's *Mila 18*, Henry Fonda in *12 Angry Men*; gathered from what I understood of civil disobedience after reading Thoreau and Gandhi; gathered from the reluctance of friends' parents in the film industry, blacklisted in 1951-53, to be interviewed in 1964 for my research papers on McCarthyism. One girl I knew was the daughter of survivors, yet I was more intrigued by my mother's tales of tending German POWs as a psychiatric nurse at Fort Benning, Georgia, where she assisted at early trials of "truth serum" for those with combat stress and selective amnesia.

And we would have gone our separate ways, did we not share a faith in the power of word and song to transform trauma. I could envision the universalization of Holocaust experiences through re-presentations of the Warsaw uprising and conjoint metaphors; David could see a way to communicate the wholeness of East European

¹² Cf. David G. Roskies, *Yiddishlands: A Memoir* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2008).

¹³ Roskies and Diamant, *Holocaust Literature*, x.

Jewish life while mourning the magnitude of its loss. Together we might shape a Sixties Shiva for the Six Million: to forfend ghosts, one must confront demons. If not us, who?

Thus began our collaborations, each year more complex. We availed ourselves of most books cited above, of works still in Yiddish, and of sources only a dancer-poet from the West Coast might have thought apt (Kenneth Patchen, say). Our scripts drove toward ironies of juxtaposition, with characters historical, allegorical, fictive, or scriptural. The Six Million could not remain anonymous. They had to own the evening—in April 1966 as a Warsaw Ghetto commemoration; the next year as a play, *Hineni*, about the Vilna ghetto; the next year (on my own, David in Jerusalem) as *Laughter*, a montage of readings, images, song. Each production was performed on a proscenium stage with actors, lights, live music, slides. The climax came in the year of our graduation, 1969, when we presented three consecutive evenings (of parables, of dreams, of truths) at the Brandeis Jewish chapel, with film sequences by Marty Ostrow: *In Commemoration of Spring*.¹⁴

The first collaboration, in 1966, began with Job 14:7, “For there is hope of a tree . . .” and ended with lines from Katzenelson’s *Song of the Murdered Jewish People*, “I did [once] believe in you and sang your praises in each song of mine. / I loved you as one loves a woman, though she vanished like the mist.” The second, in 1967, began with an excerpt from *Apologia of a Physician* by Dr. Mark Dvorzhetski: “It is night. Thoughts are disquieting and memories astir. Like my grandfathers before me, I rise at midnight to weep for the Destruction.” It ended with a lullaby, *Shtiler, Shtiler, lomir shvaygn*, and

“Now it occurs to me at night that I see them, the shadows of Itsik Vittenberg from Vilna, Mordechai Anielewicz from Warsaw, and Mordechai Tannenbaum from Bialystok, and I hear them talk to me aloud: ‘We have perished— and you are here.’ Tell me, conscience, what can I answer them?”

The third opened in 1968 hours after news broke that Martin Luther King, Jr., had been shot, but we went on, the first words coming in the dark from offstage: “In a world of night, the flame of a matchstick is for a moment the sun.” We ended by reciting the names of concentration camps and then the Kaddish, “which slowly and softly turns into laughter, led by the Madman.” The final set of evenings, in 1969, began with a parable of departure and return; it ended with the names of camps, a Kaddish again dissolving into laughter, and the MC breaking in: “OK. Let’s take it from the top.”

¹⁴ Formally: David G. Roskies (script) and Hillel Schwartz (dir.), “Warsaw Ghetto Memorial Evening,” (Brandeis University, April 1966); David G. Roskies (script) and Hillel Schwartz (editor, director), *Hineni* (Brandeis University, April 1967), published by the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, 1968; Hillel Schwartz, comp., “Laughter, Readings in Commemoration of the Holocaust,” (Brandeis University, April 1968) ; Hillel Schwartz (director, script), and David G. Roskies (producer, script), “In Commemoration of Spring, in three parts/nights at the Berlin chapel: I. In the Depths, an Evening of Parables; II, Of the Dark Night: an Evening of Dreams; III, There Is Laughter: an Evening of Truths” (Brandeis University, April 1969). Ostrow became a documentary filmmaker; in 1994 he wrote and directed “America and the Holocaust: Deceit and Indifference” for the PBS Series, *The American Experience*.

These plays were no rehearsals for JewSpeak. They were intently the opposite, putting Yiddish voices into play beyond the Borscht Belt and Bintel Briefs, moving Jewish suffering beyond the pale of Workmen's Circles and synagogue bimas. Only afterwards, as David began to draw the folds of the Jewish tent ever more resolutely about him—spiritually, intellectually, sociopolitically—did he begin to insist upon specifically Jewish traditions of anti-apocalyptic engagement with, and language for, catastrophe.

When he joined Havurat Shalom in Somerville and created *Night Words: A Midrash on the Holocaust* (1970), he did indeed take it from the top, by quoting Elie Wiesel:

Story-Teller: In the beginning was the Holocaust. We must therefore begin again. We must write a new Talmud, new Midrashim, just as we did after the destruction of the Second Temple.¹⁵

In keeping with his own (re)turn to the religious fold, he wove four years of our material into a tallit, its fringes still twisted and ironic but its juxtapositions as liturgical as before they had been literary or philosophical. The text graduated from misery to makeshift optimism, from calibrated cynicism to a kind of kabbalistic humanism—in short, from cicatrix to ligature. Over the next thirty years and four editions, *Night Words* would tighten to *Nightwords* and become a Holocaust haggadah, less a Freedom Seder with its raft of new causes than a recovery room in the most surgical—and Synanonical?—of senses.¹⁶ From Invocation through Sacrifice, from a Ritual of Tearing through a Hallel of Dreams and Nightmares, participants appreciate what it means for anaesthesia to wear off. The Night begins with all removing their footwear; it ends (as fifty years ago) with a recitation of the names of concentration camps, a Kaddish (absent the laughter), and ushers sorting out the pile of shoes.

Who was it who knew not how to ask? The one still looking for his shoes.

¹⁵ Elie Wiesel in "Jewish Values in the Post-Holocaust Future: A Symposium." *Judaism*, vol. 16 no. 3 (1967), p. 285.

¹⁶ David G. Roskies, comp., *Night Words: A Midrash on the Holocaust* (New England Jewish Free Press, 1970; 2nd ed., 1971); idem, *Night Words: A Midrash on the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C.: B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, 1971); idem, *Nightwords: A Liturgy on the Holocaust*, 4th rev. ed. (New York: CLAL, 2000); idem, as performed by Daniel Brenner and Janet Leuchter, *Nightwords: A Liturgy on the Holocaust (Audiobook)* (New York: CLAL, 2002).