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Ruth Jacobs

Remembering as a Source of Creation in the Poetry of Ezra Pound and H.D. and the Musical Representations of the Holocaust by Arnold Schoenberg and Steve Reich.

Memory is a kind
of accomplishment
a sort of renewal
even
an initiation, since the spaces it opens are new places

-William Carlos Williams¹

¹ William Carlos Williams, *Patterson* (New York: New Directions Books, 1946), 78.

To remember is to confront the force of forgetting, to acknowledge a past that is no longer complete, but fragmented by the passage of time. Perhaps that is why we cling to old photographs, handwritten letters, and other objects. They become tangible evidence of something that no longer exists. In his novel, *Immortality*, Milan Kundera explores the way time alters our memory, creating frozen moments, disconnected from the narrative of our lives:

But how is one to be obsessed with the past when one sees in it only a desert over which the wind blows a few fragments of memories? Does that mean he would become obsessed with these fragments. Yes[...] Reubens discovered a peculiar thing: memory does not make films, it makes photographs.²

As Kundera's Reubens discovers, the past is not preserved in narrative form, but in images and fragments. As a result, the role of memory becomes creative as well as preservative. In the opening lines of *Wars I Have Seen*, Gertrude Stein writes: "I do not know whether to put in the things I do not remember as well as the things I do remember. [...]"³ As Stein acknowledges, to remember is not only to call upon the fragments of memory that remain, but to construct a version of the past that is complete. Memory has the capacity to create a new space where the past continues to exist, but it is a version of the past that is constantly evolving both as a result of our changing perceptions and the inevitable force of forgetting.

While creative and artistic interpretations of memory are accepted and even valued in personal recollection, the construction of a greater historical past depends on a sense of objectivity. In "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," Pierre Nora distinguishes between memory and history, as he writes: "History on the other

² Milan Kundera, *Immortality*, translated by Peter Kussi (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1991), 8.

³ Gertrude Stein, *Wars I Have Seen* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1945), 1.

hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond trying to give us the eternal present; history is a representation of the past.”⁴ Nora argues that history attempts to represent the past, while memory has the capacity to allow the past to exist in the present. He argues that the “eternal present” of memory is achieved by accepting not only the definite events of the past, but the process of remembering itself and the way the past is altered by the passage of time: “[memory] remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived.”⁵ Nora’s assertion reveals that the power of memory comes from its “permanent evolution,” that history’s attempt to reconstruct the past will always be incomplete, as it excludes the process of memory that is in constant motion. While the past will never be preserved as it was, examining the process of remembering reveals its continued relevance as it evolves in relationship to the present.

Modernist poets, H.D. and Ezra Pound both wrote about their present circumstances in relationship to a greater historical past. Both poets explore the power of memory as a source of creation and look to the past to define the present as well as look towards the future. They viewed history as memory, allowing a vast expanse of times and places to coexist in relationship to the present. Poet Robert Duncan comments: “History itself, no longer kept within the boundaries of periods or nations, appears as a

⁴ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History,” *Representations*, No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1989), 8.

⁵ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 8.

mobile structure in which events may move in time in ever-changing constellations.”⁶ As Duncan asserts, both Pound and H.D. viewed history as a “mobile structure,” valuing it for its relationship to the flux of time and the process of memory. In the face of the destructive forces of war, they also look to the past to align the present with its greater historical context in order to look to the future. Pound acknowledges his role as a writer, emerging from the ruins: “As a lone ant from a broken ant hill/ from the wreckage of Europe, ego scriptor.”⁷ Hugh Kenner asserts that examining the past provides a precedent for renewal:

If we believe that good things have been and will return we can manage to live with bad things [...] And the ground for such beliefs was what poets sought in history, writing “Poems including history,” attentive to the ecology of events in which any detail may be symptomatic of everything else that is happening.⁸

Kenner asserts that the return to history offered a lens through which to view the present destruction and that the infinite cycle of violence and renewal reveals the power to endure and the promise of regeneration.

In “The Walls do not Fall,” H.D. recognizes the endless search for historical parallels, the attempt to find meaning in the past, acknowledging the criticism that it will bring nothing new:

This search for historical parallels,
research into psychic affinities,

has been done to death before,
will be done again;

What new light can you possibly

⁶ Robert Duncan, *The H.D. Book*, edited by Michael Boughn and Victor Coleman (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 167.

⁷ Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions Books, 1970), 478.

⁸ Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1971), 362.

throw upon them?⁹

H.D. recognizes, however, that the process of remembering is unique even in relationship to the collective past as it is altered by personal experience:

my mind (yours),
your way of thought (mine),

each has its peculiar intricate map,¹⁰

H.D. asserts that remembering history cannot be a repetitive process, as understanding the past is shaped by personal experience and the immediate present, making every individual's perception different. Each mind creates its own "peculiar intricate map," as remembered events trigger other memories, open new spaces.

In remembering historical events, the understanding of memory as a creative and evolving process is often criticized, especially in relationship to representing traumatic events such as the Holocaust. The nature of extreme violence, however, inherently defies representation, as words lose their capacity to communicate. Amy Lynn Wlodarski asserts that as a result, all Holocaust testimony becomes a kind of artistic creation: "Thus Holocaust testimony of any kind, whether secondary or primary, reveals itself to be an aesthetic act in its erosion of the boundary between history and memory."¹¹

Arnold Schoenberg and Steve Reich both created their own musical narratives of the Holocaust that reflect the process of remembering an event that is both inconceivable and inexpressible. Looking at these works through H.D. and Pound's conception and history

⁹ H.D., *Trilogy* (New York: New Directions Books, 1973), 51.

¹⁰ H.D., *Trilogy*, 51.

¹¹ Amy Lynn Wlodarski, "The Testimonial Aesthetics of Different Trains," *The Journal of Musicology*, 136.

as a source of creation reveals the power of memory as a creative as well as preservative force.

H.D. and Ezra Pound

In Pound's *Cantos*, fragments from a vast expanse of history, literature, and art coexist, negating both time and space. Pound aligns his own circumstances with a greater collective past, using memory to shape both the present and his vision of the future. Hugh Kenner asserts that Pound created a new reality within the poem and that by aligning himself with Odysseus, he becomes the central figure, journeying through the vast expanse of memory: "[...] to experience the poem as he wrote it, himself committed to all of which he wrote, himself Odysseus actually en route."¹² Aligning himself with Odysseus, Pound becomes a kind of epic hero, traveling through fragments of the past, making them relevant to the present. As a result, the poem was shaped by memory, but its structure was rooted in the flux of time as it moved into the future. As Kenner notes, Pound experienced the poem as he wrote it, leaving the future of the poem to events that were still to come: "Pound was working instead from within a poem whose end he did not clearly foresee, in the faith that secular events, and the shape of his own life, would supply a proper finale when it was time."¹³ Although *The Cantos* are rooted in the past, these fragments of memory are triggered by the present and are constantly looking toward the future. Pound looked to the past not for a solid reconstruction of events, but for possibilities, for a kind of potential in humanity that would lead him to the future. As Kenner states: "And anything that is possible can again be. The *Cantos* scan the past for possibilities, but their dynamic is turned toward the future."¹⁴

Pound begins his epic in a way that implies that we are entering not only into the flow of history, but into the middle of the poem's memory as well. He opens with the

¹²Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 379.

¹³ Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 379.

¹⁴ Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 325.

word, “And,” implying a past that exist beyond even the ancient memory evoked in his poem: “And then went down to the ship.”¹⁵ The “And” acknowledges the vast expanse of history that comes before the beginning of the poem, placing the reader in the middle of Pound’s world, a world built from fragments of literary, historical, and personal memory. Kenner asserts that the “And” also acknowledges the literary past he is evoking to assert his own appropriation of it: “What comes before ‘and’? In mankind’s past, before ever Homer, a foretime; a foretime even before the dark rite of confronting shades which Pound thought *older* than the rest of the *Odyssey*, reclaimed by Homer as he reclaims Homer now.”¹⁶ Kenner’s claim reveals that Pound’s “and” also implies the role of literature in evoking the past, that just as he begins with the now ancient time of Homer, Homer evoked his own past in the *Odyssey*.

Pound begins *The Cantos* with Odysseus’ journey to Hades, explicitly invoking the voices of the dead as they continue to speak in the present. His decision to begin the cantos with Odysseus’ trip to the underworld emphasizes his interest in the immortality of memory. Provided with sacrificial blood, the dead are given the power to speak:

Dark blood flowed in the fosse,
Souls out of Erebus, cadaverous dead, of brides
Of youths and of the old who had borne much;
Souls stained with recent tears, girls tender,
Men Many, mauled with bronze lanceheads,
Battle spoil, bearing yet dreory arms¹⁷

The opening images of Pound’s epic are of the dead, but of the dead given the capacity to speak in the present. Odysseus becomes the bridge between the world of the dead and that

¹⁵ Pound, *The Cantos*, 3.

¹⁶ Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 349.

¹⁷ Pound, *The Cantos*, 4.

of the living. As Pound aligns himself with Odysseus, beginning the *Cantos* with this image reveals his own investment in bringing voices from the past to the present world.

Pound recalls Odysseus' interaction with Elpenor who died at Circe's house, focusing on the importance of mourning. Elpanor's body was left behind, forgotten by the crew:

But first Elpenor came, our friend Elpenor,
Unburied, cast on the wide earth,
Limbs that we left in the house of Circe¹⁸

Pound emphasizes Elpenor's concern for his body, as it represents the remains of his memory in the world of the living. He asks that they remember him, mourn him, and burry him:

“But thou, O King, I bid remember me, unwept, unburied,
“Heap up mine arms, be tomb by sea-bord, and inscribed:
“A *man of no fortune, and with a name to come.*”¹⁹

Given the chance to speak to the living, what Elpenor asks for is to be remembered. As his body remains “unwept” and “unburied,” it is meaningless to the world of the living. Mourning and burial ensure at least the possibility of preservation in the memory of the living. It is with this plea for remembrance that Pound opens his own poem and enters the world of memory preserved, using fragments from the past to create a space for the present history to exist in a way that will ensure its own place in a greater collective memory.

Pound's exploration of memory was given new meaning when he returned to work on *The Cantos* from the U.S. Army's Disciplinary Training Center (DTC), just

¹⁸ Pound, *The Cantos*, 4.

¹⁹ Pound, *The Cantos*, 4.

north of Pisa after he was arrested for his pro-fascist wartime broadcasts on Radio Rome. He was initially kept in one of the camp's "death cells," a six foot long steel cage with no protection from the elements and forbidden to talk to anyone, even the guards. After a few weeks, however, he suffered a breakdown and was moved by the medical staff to a private tent in the medical compound. Pound later stated that he had suffered from a complete loss of memory, although this may have been exaggerated for legal purposes. As Richard Sieburth points out, whether physical or imagined, the *Pisan Cantos* emerge from trauma:

Whether Pound's repeated insistence on the "amnesia" he experienced in the cage was merely a ploy to buttress his plea of insanity when facing trial for treason later that fall of course remains open for question. But as far as the composition of *The Pisan Cantos* is concerned, the myth of an originary trauma, be it the violent collapse of Mussolini's Italy or that of the poet's own mind, is vital to an understanding of how the poem stages its theater of memory and forgetting.²⁰

Although the reality of Pound's mental health and claim to a complete loss of memory is uncertain, *The Pisan Cantos* begin with the traumatic loss of Pound's political dreams and the uncertainty of his immediate future.

Without access to books, Pound's memory became his only source of creation. While the literary and historical past still plays a prominent role in *The Pisan Cantos*, it often appears in relation to his present surroundings. Sieburth aligns Pound with Odysseus in Hades, as "the snatches of overheard GI conversations in turn opening up the entire echo chamber of remembered voices into which the poet of the Pisan Cantos, like Odysseus in Hades, makes his descent." As Pound begins to write from his tent, he opens with the image of Mussolini's body, an image not called up from the ancient past, but from the present:

²⁰ Richard Sieburth. *Introduction*, in *The Pisan Cantos* edited by Richard Sieburth, ix-xliiii (New York: New Directions, 2003), xviii.

The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent
shoulders
Manes! Manes was tanned and stuffed,
Thus Ben and la Clara a Milano
By the heels at Milano
The Maggots shd/eat the dead bullock
DIGONOS, Δίγονος, but the twice crucified
Where in history will you find it?²¹

Pound emphasizes the loss of the physical Mussolini through the focus on his mutilated body, hung by its heels for everyone to see. Mussolini's death also calls up images from the ancient past. Manes, the founder of the Mancheans was condemned and crucified for his teachings. Like Mussolini, his body was then displayed publicly in the royal city. Where Dignonos was twice born, Mussolini is "twice crucified," emphasizing that he will never be resurrected. While he emphasizes the finality of death, Pound does not give up on the potential that Mussolini's dream represents to him. Kenner writes: "Again and again in the *Cantos* single details merely prove that something lies inside the domain of the possible. It is not necessary to prove that the possibility was ever widely actualized; only that it exists."²² Pound expresses hope that Mussolini's dream can still be realized, as his graphic depiction of Mussolini's body is immediately followed by the hopeful image of Dioce's paradisaical city of Ectaba: "To build the city of Dioce whose terraces are the colour of stars."²³ While Mussolini's death is absolute, his dream lives on in the possibility of the future.

When he returned to work on *The Cantos* from the DTC, Pound was at a point in his epic, which loosely follows Dante's ascent from hell to heaven, where he was to write his own version of Paradise. Although his present circumstances do not point to paradise,

²¹ Pound, *The Cantos*, 445.

²² Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 325.

²³ Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 325.

Pound refuses to give up on the ascent, finding fragments of paradise in the natural world:

Le paradis n'est pas artificiel
but spezzato apparently
it exists only in fragments²⁴

Paradise is not artificial, it cannot be written, but instead exists, fragmented in nature, the smell of the paradisaic herbs, the wind. Even from his cage in the DTC, Pound finds elements of paradise in the world around him:

By thy herbs menthe thyme and basilicum
from whom and to whom,
will never be more now than at present
being given a new green katydid of Sunday
emerald, paler than emerald,
minus its right propeller
this tent is to me and ΤΙΘΩΝΩΙ²⁵

Pound finds paradise in the smell of mint, tiny fragments of hope, as he remains trapped in his tent in the DTC. He identifies with a grasshopper he sees, calling to memory the myth of Tithonus, also trapped. He finds power in fragmented memories called to the surface by aspects of his immediate surroundings. A small grasshopper in his tent evokes his literary memory, as he aligns himself with Tithonus, also trapped. Isolated from the outside world, paradise can only be fragmented.

The *Pisan Cantos* reveal the capacity of Pound's mind to maintain the vast flow of memory and to give it a shape through writing. Kenner notes: "his resources were his thoughts; and what filled the office of Divus or De Mailla, coming between present immediacy (camp, guards, prisoners) and the elements of the Paradise, could only be

²⁴ Pound, *The Cantos*, 458.

²⁵ Pound, *The Cantos*, 455.

memory.²⁶ From the chaos and disorder around him, Pound does not abandon his vision of paradise, but creates it from memory:

By no means an orderly Dantescan rising
but as the winds veer
now Genji at Suma tira libeccio
as the winds veer and the raft is driven , tira libeccio
and the voices , Tiro, Alcmene
with you is Europa nec cast Pasiphae
Eurus, Apeliota as the winds veer in periplum²⁷

Pound acknowledges that there is a lack of order in the ascent to heaven. As it can not be found in the greater circumstances of the world, he looks to fragments from the past and the natural world to create paradise. He calls upon the wind, which transcends both place and time bringing voices from the past and returns to the voices of the dead Odysseus meets in Hades, evoking Tiro and Alcmene. It is out of memory and the potential found in the past that Pound builds his paradise.

Pound also looks to the fragmented past for the re-generation of modern society. He collects fragments from history to emphasize their potential, to create something concrete from fleeting moments of possibility. Amidst the chaos of his present circumstances and the destruction of both world wars, Pound insists on the possibility of renewal:

I surrender neither the empire nor the temples
nor the constitution nor yet the city of Dioce plural
each one in his god's name
as by Terracina rose from the sea Zephyr behind her²⁸

²⁶ Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 476.

²⁷ Pound, *The Cantos*, 463.

²⁸ Pound, *The Cantos*, 454.

Pound returns to the image of Dioce's paradisaal city, emphasizing that it will be constructed from a collection of ideas, evoking Aphrodite's birth out of sea foam, the wind behind her to illustrate the fluidity of creation. Pound looks to the every changing flux of memory and experience to create a future out of possibility just as Aphrodite emerged, a solid form out of water. Pound's description of her birth in Canto XXIII emphasizes the possibility of creating something permanent from something ever flowing and changing:

and saw then, as of waves taking form,
As the sea, hard, a glitter of crystal,
And the waves rising, but formed, holding their form.
No light reaching through them.²⁹

Out of the process comes a permanent form, the crystallization of a wave in moiton. Kenner connects Aphrodite's emergence from the flowing waves to Pound's poetic achievement: "So his poetic achievement—his Aphrodite—is not to be a swimmer stepping out of the ocean but a crystallization into form of the flux itself."³⁰ What Pound achieves in *The Cantos*, is the creation of form from the flow of memory. He effectively uses fragments from the past to create a new reality, one that captures the evolution of memories through time. Through the repetition of images that resurface throughout the work, *The Cantos* develop a memory of their own. The image of Aphrodite's birth takes on new meaning from Pisa. As his writing becomes his only form of communication, the creation of something concrete out of the flow of memory indicates endurance.

²⁹ Pound, *The Cantos*, 109.

³⁰ Hugh Kenner, *The Broken Mirrors and Mirror of Memory in Motive and Method in The Cantos of Ezra Pound* edited by Lewis Leary, 3-33 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 13.

As Pound concludes the first of *The Pisan Cantos*, he evokes the power of memory in creating a permanent form from the flux of experience and in ascent to paradise:

Serenely in the crystal jet
as the bright ball that the fountain tosses
(Verlaine) as diamond clearness
How soft the wind under Taishan
where the sea is remembered
out of hell, the pit
out of the dust and glare evil
Zephyrus/ Apeliota
This liquid is certainly a
property of the mind
nec accidente est but an element
in the mind's make-up
est agens and functions dust to a fountain pan otherwise
Hast 'ou seen the rose in the steel dust
(or swansdown ever?)
so light is the urging, so ordered the dark petals of iron
we who have passed over Lethe.³¹

If the first *Pisan Cantos* begin with the trauma of Mussolini's death and the poets own amnesia (whether real or imagined), it concludes with a testament to the power of memory. Kenner notes that the word "crystal" evokes the memory of the poem itself, calling to mind many passages from earlier cantos:

Thus "crystal" takes us back to Canto 4's raining light, "liquid and rushing"; to Canto 23's waves, "holding their form" and mentioned with Aphrodite, mentioned again in Canto 25 along with musical "notes as facets of air," also with the sculptor seeing the form in the air as Acoetes in Canto 2 saw "beasts like shadows in glass," manifested by Dionysiac energy. The one word "Verlaine" assembles "crystal and "jet" and sculptor under the sign of his "Clair de Lune" which closes with great ecstatic fountains among statues ("les grands jets de'eau sveltes parmi les marbres").³²

³¹ Pound, *The Cantos*, 469.

³² Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 482.

Pound evokes the flux of memory, as it is experienced in the mind, giving voice to process of remembering, as one recollection triggers another. Through a single word, crystal, he gives form to this flow of fragmented memories, calling up their presence without restating them. The word itself is also emblematic of this process, of making permanent the act of remembering that is constantly in motion. It recalls Aphrodite's birth from the sea, as well as the image of a sculptor creating a solid form of a shape imagined in air. As Kenner asserts, the inclusion of Verlaine evokes the end of "Clare de Lune" bringing together the image of solid statues and the fluidity of the fountain. Pound also returns to wind and its capacity to transcend time and place, bringing remembrance:

How soft the wind under Taishan
where the sea is remembered
out of hell, the pit
out of the dust and glare evil
Zephyrus/ Apeliota³³

Pound calls upon the wind to carry memory, which will aid in the ascent out of hell and into paradise. He then shifts to the human mind as a space for memory that is both fluid and certain: "This liquid certainty a/ property of the mind." The mind has the capacity to maintain the fluidity of memory, but human memory is not permanent unless recorded. Pound returns to images of form emerging from fragments and fluidity through the magnet bringing form to steel dust. Although her presence is not directly acknowledged, Aphrodite's birth is implicit in his allusion to Ben Johnson: "or swansdown ever." Kenner notes that Pound's portrayal of the mind is linked with Aphrodite to further emphasize the translation of the motion of memory into a permanent form: "Pound's

³³ Pound, *The Cantos*, 469.

homage to the mind implies a lady because all his invocations of flux yielding form imply Aphrodite.”³⁴ He concludes the first canto written from the immediacy of the tent with an acknowledgment that memory has conquered the potential danger of forgetting: “we who have passed over Lethe.”

H.D.’s personal experiences in World War I made her painfully aware of the silencing power of trauma. After the loss of both her father and brother, she was virtually incapable of writing. Her decision to remain in Europe during World War Two was in part a conscious effort to prove that creativity could prevail. In her biography, *Herself Defined: The Poet and her World*, Barbara Guest asserts: “She wrote now to prove that creativity could conquer death. She had not felt this way in the Great War. That war had crushed her just as she was beginning to bloom on an alien soil, prematurely, so she would always believe.”³⁵ H.D. saw herself as a witness to the war and it became a source of creativity rather than silence. She wrote in her journal:

Now exaltation rises up like sap in a tree. I am happy. I am happier than I have ever been. It seems to me in my whole life...we were able, night after night, to pass out of the unrealities and the chaos of night battle and see clear. If my mind at those moments had one regret, it was that I might not be able to bear witness to this truth, I might be annihilated before I had time to bear witness. I wanted to say, “when things become unbearable, a door swings open or a window.”³⁶

Where the First World War had effectively silenced her, World War II proved to be a catalyst for her writing. H.D. chose to remain in Europe during the war in order to

³⁴ Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 483.

³⁵ Barbara Guest. *Herself Defined: The Poet and her World* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984), 253.

³⁶ H.D., quoted in Guest, *Herself Defined*, 254.

assume to role of witness that she had been incapable of during the previous war. Amidst the destruction and “unrealities” of violence that remain inexpressible, she finds a renewed power in writing. She does not attempt to bear witness to the “chaos of night battle,” but rather to the clarity and inspiration that comes to her out of the ruins. In “The Walls Do Not Fall,” she asserts that inspiration is revealed through desolation:

so, through our desolation,
thoughts stir, inspiration stalks us
through gloom.³⁷

Inspiration comes in spite of destruction, as she describes it having a weight, an intention of its own.

Like Pound, H.D. was interested in the relationship between the present and a greater historical past. She wrote about the war in a way that aligned the present destruction with ancient ruins to emphasize the capacity to endure. In the inscription to “The Walls Do Not Fall,” she explicitly connects ancient Egyptian Egypt with wartime London:

for Karnak 1923
from London 1942

Egypt was connected to H.D.’s personal memory, as she had visited the ruins, finding magic in their antiquity. Her decision to align wartime London with the ruins of Karnak was also in response to the recent violent excavations of the temple. In both places, human destruction threatened preservation. Karnak was particularly significant, as it contained in itself relics from a variety of ancient kings. It was a vast temple dedicated to the sun god, Amen, added to by every Egyptian pharaoh from the Middle Kingdom (c.

³⁷ H.D., *Trilogy*, 3.

2000 B.C.E.) until the Ptolemaic period (c. 330 B.C.E.)³⁸ To H.D., Karnak represented the capacity of one place to encompass a vast expanse of time, to demonstrate the power to endure. Throughout the “The Walls do not Fall,” she associates the sun god Amen with eternity:

Ra, Osiris, *Amen* appeared
in a spacious, bare meeting-house;

he is the world-father,
father of past aeons,

present and future equally³⁹

H.D. recognizes the eternal power of ancient myth. She found magic in objects from the past as well as the ruins both in London and Egypt, as she saw evidence that despite everything, they remained.

Marsha Bryant and Mary Anne Eaverly assert that H.D.’s connection to ancient Egypt reflects her insistence of a kind of preservation that went beyond human circumstances. They assert that Karnak challenges the classical sense of the world that is based on human accomplishment: “And yet for H.D., Karnak’s divine proportions challenge the Classical world’s use of humans as the standard of measurement.”⁴⁰ Bryant and Eaverly point to H.D.’s story “Secret Name: Excavator’s Egypt,” asserting that it demonstrates the magic and eternal meaning she found in Egypt that was not present for her in the classical past:

In Greece, even in so late a building as the Italian Paestrum there was that strange insistence upon human achievement. One measured oneself by the tiny Nike

³⁸ Marsha Bryant and Mary Ann Eaverly, “Egypto-Modernism: James Henry Brested, H.D., and the New Past”, *Modernism/modernity* 14, no. 3 (2007), 438.

³⁹ H.D., *Trilogy*, 25.

⁴⁰ Bryant and Eaverly, “Egypto-Modernism: James Henry Brested, H.D., and the New Past”, 438.

temple, outjutting on the Acropolis. Even in the more massive Paestrum, one measured oneself and one's status by some known and intellectual formula. Here was magnificence of another order.⁴¹

H.D. reveals that classical monuments focus on humanity, while she finds a different kind of magnificence in ancient Egypt. Human achievement is irrelevant in the vast scale of Karnak, built upon by generations. In "The Walls do not Fall," she associates the current ruins to those of Karnak, left open to the elements and the destructive forces of time:

There, as here, ruin opens
the tomb, the temple; enter,
there as here, there are no doors:

the shrine lies open to the sky,
the rain falls, here, there
sand drifts; eternity endures⁴²

H.D. acknowledges the physical destruction of ruins, but maintains that: "eternity endures." While the ruins are subject to the destructive forces of time, their capacity to endure and their eternal magic exists beyond their physical presence. H.D. focuses on what remains, finding preservation in destruction by acknowledging the power of ruins. Even in crumbled temples, London after the bombings, part of the structure remains.

In an attempt to come to terms with the destruction of the world around her, H.D. finds faith in what remains. She looks to the physical objects that endure even the most horrific violence as the starting point for regeneration. Struggling to comprehend the brutality of modern warfare, H.D. extends her search for preservation to the human body:

Where Men roll drunk
With a new bewilderment,

⁴¹ H.D. "Secret Name: Excavator's Egypt," quoted in Bryant and Eaverly, "Egypto-Modernism: James Henry Brested, H.D., and the New Past", 438.

⁴² H.D., *Trilogy*, 3.

Sorcery, Bedevilment:

The bone frame was made for
no such shock knit within terror
Yet the skeleton stood up to it:

The flesh? It was melted away,
The heart burnt out, dead ember
Tendons, muscles shattered, outer husk dismembered.⁴³

H.D.'s graphic description of the physical deterioration of the human body as a result of the violence of war focuses on what is left, the bones. This exploration emphasizes her search for a kind of preservation that extends beyond the confines of the physical world. In response to inconceivable physical violence, H.D. objectifies the human body, making it a kind of relic capable of preserving memory like an ancient Egyptian tomb. While she implicates the horrors of chemical warfare, H.D. finds hope even in the remainder of bones. Where there are remains, at least there can be preservation.

H.D. connects survival to antiquity, as remains like ancient ruins have the capacity to preserve memory even in the face of destruction. She asserts that those who survive that kind of violence are bound together, connected to a greater force of memory:

We are the keepers of the secret,
the carriers, the spinners

of the rare intangible thread
that binds all humanity

to ancient wisdom,
to antiquity⁴⁴

H.D. suggests that survival connects humanity, that the power to endure “binds all humanity/ to ancient wisdom,/to antiquity.” She connects the present survival to the

⁴³ H.D., *Trilogy*, 4.

⁴⁴ H.D., *Trilogy*, 24.

power of antiquity in an attempt to find meaning in endurance. She suggests that preservation is both what connects all of humanity as well as evokes the ancient past and the eternal.

H.D. also defines the power of endurance through an exploration of natural objects that resist deterioration over time. She establishes the significance of shellfish, as the shell provides a consistent home for the finite beings that live within them:

Continuous, the sea-thrust
Is powerless against coral,

Bone, stone, marble
Hewn from within by that craftsman

The shell fish:
Oyster, clam, mollusk

Is master-mason planning
The stone marvel⁴⁵

The solid objects that have been set up in previous sections as elements that survive the destruction of both time and the violence of war are compared to the shells of sea-creatures that act as natural barriers to the force of the ocean. She sets up the parallel between bones and stone structures that withstand the destructive forces of war with the shell of the shellfish. In contrast to the durable shell, however, what lives inside represents the mortality of the individual:

Yet the flabby, amorphous hermit
Within like the planet

Senses the finite
It limits its orbit

⁴⁵ H.D., *Trilogy*, 9.

Of being its house,
Temple, fane, shrine⁴⁶

H.D. maintains that the crab within these solid structures recognizes the fact that it is finite compared to the eternity of the ocean. She argues that the finite crab lives within the shell, as it has the power to endure and will continue to be home to many organisms as time progresses.

As she looks to the regeneration of modern society, H.D. recovers these objects. While she acknowledges that they are incomplete and empty, they provide the foundation for the future:

...coals for the world's burning,
for we must go forward,

we are at the cross-roads,
the tide is turning;

it uncovers pebbles and shells,
beautiful yet static, empty⁴⁷.

The post war society has faced the possibility of total destruction, and is now faced with an uncertain future. H.D. recalls the cycle of the hermit crabs, whose shells are permanent compared to the "amorphous hermit within."

At the conclusion of the poem, H.D. returns to questioning the purpose of survival in the face of horrific new weaponry and an uncertain future:

*Still the walls do not fall,
I do not know why;

there is a zrr hiss,
lightning in a not known ,*

⁴⁶ H.D., *Trilogy*, 8.

⁴⁷ H.D., *Trilogy*, 26.

*unregistered dimension;
we are powerless,*

*dust and powder fill our lungs
our bodies blunder⁴⁸*

H.D. continues to question, why violence occurs, but why structures continue to hold. She describes the powerlessness of the body in relationship to new weaponry, suggesting that despite the vulnerability of the human body, society continues to endure must prepare for the future. Throughout the poem, she has explored the significance of endurance and established the importance of the poet in the face of war. While she has defended the preservative power of writing and past ruins, she now questions the unknown of the future, as there are no relics to turn to:

*we know no rule
of procedure,*

*we are voyagers, discoverers
of the not-known,*

*the unrecorded;
we have no map;*

*possible we will reach haven,
heaven⁴⁹*

H.D.'s tone at the conclusion of the poem shifts dramatically as she turns towards the unknown of the future. There is no precedent for living in the modern world, with the invention of new weapons and the possibility of complete annihilation, yet at least for the present, humanity has survived. She can no longer look to past cultures, but is forced to face the unknown and undefined. The power in the closing line comes from its

⁴⁸ H.D., *Trilogy*, 58.

⁴⁹ H.D., *Trilogy*, 59.

ambiguity, as reaching haven and heaven have extremely different implications.

Reaching haven suggests a safe place on earth, while heaven implies that peace will only be discovered after death.

Reich and Schoenberg: Musical representations of the Holocaust.

In the Aftermath of the Holocaust, there was a fear that the events would be looked at as exaggerated tools of propaganda if not presented in a certain way. Directly following the war, historians emphasized objectivity in their presentation of events by constructing an account based on physical evidence and official documents. With the publication of several survivor's diaries between 1945 and 1965, however, first hand accounts were viewed as historical documentation. Amy Lynn Wlodarski asserts that testimony "could now be understood as a form of hard history rather than soft literary reconstruction."⁵⁰ Linked with the authenticity given to survivor testimony, however, was the dismissal of secondary or fictional accounts as an adequate means of representing the Holocaust. Michael Andre Bernstein cautions, however, that as living memory will soon fade, secondary accounts should not be ignored: "Since the generation of survivors will soon die out, to prohibit anyone who was not actually caught in the Shoah from representing it risks consigning the events to a kind of oblivion interrupted only occasionally by the recitation of voices from an increasingly distant past."⁵¹ While preserving first hand accounts is an undeniably important part of ensuring the memory of the Holocaust, secondary and fictional accounts also play an essential role in solidifying its place in the collective historical memory.

In addition to the fact that living memory of the Holocaust will soon no longer exist, preserving the event is complicated by the fact that the nature of trauma inherently defies representation. Theorist Elaine Scarry asserts: "There are never enough words or the right words, there is never enough time or the right time, and never enough listening

⁵⁰ Amy Lynn Wlodarski, "The Testimonial Aesthetics of Different Trains," 107.

⁵¹ Michael Andre Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 45.

or the right listening to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in *thought*, *memory*, and *speech*.”⁵² While there is no adequate means of expression, the memory of the Holocaust has been recorded extensively. As the reality of the Holocaust defies representation, language must be re-defined, silence itself recognized as a means of communication. Survivor Elie Wiesel writes about his experiences not only during the Holocaust, but his attempts to record them:

Such was the language of the concentration camp. It negated all other language and took its place. Rather than link people, it became a wall between them. Could the wall be scaled? Could the reader be brought to the other side? I knew the answer to be No and yet, I also knew that No had to become Yes. This was the wish, the last will of the dead. One had to shatter the wall encasing the darkest truth, and give it a name. One had to force man to look.⁵³

Wiesel acknowledges that the totality of trauma encompasses language itself. As a result, our most basic means of communication becomes a barrier rather than a source of agency. Wiesel reveals that the way we perceive language must be re-defined in order to shatter the barrier created by trauma. Language must be explored for its capacity to communicate beyond the literal meaning of words, to give a physical presence to the silence inflicted by violence.

On October 3rd, 1943, Henrich Himmler delivered a speech to his senior officers at Posen, asserting that the genocide was to be, “a never-written and never-to-be-written page of Glory in our [SS] history.”⁵⁴ Himmler’s assertion reveals that the Nazi’s sought to annihilate not only the victims, but even the possibility of memory. Survivor Primo

⁵² Elaine Scarry. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 63.

⁵³ Elie Wiesel. *From the Kingdom of Memory* (New York: Summit books, 1990), 15.

⁵⁴ Himmler’s speech is printed as “Document 1919-PS” in volume 19 of the *Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal: Nuvermberg, 14 November 1945-1 October 1946* (New York: AMS Press, 1948) quoted in Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions*, 45.

Levi recalls that the SS consciously exploited the inexpressibility of trauma as a means to erase the Holocaust from history as well as erase their accountability:

Many survivors remember the SS militiamen enjoyed cynically admonishing the prisoners: “However this war may end, we have won the war against you; none of you will be left to bear witness, but even if someone were to survive, the world will not believe him [...] And even if some proof should remain and some of you survive, people will say that the events you describe are too monstrous to be believed.”⁵⁵

As Levi reveals, the Nazi’s were aware of the power of trauma to destroy the victim’s capacity to communicate their experiences. They sought to remove any possibility of memory that would preserve the monstrosity of their actions. These claims expose the guard’s conscious awareness that the Holocaust was too horrific to be recorded. Michael Andre Bernstein also asserts that prisoners were isolated to ensure that even those experiencing the event could not bear witness:

Moreover, since one of the Nazi mechanisms of controlling the prisoners depended on isolating each of them as much and for as long as possible to keep them ignorant of the full scale of their predicament, the testimony of any single survivor, no matter how vivid and thoughtful, will be fragmentary and in need of supplementation from other sources and narratives.⁵⁶

In addition the limitation of first hand accounts, the testimony that is perhaps most important is absent, as it belongs to the dead. Claude Lanzmann, who directed, “Shoah,” a nine and a half hour film about concentration camps in Poland, composed primarily of testimony asserts: “What was most important was missing: the gas chambers, death in the gas chambers, from which no one had returned to report.”⁵⁷ As Lanzmann suggests, the memory that is most important to our understanding of an event as incomprehensible as

⁵⁵ Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Summit Books, 1988), 11, quoted in Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions* 45.

⁵⁶ Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions*, 46.

⁵⁷ Claud Lanzmann quoted in Richard Brody, “Witness: Claude Lanzmann and the making of ‘Shoah.’” *The New Yorker* (March 19th, 2012), 80.

the Holocaust belongs to the dead. In response to this absence, memory must be ensured both by creating narratives from the fragmented testimony of survivors, and by acknowledging and representing the silence that remains.

Examining Arnold Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw* and Steve Reich's *Different Trains* reveals the complexity of authenticity in relationship to representing the Holocaust. While *Survivor* is often criticized for its factual errors, most significantly the mention of smoke stacks in the Warsaw Ghetto when none existed, Reich is praised for his inclusion of recorded testimony. In fact, music scholar Richard Taruskin asserts that Reich, "has composed the only adequate musical response—one of the few adequate artistic responses in any medium—to the Holocaust."⁵⁸ In an interview, Reich reveals that his intention in composing *Different Trains* was to present the testimony in a way that would preserve its authenticity by simply presenting what they said, removing himself from the thematic content of the work:

To consider the Holocaust as subject material in any way, shape, or form is so inherently...not just difficult, but impossible. What makes this piece work is that it contains the voices of these people recounting what happened *to them*, and I am simply transcribing their speech melody and composing from that musical starting point. The documentary nature of the piece is essential to what it is.⁵⁹

While Reich acknowledges the impossibility of representing the Holocaust, he also asserts that his personal interpretation of events is somehow removed from his composition through the inclusion of survivor testimony. As *Different Trains* includes only fragments from almost 8 hours of pre-recorded testimony, however, Reich's own perception of events inevitably shaped his selections. Wlodarski asserts that, "his selections were motivated by his desire to create a coherent and emblematic account of

⁵⁸ Taruskin, "A sturdy Musical Bridge to the 21st Century."

⁵⁹ From an interview with Jonathan Cott in 1996. <http://www.steverreich.com/> (accessed 2/10/12).

Jewish persecution in Europe—in short, a narrative that accorded with his own understanding of the Holocaust.”⁶⁰ While the inclusion of survivor testimony is powerful in its preservation of their voices, *Different Trains* is effectively Reich’s own Holocaust narrative, a representation of his interaction with the testimony and how it shaped his understanding of the event.

Unlike Reich, Schoenberg did not assert the authenticity of his depiction of the Holocaust in *Survivor*. An excerpt from a letter he wrote to Kurt List in 1948 reveals that the primary purpose in writing the piece was to ensure the lasting memory of the Holocaust, not to provide an authentic re-construction of events:

Now this is what the text of the *Survivor* means to me: It means at first a warning to all Jews, never to forget what has been done to us, never to forget that even people who did not do it themselves, agreed with them and many of them found it necessary to treat us this way. We should never forget this, even if such things have not been done in the manner in which I describe them in the *Survivor*. This does not matter. The main thing is, that I saw it in my imagination.⁶¹

Schoenberg’s letter reveals that producing memory was the primary focus of his cantata, to give a voice to the dead by recording his imagined narrative. In addition to recording his own experiences, survivor Elie Wiesel has also written a number of novels. Like Schoenberg, Wiesel asserts that he writes to ensure the memory of the dead: “Why do I write? To wrest those victims from oblivion. To help the dead vanquish death.”⁶² Wiesel writes that his characters give the dead a voice, provide a physical representation of their absence, giving them a place in living memory:

⁶⁰ Wlodarski, “The Testimonial Aesthetics of Different Trains,” 117.

⁶¹ Arnold Schoenberg to Kurt List, 1 November 1948, as reprinted in *Arnold Schoenberg Self-Portrait: A Collection of Articles, Program Notes, and Letters by the Composer about His Own Works*, ed. Nuria Schoenberg Nono (Pacific Palisades, Calif.: Belmont Music Publishers, 1988), 105, in Wlodarski, “An Idea Can Never Perish,” 586.

⁶² Wiesel. *From the Kingdom of Memory*, 21.

I offer them shelter. The enemy wanted to create a society purged of their presence, and I have brought some of them back. The world denied them, repudiated them: so let them live at least within the feverish dreams of my characters.⁶³

While Schoenberg's narrative is not factual, it ensures memory, gives a voice to the absent narratives that will never be told, just as Wiesel writes characters that represent the dead, while never claiming the capacity to transmit their specific experiences. In this way, they both contribute to the preservation of Holocaust memory and acknowledge the void of experiences we will never have access to.

While Reich asserts a different kind of authenticity, his conception of *Different Trains* reveals the nature of testimony and how historical memory shapes his perception of the Holocaust. While testimony is a valuable resource, it is problematic to associate memory with fact, especially when dealing with the complexity of traumatic memory. Compounded with the impossibility of telling, is the inherent danger of misrepresentation in every stage of transmission. Wlodarski comments that testimony "requires transference, a transmission from the witness to the listener, in which the narrative passes from one vessel to another, but at each stage—from recollection to utterance to receipt—the danger of misrepresentation arises."⁶⁴ Wlodarski points to places Reich's "documentary" presentation of testimony where he actually re-writes the original text. She asserts that these alterations were a result of his preconceived vision of the Holocaust: "I would hypothesize, however, that the cultural strength of these symbols affected Reich's own imagining, leading him to substitute or mishear partly because he expected to hear the usual tale of Auschwitz: deportations, selections, exterminations, and

⁶³ Wiesel. *From the Kingdom of Memory*, 20.

⁶⁴ Wlodarski, "The Testimonial Aesthetics of Different Trains," 115.

cremations.”⁶⁵ Wlodarski suggests that Reich’s mishearing of the testimony was a result of a created memory, an image in his mind built from the most commonly told experiences of Auschwitz.

At the climax of the second movement, the moment when the trains finally stop, reaching their destination, Reich quotes Rachella describing her first impression of Auschwitz: “Flames going up to the sky—it was smoking.”⁶⁶ This image immediately evokes smoke stacks, death, the ideas of terror we have come to associate with the camp. In her original testimony, however, Rachella recalls noting the beauty of the sunset:

Then it was our turn. They opened our cattle wagon doors and we went down on the platform. It was very dark and when I looked up to the sky, it was kind of like a red sky and kind of *flames going up in the sky*. *It was smoky* and I said to my—the girls around me. Look at that pretty sky, it’s red.⁶⁷

Reich’s mishearing of the Rachella’s testimony transforms her description of the “pretty sky,” into an image of death and the horror of Auschwitz. While the image is extremely powerful, it diminishes Reich’s claim to authenticity. Wlodarski maintains that audiences remain unaware of the fictional interpretation of the testimony, as Reich continually asserts its “documentary nature”: “These constructions, whether intentional or not, remain hidden to listeners, whose only guide is Reich’s official transcript of the testimonies, provided in the concert program or liner notes, and his assurance that what you are about to hear is a ‘musical reality.’”⁶⁸ While Reich’s misinterpretation of the text

⁶⁵ Wlodarski, “The Testimonial Aesthetics of Different Trains,” 130.

⁶⁶ Steve Reich, *Different Trains* (U.S.A.: Hendon Music, Inc., 1998). Reich, “Different Trains.”

⁶⁷ Rachella M. Holocaust Testimony, P, tape 2, side A, quoted in Wlodarski, “The Testimonial Aesthetics of Different Trains,” 131.

⁶⁸ Wlodarski, “The Testimonial Aesthetics of Different Trains,” 126.

is almost certainly unintentional, it not only undermines his claim to authenticity, but also reveals the problematic nature of regarding testimony as fact.

While Reich fails to acknowledge the impossibility of creating a purely documentary representation of the Holocaust, *Different Trains* does reflect the nature of testimony itself. Wlodarski notes that interviewers in the recorded testimony of the Fortunoff Archives, “do not merely listen to the accounts, but help to shape them through questions, interjections, clarifications, and even direct (although perhaps not intentional) censorship.”⁶⁹ Survivor and Psychologist Dori Laub describes bearing witness to testimony as the process of moving toward and away from the traumatic experience that cannot be symbolized: “I observe how the narrator and myself as listener alternate between moving closer and then retreating from the experience.”⁷⁰ The music in *Different Trains* functions in a similar way, as the underlying motion of the train carries the memories that are told in fragmented speech. Each movement contains within it shorter sections, indicated by tempo changes that parallel the fragmentary nature of testimony. The music is constantly moving toward something, but before the memory can be fully realized, the motion shifts, moving away from it. Wlodarski asserts that this episodic music also reflects the stasis that often occurs in testimony as the memories become too painful to recall: “The result is a modular approach to testimonial narration in which musical progression signifies narratological advance while repetition denotes a sense of stasis similar to moments of emotional paralysis found in Holocaust testimonies.”⁷¹

Reich’s musical language parallels the impossibility of creating a complete narrative

⁶⁹ Wlodarski, “The Testimonial Aesthetics of Different Trains,” 110.

⁷⁰ Dori Laub, *Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle*, in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, edited by Cathy Caruth, 61-76 (Baltimore, MD: The Johns, 1995), 62.

⁷¹ Wlodarski, “The Testimonial Aesthetics of Different Trains,” 113.

from the fragments of traumatic memory. Through the doubling of speech with music, Reich gives voice to the inherent duality between testimony and the reality of the memories that defy articulation.

In *Survivor*, Schoenberg also engages with music's capacity to represent the process of recalling and attempting to communicate traumatic memories. He explores the ways in which musical memory both parallels human thought and has the power to represent memories that defy conscious recollection. Throughout the work, Schoenberg repeats a series of musical motives that represent the narrator's memories. They are first presented in a purely musical setting, demonstrating the power of music to serve as a physical representation of the absence of conscious memories as the narrator struggles to recall his own experience:

But I have no recollection of how I got underground to live in the sewers of Warsaw for so long a time...The day began as usual. Reveille when it was still dark. "Get out!" Whether you slept or whether working kept you awake the whole night. You had been separated from your children, from your wife, from your parents. You don't know what happened to them...How could you sleep?⁷²

While the narrator struggles to re-construct the memories of his own experience, they are present in the music before he is capable of articulating them. The association between the musical representation of memory and the narrator's gradual conscious recognition of them is demonstrated by the repetition of musical motives. Schoenberg signals the narrator's shift from unconscious recollection to a conscious articulation of his experience through the repetition of the opening fanfare beginning on the word "Reveille." As the piece progresses, all of the opening musical motives are repeated as they gradually become associated with specific memories. Wlodarski asserts that musical

⁷² Arnold Schoenberg, *A Survivor from Warsaw* (New York: Boelke-bomart, inc., 1974).
Schoenberg, *A survivor from Warsaw*.

memory functions as a kind of trigger for conscious recollection: “This process of translation represents the narrator’s mnemonic experience, portrayed as a psychosonic phenomenon in which musical memories are sensed and then articulated in spoken text.”⁷³ Musical memory functions both to depict the narrator’s unconscious memories, as well as provide a vehicle through which to recognize them. It is only after hearing their musical representation, that Schoenberg’s narrator is able to articulate his own memories.

Schoenberg’s depiction of the narrator’s process of remembering exposes the way traumatic memories often defy conscious recollection. Psychologists Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart assert that traumatic memories are stored differently from other forms of memory and as a result, the victim is not in control of their retrieval:

Under extreme conditions, existing meaning schemes may be entirely unable to accommodate frightening experiences, which causes the memory of these experiences to be stored differently and not be available for retrieval under ordinary conditions: it becomes dissociated from conscious awareness and voluntary control.⁷⁴

Schoenberg’s musical representation of his narrator’s recollection of traumatic memory reflects this “dissociation from conscious awareness.” Musical memory serves as a depiction of these unconscious memories that can only be articulated after they are heard. This latency is also representative of recalling trauma, for as Cathy Caruth asserts: “The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent latency that it is first experienced at all.”⁷⁵ Extreme physical and emotional trauma, remove the narrator’s possibility of

⁷³ Wlodarski, “An Idea Can Never Perish,” 589.

⁷⁴ Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, *The Intrusive past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma* in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth, 158-183 (Baltimore, MD: The Johns, 1995), 160.

⁷⁵ Caruth, *Trauma*, 8.

bearing witness to his own experience as it is occurring. It is only through the process of conscious recollection, triggered by musical/unconscious memory, that he is able to articulate pieces of his experience. Wlodarski asserts that Schoenberg's narrator becomes a kind of author of his own narrative through the process of remembering: "As a result the narrator in *Survivor* transcends his role as fictional protagonist, a mere character of the work, and becomes the cantata's own internal witness and author."⁷⁶ *Survivor's* narrator comes to know his own experience only through the act of telling, as his traumatic unconscious memories are recognized and then articulated. As a result, the piece mirrors the process of testimony, of trying to regain one's traumatic past through the act of telling.

As both *Different Trains* and *A Survivor from Warsaw* are effectively their own holocaust narratives, the act of performing these pieces becomes a kind of testimony, as the audience assumes the role of witness. Psychologist Dori Laub explores the process of witnessing, asserting that the listener plays an important role in shaping the narrative:

To a certain extent, the interviewer-listener takes on the responsibility for bearing witness that previously the narrator felt and bore alone and could not carry out. It is the encounter and the coming together between survivor and listener, which makes possible something like a repossession of the act of witnessing.⁷⁷

Laub asserts, the role of the interviewer goes beyond listening, as the witness assumes some of the burden of traumatic memory. Through the act of telling, the victim shares his or her story, however fragmented and incomplete, to another, effectively repossessing their own memory. As a result the struggle to comprehend, to piece together a complete narrative is now shared. The burden of remembering is also shared, as the listener

⁷⁶ Wlodarski, "An Idea Can Never Perish," 589.

⁷⁷ Wlodarski, "An Idea Can Never Perish," 589.

absorbs the narrative into their own memory, shaping it through their own experiences and perceptions. While testimony is an inevitably incomplete and altered version of the past, the act of telling makes the process of remembering trauma a shared experience.

Both Reich and Schoenberg present their Holocaust narratives by preserving the fragmented nature of testimony. While Schoenberg's narrative is comprised of musical fragments that are eventually associated with fragmented memories, Reich presents the listener with small sections of recorded testimony. As a result, both Reich and Schonberg place at least part of the responsibility on the listener, who must create his or her own version of the narrative. Wlodarski asserts that Reich presents only fragments of testimony so that the audience becomes involved in the process of remembering, or creating a narrative out of that which is inherently broken:

Reich involves his listeners in *Different Trains* by conceiving of their imaginations as the stage for his documentary theater of the mind. This puts the representational onus on the audience, who are given short yet suggestive sound clips and expected to stitch together the fragmented memories extracted from the survivors' fraught testimonies.⁷⁸

Through the fragmented sound clips, the listener is forced to piece together their own perception of the survivor's complete narrative just as the witness plays a prominent role in shaping survivor testimony. While the reality of the Holocaust will never be preserved, and perhaps should not be, through Reich's use of speech melody and preservation of fragmented memories, he has immortalized a small fraction of their testimony.

Reich and Schoenberg both harness the power of musical performance, causing the audience to become witnesses. While Reich emphasizes the authenticity he achieves through the use of actual survivor testimony, the nature of traumatic memory makes his

⁷⁸ Wlodarski, "The Testimonial Aesthetics of *Different Trains*," 116.

composition a source of creation rather than preservation. Although the perceived authenticity of the work may be diminished by this claim, it is still powerful. In fact, it takes on a different kind of authenticity, the authenticity of bearing witness. Even the way he misquotes the testimony reveals the complexity of our cultural and historical interaction with the Holocaust. Schoenberg also uses the act of performance to help ensure the continued remembrance of the Holocaust, valuing memory over authenticity: “We should never forget this, even if such things have not been done in the manner in which I describe them in the *Survivor*.” Wlodarski asserts that *Different Trains* also creates memory, as the listener is carried through Reich’s own Holocaust narrative, “[...] with Reich as its memory artist, attempting to make sense of the rational even as he is haunted by the irrational.”⁷⁹

Extreme violence destroys our capacity to communicate through language, as screams replace words. Theorist Elaine Scarry asserts that screams demonstrate the power of pain to remove our capacity to communicate through language: “Physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned.”⁸⁰ Scarry’s depiction of screaming implies that extreme pain causes a reversion to a primitive, animal like state, as the ability to communicate through language is distinctly human. Searching for a way to communicate the horror of the Holocaust, Elie Wiesel also aligns the language of violence with the primitive:

⁷⁹ Wlodarski, “The Testimonial Aesthetics of Different Trains,” 136.

⁸⁰ Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 4.

Where was I to discover a fresh vocabulary, a primeval language? The language of the night was not human; it was primitive, almost animal-hoarse shouting, screaming, muffled moaning, savage howling, the sounds of beating...⁸¹

As the language of violence denies objectification in words, a new vocabulary is needed to capture its reality. Elaine Scarry also notes that the inexpressibility of pain contributes to its totality: “A fifth dimension of physical pain is its ability to destroy language, the power of verbal objectification, a major source of our self-extension, a vehicle through which the pain could be lifted out into the world and eliminated.”⁸² As pain denies objectification in words, screams become the only way to translate violence into a kind of language. Rather than communicate the experience, however, this “language of the night” becomes representative of absence. If nothing else, this form of pre-language demonstrates pain’s capacity to destroy even our most basic means of communication. In the attempt to depict the inexpressible, both Reich and Schoenberg give musical voice to this language of pain.

In *Survivor*, physical violence enters Schoenberg’s libretto in a direct way, as the narrator recalls being beaten and left for dead. It is at this moment that absence is brought most concretely to the fore as the narrator is literally beaten unconscious, physically incapable of bearing witness to his own trauma:

The sergeant and his subordinates hit [everyone]: young or old, [strong or sick], guilty or innocent...It was painful to hear them groaning and moaning. I heard it though I had been hit very hard, so hard I could not help falling down. We all on the [ground] who could not stand up were [then] beaten over the head...I must have been unconscious.⁸³

⁸¹ Wiesel, *From the Kingdom of Memory*, 15.

⁸² Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 54.

⁸³ Schoenberg, A survivor from Warsaw.

In order to depict violence, Schoenberg uses music to mirror the narrator's memories of physical brutality, as it is accompanied by percussive pizzicato in the strings and cymbal crashes that coincide with his recollection of being "beaten over the head." As he falls unconscious, however, the music withdraws as well. Lying on the ground, he is consumed by physical violence and the sound of "groaning and moaning." His memory is incomplete, as he describes himself experiencing it only partially consciously: "There I lay aside half conscious. It had become very still—fear and pain." Pain becomes the only part of the experience remaining, as the narrator simply states, "fear and pain."

In *Different Trains*, Reich also acknowledges the impossibility of translating violence into language by evoking the sound of screams through recorded sirens and sustained high notes. Naomi Cumming notes that these screams also emerge from the sound of train whistles, drawing the listener into their reality: "Its complex mixture of high-pitched noises are at first very forceful and train-like, but as they are progressively raised in pitch with subsequent entries, these real sounds can gain the signification of a voice or voices."⁸⁴ Cumming's observation suggests that the musical screams are linked to the sound of the train, which draws the listener in by connecting unimaginable horror with the nostalgic trains of the first movement. Through the gradual transformation of the relatable sound of the train into human screams, Reich brings the inexpressible into the realm of communication. Cumming also asserts that the creation of the 'screams' from 'real' recorded sounds contributes to their communicability:

For a moment there is an ingenuous factuality in the statement that there were 'lots of cattle wagons there,' as the child again seems to speak, but by superimposing on her voice some very high-pitched sirens, the possibility is

⁸⁴ Naomi Cumming, "The Horrors of Identification: Reich's 'Different Trains,'" *Perspectives of New Music* 35 no. 1 (Winter, 1997), 146.

creating for hearing in the 'real' sounds an anthropomorphic fear, the terrified screaming of many voices in the background to this event.⁸⁵

Cumming notes that the words spoken are capable only of "factuality," and that it is the musical translation of screams that evokes the possibility of hearing "anthropomorphic fear." While words are capable only of depicting the factuality of the testimony, Reich's musical translation of screams, made more 'real' by the use of recorded sound, has the capacity to communicate terror. While the reality of the horror will never be translated, through the musical depiction of screams, Reich gives voice to the absence of language.

While music cannot necessarily transcend the power of violence to deny representation, it can give a tangible presence to absence. Perhaps the only way to begin to understand the Holocaust, to give voice to its trauma is to recognize its inexpressibility. Jean-Louis Pautrot suggests that musical memory originates from a kind of unreality:

"Musical memory is generated from the inescapable vanishing of reality—from disappearance, invisibility, and silence—rather than from a mimetic representation of reality or from an organizing and interpretive reading of memories."⁸⁶

Pautrot associates musical memory with the "inescapable vanishing of reality", as it is generated from silence, from an absence of language. Both Reich and Schoenberg employ musical memory to extend the boundaries of communication to include a representation of absence itself. Perhaps the only way we can begin to comprehend the Holocaust is through its inexpressibility. Reich and Schoenberg both explore music's capacity to give voice to silence, revealing that it can be a form of communication as well as absence. While the Holocaust can never be understood or fully communicated, what

⁸⁵ Cumming, "The Horrors of Identification," 146.

⁸⁶ Jean-Louis Pautrot, "Music and Memory in Film and Fiction: Listening to *Nuit et Brouillard* (1955), *Lacombe Lucien* (1973) and *La ronde de nuit* (1969)," *Dalhousie French studies*, 55 (Summer 2001), 168.

matters most is that the dead not be forgotten, for as Wiesel asserts, “the punishment that the killer most fears is the victim’s memory of his deeds.”⁸⁷ Giving voice to silence itself, is perhaps the only way to depicts trauma through its inexpressibility while ensuring memory.

Reich engages with musical silence at the end of the second movement when listeners are faced with the only thing more horrifying then being trapped by the motion of the train, it stops. Until this point in the work, everything has been accompanied by the constant eighth and sixteenth notes, signifying the motion of the train. Naomi Cumming asserts that these running notes can be almost soothing, but when the stop, the listener is forced to engage with the subject matter:

“Flames going up to the sky-it was smoking, it was smoking.” It is at this point death enters the music in a way that cannot be avoided by a listener whose interpretive strategy has been to accept an entrainment of his or her own sense of bodily motion to the ostinato’s momentum. The train stops.⁸⁸

As the train stops, the listener can no longer be lost in the motion of the train, in the music of the piece, but must engage with the narrative in a different way. Cumming asserts that at this moment the audience is confronted with not only death, but the inexpressibility of the horror, which she argues makes it the most disturbing moment in the work:

In them is a death that not only confronts Rachella, whose voice brings a reenactment of that moment of fear, but a death confronting listeners who are engaged with the work, in active participation. To live this moment is to confront something that cannot fully be symbolized. Only the trace of smoke has been left in memory as an index to the silence.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Wiesel, *From the Kingdom of Memory*, 201.

⁸⁸ Cumming, “The Horrors of Identification.” 147.

⁸⁹ Cumming, “The Horrors of Identification.” 147.

Cumming's assertion reveals the expressive value of silence. Faced with the absence of sound, the audience is forced to engage with everything they have heard up until this point in a different way. The music becomes most horrific when it falls silent, when Reich confronts the inexpressibility of trauma in a direct way. Recognizing the absence of representation is perhaps the only way to begin to comprehend, to convert the silence of inexpressibility into the silence of communication.

Schoenberg employs his 12-tone compositional technique to provide a musical representation of fragmented memory. Wlodarski notes that smallest musical unit present in his system of musical rows is the augmented triad:

This causes realizations of the augmented triad to pervade *Survivor* melodically and harmonically because every row (and its hexachordal combination) contains one of its four types. Repetition of the augmented triad throughout the piece suggests that Schoenberg considered this chord to be *Survivor's* expression of the musical idea and therefore the component of the work subject to mnemonic treatment.⁹⁰

Wlodarski asserts that the augmented triad is a unifying musical fragment, as it is present in every row. Schoenberg also uses this augmented triad as a musical representation of absence. Wlodarski states: "Schoenberg foreshadows the approaching suppression (or storage) by fragmenting P6 until only its augmented triad remains, an effect that creates row ambiguity directly preceding measure 47."⁹¹ As the narrator approaches physical unconsciousness, the music become more and more fragmented until all that remains is the augmented triad. This triad, however, is also the source of the music that feeds the narrator's recollection, demonstrating its connection to memory. Even when the music

⁹⁰ Wlodarski, "An Idea Can Never Perish," 601.

⁹¹ Wlodarski, "An Idea Can Never Perish," 600.

recedes and the narrator has no conscious recollection or capacity to bear witness, the fragment of memory remains. In this way the augmented triad becomes representative of both a presence and an absence. Wlodarski asserts that it reveals memory is never absent, but fragmented almost beyond comprehension: “This retention, in turn, facilitates the process of recollection, in that the idea is never completely absent but merely obscured by fragmentation.”⁹² Even in the silence of physical unconsciousness, the augmented triad remains, demonstrating the presence of memory that exists even in absence of conscious recollection.

Silence is often equated with music, as song has the capacity to serve as a different kind of absence. Wiesel suggests that song can replace the silence of grief, carrying it out in to the world:

When man, in his grief, falls silent, Goethe says, then God gives him the strength to sing of his sorrows. From that moment on, he may no longer choose not to sing, whether his song is heard or not. What matters is to struggle against silence with words, or through another form of silence.⁹³

Wiesel suggests that the silence of trauma must be replaced with a silence capable of communicating. While words will never be adequate, music can function as “another form of silence,” one that ensures memory. In the immediate face of violence, song can also function as a means of communicating when language falls short. Survivor Celia Biderman recalls a moment in Auschwitz when the screams of a group of people being taken to dies were suddenly transformed into song:

With extreme accuracy, big vans came to the blocks, and the poor victims were taken and thrown in the van. The block lady and the girls from the night shift

⁹² Wlodarski, “An Idea Can Never Perish,” 602.

⁹³ Wiesel, *From the Kingdom of Memory*, 21.

helped the men to bring out the victims. The poor victims were screaming and crying, and suddenly, the HATIKVAH was heard singing by them. Another few vans arrived and were gone.⁹⁴

In the face of inconceivable violence, song allowed the victims to assert their Jewish faith by singing in Hebrew. The Hatikvah unified them by giving voice to their memory.

Even in the face of immediate death, they assert their faith in the religion and history the Nazi's condemned to oblivion. Where language was diminished to screaming and crying, song took over, asserting communicability in the face of inconceivable horror.

Schoenberg also engages directly with the power of song to preserve memory in response to a similar story of singing in the camps. He had originally begun composing *Survivor* in response to Corinne Chochem's desire to put together a commemorative album including the work of prominent Jewish composers. In a letter, she shared with Schoenberg the story of Hirsh Glick's "Never Say There is Only Death For You", a partisan song sung in protest at the Vilna Ghetto.⁹⁵ It is evident from Schoenberg's emphasis on the power of song in *Survivor*, that he was deeply affected by the implications of this text. He wrote to Chochem on 20 April 1947, that he, "plan[ned] to make it this scene—which you described—in the Warsaw Ghetto, how the doomed Jews started singing, before going to die."⁹⁶ In addition to the use of song as protest in the face of death, the text implies the power of song to preserve memory:

We'll have the morning sun to set our day aglow,
And all our yesterdays shall vanish with the foe,
And if the time is long before the sun appears,
Then let this song go like a signal through the years.

This song was written with our blood and not with lead:

⁹⁴ Celia Biderman. *74233* (Chicago: The Limud Foundation, 1990), 13.

⁹⁵ Wlodarski, "An Idea Can Never Perish," 585.

⁹⁶ Arnold Shoenbert to Corinne Chomem, 20 April 1947, in Strasser, "Personal Parable," 52, in Wlodarski, "An Idea Can Never Perish," 586.

It's not a song that birds sing overhead.
It was a people, among toppling barricades,
That sang this song of ours with pistols and grenades.⁹⁷

While the text obviously points to the power of song as protest, it also implies a more profound role of musical memory. The text does not directly protest the events that are occurring, but rather ensures that through song, the memory of what happened will be preserved: "Then let this song go like a signal through the years." Through the medium of song, the victims preserve something of their experience that belongs only to them. While song does not have the power to change the course of events, the act of singing demands listening. The song was written with the victims "blood" and not the "lead" of the Nazi guards, asserting the preservation of the victims experience in the song itself.

At the beginning of the piece, Schoenberg's narrator asserts that the only memory that does not elude him is that of song: "I remember only the grandiose moment when they all started to sing, as if prearranged, the old prayer they had neglected for so many years-the forgotten creed." While the narrator finds memory eludes him when trying to recall the traumatic past, his musical memory functions in a different way. Through the use of 12-tone composition, Schoenberg explores the role of personal memory in musical comprehension. The melodic and harmonic structure of the work comes from a pre-composed row (P6), but throughout the work, Schoenberg uses hexachordal combinatoriality to avoid presenting a row in its entirety, completing it instead with its inversion. Where traumatic memory fails to preserve, the narrator's gradual recollection is represented by inversions of the 12-tone row.⁹⁸ The only time the 12-tone row appears in its prime form is during the singing of the *Shema*, which emphasizes Schoenberg's

⁹⁷ Corinne Chochem to Arnold Schoenberg, 2 April 1947, in Strasser, "Personal Parable," 52, quoted in Wlodarski, "An Idea Can Never Perish," 585-586.

⁹⁸ Wlodarski, "An Idea Can Never Perish," 601.

belief in the preservative power of musical memory. While all of the narrator's other memories first appear subconsciously, the singing of the *Shema* is the only memory he is capable of recalling consciously. The fact that it contains the 12-tone row that is the source of all its transfigurations that make up the rest of the work is indicative of music's capacity to represent the presence of an absence. The memory of the song does not explicitly communicate the horror of the narrator's experience, but it is the source of all of his other memories. Music represents the unconscious memories in their lack of definition. The singing of the *Shema* presents the intersection of traumatic and musical memory, as the memory of song is inextricably linked to the narrator's memory of Nazi brutality. While other memories elude him, however, the memory of the song prevails. Schoenberg's belief in the power of music to preserve memory is also significant, as it is his own artistic language. His conception of *Survivor* was to ensure the memory of the Holocaust through his musical interpretation of it. His belief that musical memory has the capacity to preserve where narrative memory does not, suggests that our retention of his musical ideas also preserves the memory of the Holocaust.

The final movement of *Different Trains* also asserts the power of musical performance in both preserving memory and carrying it into the future. This silence of the second movement gives way to the opening of the third, in which the speech melodies of the previous two movements return in a new context. The war is over. In the final movement, the division between the past and present is blurred as the speech melodies are played independently from their speech fragments, as there are fewer and fewer recorded voices. The last fragment of testimony we are left with is the image of a girl singing in the camps:

There was one girl, who had a beautiful voice
and they loved to listen to the singing, the Germans
and when she stopped singing they said, “More, more” and they applauded.⁹⁹

Reich’s decision to end the piece with the explicit connection to song reveals emphasizes the role of his own work as a performance. He has presented the audience not only with a depiction of his own interaction with the testimony, but with fragments of the testimony itself. By the end of the piece, their words have faded away, but the meaning preserved in the speech melody remains. The end of the movement provides the audience with the most lyrical speech melody of the work, as it is carried away from the text and into the future. Reich’s conception of speech melody seems to suggest that our retention of the music preserves the memory of the testimony even when it is no longer directly linked to the words. The audience is now a source of living memory to the testimony they have been presented. Wlodarski asserts that it is at the end of the piece that the role of the audience becomes most significant: “It is at this moment that the postwar audience plays an active role in Reich’s drama; they begin to applaud-for Reich, the performance, and the memory of the singing Jewish girl.”¹⁰⁰ Through the performance of Reich’s own Holocaust testimony, the audience as witness now assumes the responsibility of memory.

⁹⁹ Reich, “Different Trains.”

¹⁰⁰ Wlodarski, “The Testimonial Aesthetics of *Different Trains*,” 132.

Notes as Facets of Air

“I listened to these dark shapes as if they were black spaces in music, a musician learning the silences of a piece. I felt this was my truth. That my life could not be stored in any language but only in silence; the moment I looked into the room and took in only what was visible, not vanished. The moment I failed to see Bella had disappeared. But I did not know how to seek by way of silence. So I lived a breath apart, a touch-typist who holds his hands above the keys slightly in the wrong place, the words coming out meaningless, garbled. Bella and I inches apart, the wall between us. I thought of writing poems this way, in code, every letter askew, so that loss would wreck the language, become the language.”¹⁰¹

-Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*

¹⁰¹ Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 111.

In both the poetry and music I have examined, objects from the past serve both as evidence for preservation as well as sources of memory. After his arrest, Pound picked a eucalyptus branch, which he kept with him as a reminder of his past and the outside world. In the midst of his vast web of historical and cultural memory, he writes: “and eucalyptus that is for memory”¹⁰² He believed in the capacity of one small object from the outside world to trigger his memories. As Kenner writes: “Every object is a memory system.”¹⁰³ Objects have the capacity transcend time and place, carrying with them memory. A mountain Pound could see from within his tent reminded him of the sacred Mt. Taishan in China and its image surfaces again and again throughout *The Pisan Cantos*. The sight of a “green katydid,” in his tent evokes Tithonus and Pound identifies his current entrapment with that of ancient myth. For Pound, objects from the past connect his present circumstances to his greater memory, as they trigger recollections.

H.D. and Ezra Pound also explored language as a tangible force with the capacity to create space for an experience that extends beyond the words themselves. Robert Duncan asserts that their conception of language was not to merely describe an image, but to create its tangible presence in another reality:

The very movement of the line might be a magic then, theurgic in its intent, in which the Image was specially evoked. The line was to be expressive—that was the demand of the modern aesthetic, and Pound and H.D. were acutely sensitive to the style that the age demanded; but it was also to be efficacious—it was not to express the Image, but to call up its presence, to cause it to happen.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Pound, *The Cantos*, 455.

¹⁰³ Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 31.

¹⁰⁴ Duncan, *The H.D. Book*, 49.

Duncan asserts that Pound and H.D. valued language for its capacity to create another reality. An object was not simply described, but called into being. They viewed language as a force that could create the tangible presence of an object.

In *Different Trains*, Reich uses the object of the train to unify the different time periods depicted in the work. In the program notes, he explains that thinking about his own childhood train rides in relationships to the trains used to transport victims of the Holocaust was how he first conceived of *Different Trains*: “While these trips were exciting and romantic at the time I now look back and think that, if I had been in Europe during this period, as a Jew I would have had to ride very different trains.”¹⁰⁵ For Reich, the object of the train provides a tangible connection between his reality and the inconceivable reality of the Holocaust. Wlodarski points to a passage from Rachel’s testimony in which she describes the way trains trigger memories of the traumatic past:

My mother came to visit me two months ago, [...] and I was careful not to go on the railroad. It was on my mind. But, one time, I could not help it. And there I was, with my mother sitting next to me in the car, and the trains passing. [...] And she just said so bluntly, so matter of fact, she says, “you know Rachel, that’s how they took us. That’s exactly how they took us.” And I felt like nothing.¹⁰⁶

The train becomes a carrier of memory, as it transcends the boundaries of place and time. Riding a different train, in a completely different context, makes present the traumatic past.

Reich uses the musical representation of the train as a unifying force in the work, causing the listener to experience the different trains on a physical level. Reich’s use of repetition to depict a singular musical idea within each smaller section is inextricably

¹⁰⁵ Reich, “*Different Trains*.”

¹⁰⁶ Rachel G. Holocaust Testimony quoted in Wlodarsky, “The Testimonial Aesthetics of *Different Trains*,” 122.

linked with the constant repetitive motion of the train. The musical technique of unending rhythmic motion and repeated melodic figures is what connects Reich's own nostalgic memories of his childhood train rides with the very different trains depicted in the second movement. Reich uses the constant motion of the train sounds to unify the movements, but also to emphasize the contrast between the freedom and nostalgia of the trains in the first movement and the horror of the trains in the second. The constant rhythmic motion that is almost soothing in the first movement becomes a trap in the second. Naomi Cumming analyzes the work from the perspective of listener and she argues that the repetitive drive of the trains can be experienced in a way that either causes the listener to feel trapped or to allows disengagement by simply accepting the lack of control:

An experience of sympathetic engagement with the rhythms of the music as other, such that it makes regression possible, can bring a passive pleasure. The same passivity may, however, become an unwelcome threat to the autonomy of a self if it is felt as something imposed involuntarily, a forced regression dislocating any sense of self-possession and control.¹⁰⁷

Reich uses music to create the physical reality of riding on a train. It creates a kind of continuity between the first and second movement that can be terrifying, as the nostalgic motion of train is transformed into death. The train creates a bridge between the experience of riding a train that the audience can relate to and the inconceivable experience of riding the trains in the second movement. Cumming asserts that the listener that was passively enjoying the ostinato's motion now feels trapped by it. The only thing more horrific than being trapped in the motion of these trains is the moment when they stop. Cumming states: "It is at this point death enters the music in a way that

¹⁰⁷ Naomi Cumming, "The Horrors of Identification: Reich's 'Different Trains,'" *Perspectives of New music* 35 no. 1 (Winter, 1997): 131.

cannot be avoided by a listener whose interpretive strategy has been to accept an entrainment of his or her own sense of bodily motion to the ostinato's momentum. The train stops."¹⁰⁸ Reich uses the physical experience of riding the train to engage his listeners, leading them to the moment that cannot be symbolized, forcing them to acknowledge the silence imposed by extreme horror. It is perhaps a silence, however, that is expressible. Even if the only thing it is capable of depicting is the absence of language, it brings the very inexpressibility of Auschwitz into the performance, into the present.

In the face of the destructive forces of war, H.D. associates physical objects not only with preservation, but with renewal. H.D. focuses on what remains, on the fragments of ancient culture that have endured for centuries, walls amidst ruins, even human bones when the flesh has been melted away by chemical warfare. While she acknowledges the power of endurance, H.D. questions the purpose of survival:

Yet the frame held:
We passed the flame: we wonder
What saved us? What for?¹⁰⁹

Despite the horrors of modern warfare, the fundamental aspect of society remains, "the frame held." Amidst the ruins, the doubt in the purpose of survival, H.D. looks to the fragments that remain as a starting point for renewal. She evokes images of the shells that had previously been home to "the flabby, amorphous hermit," now empty but still present:¹¹⁰

...coals for the world's burning,
for we must go forward,

¹⁰⁸ Cumming, "The Horrors of Identification." 147.

¹⁰⁹ H.D., *Trilogy*, 4.

¹¹⁰ H.D., *Trilogy*, 8.

we are at the cross-roads,
the tide is turning;

it uncovers pebbles and shells,
beautiful yet static, empty¹¹¹.

H.D. finds value in the preservation of objects, in the power to endure, but she also acknowledges that they are only the source of regeneration, as they are “static, empty.” She asserts that with the tattered remains and the faith in endurance, “we must go forward.”

H.D. also begins to view language itself as a kind of relic, an object that has value beyond the meaning of the words. Elizabeth Willis states: “[...] H.D. developed a synaesthetic, interdiscursive, transhistorical sense of language as having a fragrance, a weight, a force, a shape; magnified, it could catch fire. It could be stolen, buried, broken and yet keep its incantatory magic.¹¹²” H.D. understands that language itself can function as a kind of object, transcending space and time. Ancient writing that remains on a tomb in Egypt contains a kind of magic in its capacity to transcend the bounds of time. Objects can function both as the physical presence of the past, as H.D. writes:

and every concrete object
has abstract value, is timeless
in the dream parallel¹¹³

Every object has the capacity to evoke memory, to call into being another time and place. Objects are the physical presence of the past, evidence for memories that have evolved with time.

¹¹¹ H.D., *Trilogy*, 26.

¹¹² Elizabeth Willis, “A Public History of the Dividing Line: H.D., the Bomb, and the Roots of the Postmodern,” *Arizona Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (Spring 2007), 88.

¹¹³ H.D., *Trilogy*, 24.

Reich's conception of speech melody attempts to capture the power of words that exists beyond their literal meaning in music. He believes that music has the power to communicate beyond the capacity of language, and that in presenting a musical representation of recorded speech, he is not altering its objectivity, but reinforcing inherent meaning of the words. Reich has spent a lot of time studying African languages, in which vocal inflection and meaning are inextricably linked. In an interview, he maintains that there is a similar correlation in English:

In our Western Languages speech melody hovers over all our conversations giving them their fine emotional meaning—'it's not what she said—it's how she said it.' We are, with speech melody in an area of human behavior where music, meaning, and feelings are completely fused.¹¹⁴

Music has been used to enhance and emphasize the significance of text for centuries, but in looking at the inherent melody in speech, Reich asserts that music is not only capable of communicating the meaning of language, but that words have a music of their own. If meaning and speech melody are linked, then Reich's use of instruments not only reinforces the literal meaning that is already present in the sound clips, but preserves a more subtle emotional meaning that extends the boundaries of communication beyond those of language.

Speech melody gives a musical presence to the magic of language that H.D. recognizes as she begins to think of it as a kind of object or relic. Words have power not only in what they say, by what they conceal:

I know, I fell
the meaning that words hide;

they are anagrams, cryptograms,

¹¹⁴ Steve Reich, in "48 Answers to Questions about *Different Trains* (1994)." In *Writings on Music 1965-2000*, edited by Paul Hillier, 180-183(New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2002), 181.

little boxes, conditioned

to hatch butterflies...¹¹⁵

While she was silenced by the trauma of World War One, H.D. found a renewed power in language during the Second World War. She found expression in language that existed beyond its capacity to communicate literal meaning, the meaning they hide. It is this meaning that Reich gives voice to through speech melody. While words may be incapable of directly expressing trauma, they have power in existence. Language itself is a kind of object, one that can endure and carry with it the presence of the past.

For Pound, voices from the past also carried with them the potential of memory. The ascent to Paradise was not to be an orderly, literary rising, but created from memory. The wind carries with it voices of the dead:

By no means an orderly Dantescan rising
but as the winds veer
tira libeccio
now Genji at Suma , tira libeccio
as the winds veer and the raft is driven
and the voices , Tiro, Alcmene
with you is Europa nec cast Pasiphae
Eurus, Apeliota as the winds veer in periplum¹¹⁶

In the ascent to paradise, Pound evokes different winds from a variety of times and places. Like speech melody, they carry voices from the past. He calls to the present Tiro and Alcmene, the dead who speak to Odysseus in Hades. Paradise is not to be found in the order of contemporary society, which lays in ruins, but in the power of language to carry the past into the present. From memory, from the infinite potential in the past, realized or not, Pound will build the future and paradise.

¹¹⁵ H.D. *Trilogy*, 53.

¹¹⁶ Pound, *The Cantos*, 463.

Reich explores the power of music, like the wind, to transcend space and time, as sound travels through the atmosphere long after it is heard. In his essay “Music as a Gradual Process” written years before *Different Trains* was composed, Reich asserts that the musical process of listening is variable even when controlled by electronic devices. He asserts that the realization of composer intention is limited even in the most controlled musical settings, as he believes the musical process extends beyond the moment a note is played and is carried by the sound even when it can no longer be heard:

Listening is an extremely gradual musical process opens my ears to *it*, but *it* always extends farther than I can hear, and that makes it interesting to listen to the musical process again. That area of every gradual (completely controlled) musical process, where one hears the details of the sound moving out away from intentions, occurring for their own acoustic reasons, is *it*.¹¹⁷

Reich maintains that the musical experience extends beyond the physical experience of hearing a note, it continues to exist in the mind. Even serial control cannot predict the continuation of the musical process beyond the moment the note is played. While *Different Trains* moves in a different direction from some of Reich’s earlier works, his interest in the different ways music can be simultaneously controlled and freed from composer and even performer intention is reflected in his treatment of recorded sound. Reich was fascinated by the ways in which music could carry meaning for its own “acoustic reasons,” and that even in “completely controlled” musical settings, sound moves “away from intentions.” The possibility of sound occurring for its own reasons carries with it a different weight when linked to Holocaust testimony. Reich is not only dealing with the presentation of his own musical intention, but the presentation of personal memory in a greater historical context.

¹¹⁷ Reich, “Music as a Gradual Process,” 1968.

Throughout the work, Reich uses speech melody to emphasize and enhance the testimonial language as a sort of musical doubling of the recorded speech fragments. When Reich separates the speech melody from the language it came from, however, he effectively preserves the presence of the gap left where words fall short, and the speech melodies exist in the future as a residue of words and possibly experience itself. Returning to “Music as a Gradual Process,” Reich’s assertion that “one hears the details of sound moving out away from intentions, occurring for their own acoustic reasons” has powerful implications when applied to speech melody. Where words and even memory fall short in preserving trauma, the inherent music in language has its own intention and a communicative power that continues even after the sound can no longer be heard in the physical world. Reich argues that the musical meaning “always extends farther than I can hear.” Once the music enters our minds, it continues to develop in the mind of the listener, subjecting it to the limitations of individual memory. Reich views the individualized (re)experiencing of the musical process not as a limitation, but an outlet for new creative possibility. Reich accepts the elements of the musical process that occur outside of his control, as sound exists beyond the moment it is heard: “By ‘a kind’ of complete control I mean that by running this material through the process I completely control all that results, but also that I accept all that results without changes.”

Schoenberg also explores music’s capacity to carry memory. His engagement with Hirsh Glick’s “Never Say There is Only Death For You” indicates that he was thinking about music’s role in asserting the preservation of memory beyond the hearing of the notes. The text of the poem points to music’s capacity to carry memory through its “gradual process”: “Then let this song go like a signal through the years./ This song was

written with our blood and not with lead.”¹¹⁸ The text implies that song has the capacity to transfer memory, allowing sound to carry it through time. Even when the victims are dead, their song will continue to exist, asserting their eternal presence. Schoenberg’s narrator also emphasizes music’s capacity to store traumatic memory when it defies conscious recollection and articulation, as the singing of the *Shema* is the only thing he remembers completely. Schoenberg also conceives of *Survivor* itself as a musical assertion of memory: “We should never forget this, even if such things have not been done in the manner in which I describe them in the *Survivor*. This does not matter.”¹¹⁹

In “The Walls do not Fall,” H.D. defends the role of the writer in the face of immediate destruction. She asserts the immortality of language by connecting it with musical notes:

But we fight for life,
we fight, they say, for breath,

so what good are your scribblings?
this—we take them with us

beyond death; Mercury, Hermes, Thoth
invented the script, letters, palette;

the indicated flute or lyre-notes
on papyrus or parchment

are magic, indelibly stamped
on the atmosphere somewhere¹²⁰

H.D. asserts the value of art, of writing in the face of immediate destruction. She defends the immortality of language, evoking ancient gods of writing. She relates the immortal meaning hidden in words to the power of musical memory. Notes indicated on paper can

¹¹⁸ Corinne Chochem to Arnold Schoenberg, 2 April 1947, in Strasser, “Personal Parable,” 52, quoted in Wlodarski, “An Idea Can Never Perish,” 585-586.

¹¹⁹ Arnold Schoenberg to Kurt List, 1 November 1948.

¹²⁰ H.D., *Trilogy*, 17.

be played again, in different times and different places, the sounds themselves magic, existing in a continual process, sonically transferring memory to the atmosphere.

The fragmentation of memory also preserves its process in a permanent form. Kenner acknowledges that “the drive toward fragmentation of what had been temporal narrative was undertaken because narrative itself had disclosed its tendency toward static constructs. The fragments, the moments, shattering that block, recover time: through each of them rushes process.”¹²¹ At the closing of the first *Pisan Canto*, Pound asserts the power of memory over forgetting by giving voice to the flux of recollection itself. Where narrative is static, layering fragments of time that emerge from the past of the world as well as the memory of the poem “recovers time:”

out of hell, the pit
out of the dust and glare evil
Zephyrus/ Apeliota
This liquid is certainly a
property of the mind
nec accidente est but an element
in the mind's make-up
est agens and functions dust to a fountain pan otherwise
Hast 'ou seen the rose in the steel dust
(or swansdown ever?)
so light is the urging, so ordered the dark petals of iron
we who have passed over Lethe.¹²²

In the face of destruction and his own possible memory loss, Pound finds power in the capacity of language to preserve the flow of memory. Kenner asserts: “Something formed and permanent emerges from the flux of experience; this is a conquest over chaos.”¹²³ The power of *The Cantos* emerges from the flux of time, as he gives fragments

¹²¹ Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 32.

¹²² Pound, *The Cantos*, 469.

¹²³ Kenner, *The Broken Mirrors and Mirror of Memory*, 6.

of the past a permanent place through creation. Memory becomes not only a source of preservation, but a tool used to create the future. From within his tent, Pound asserts his power of the force of forgetting by evoking a multitude of memories. He asserts the power of fragmentation by recalling Aphrodite's birth from the sea foam. Pound also relates the crystallization of motion to musical notes in the air:

and saw the waves taking form as crystal,
notes as facets of air¹²⁴

Like H.D., Pound aligns the preservation of memory with musical notes, process captured by permanence, form created out of air, transcending space and time in eternal memory.

¹²⁴ Pound, *The Cantos*, 119.

This, the language was not lost but remained, yes, in spite of everything. But it had to pass through its own answerlessness, pass through a frightful falling mute, pass through the thousand darkneses of death-bringing speech. It passed through and yielded no words for what was happening—but it went through those happenings.

-Paul Celan¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Paul Celan Felstiner, 1982, 23 quoted in Felman Shoshana Felman, *Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching in Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, edited by Cathy Caruth, 13-65 (Baltimore, MD: The Johns, 1995), 34.

All of the works I have examined acknowledge the fragmented nature of memory and in their own way attempt to preserve the process of memory itself. Any attempt to preserve memory in narrative form inevitably alters its reality. Memory is a constantly evolving process and the only way to fully capture it is to give voice to the absences, to the fragmentation. Michael S. Roth reflects that narrative memory belongs the past, while fragmented recollections create a different kind of reality: “Narrative memory can be forgotten, unlike hallucinations and automatic memories, such as one finds in madness and in flashbacks where the past takes over, and the ‘pastness’ of what one is conscious of evaporates.”¹²⁶ Faced with the inherent inexpressibility of violence, perhaps the only way to preserve the past is to give shape to these fragments and embrace the changes that memory goes through as it evolves. While the immediacy of remembering the Holocaust will inevitably be altered by time, using its memory as a source of creation ensures its continued presence.

Elie Wiesel acknowledges that to remain among images of the dead can leave them in the past:

For it is dangerous to linger among the dead; they hold on to you, and you run the risk of speaking only to them. And so, I forced myself to turn away from them and study other periods, explore other destinies and teach other tales.¹²⁷

Wiesel’s reflection reveals that to ensure the lasting memory of the dead, their stories must be incorporated into living memory. He states that they are present in everything he writes: “Technically, so to speak, they are of course elsewhere, in time and space, but on

¹²⁶ Michael S. Roth, *Hiroshima Mon Amour: You must Remember this* in *Revising History: Film and Construction of a New Past*, edited by Robert A. Rosenstone, 91-101 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University press, 1995), 98.

¹²⁷ Wiesel. *From the Kingdom of Memory*, 18.

a deeper, truer plane, the dead are part of every story, of every scene.”¹²⁸ Wiesel’s assertion resonates with Pound and H.D.’s understanding of history, as well as both Reich and Schoenberg’s insistence on the power of musical memory. The reality of the Holocaust will never be preserved, but it must be remembered.

Robert Duncan asserts that the power of poetry comes from its negation of narrative memory. He aligns the sounds of the words with the construction of melody, insisting both on poetry’s musical capacity and capacity to create a space for multiple memory systems to co-exist:

The power of the poet is to translate experience from daily time where the world and ourselves pass away as we go on into the future, from the journalistic record, into a melodic coherence in which words—sounds, meanings, images, voices—do not pass away or exist by themselves but are kept by rhyme to exist everywhere in the consciousness of the poem [...]In the melody we make, the possibility of eternal life is hidden, and experience we thought lost returns to us.¹²⁹

Duncan’s assertion that the role of poetry is to keep voices from the past alive through “melodic coherence,” reveals the capacity of both language and music to preserve the fluidity of memory. As the text fades away at the end of *Different Trains*, leaving us with only the melody of her speech, the memory of the Holocaust becomes something else, but it is something we will remember. It is possible that through the capacity of both music and language to create from memory, the past can be preserved like “notes as facets of air.”

¹²⁸ Wiesel. *From the Kingdom of Memory*, 19.

¹²⁹ Duncan. *The H.D. Book*, 168.

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