

ELIE WIESEL'S *NIGHT* AND A. M. KLEIN'S *THE SECOND SCROLL*

PROFANING THE SACRED AND SACRALISING THE PROFANE:
TRANSFORMING OBJECTS AND BODIES IN ELIE WIESEL'S *NIGHT* AND A. M.
KLEIN'S *THE SECOND SCROLL*

By LUCAS FREDERICK WILLIAM WILSON, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Lucas Frederick William Wilson, B.A. (Liberty University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Roger Hyman

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to interrogate how Elie Wiesel's *Night* and A. M. Klein's *The Second Scroll* illustrate the spiritual journeys of their protagonists and depict dehumanization of the Jewish people. Through their interactions with sacred bodies, as well as profane, religious and sacred objects, both novels map the spiritual quests of the protagonists, revealing very different conclusions. Using Virginia Greene's "'Accessories of Holiness': Defining Jewish Sacred Objects" as an analytic framework, I explore how both novels transform sacred bodies into profane "objects" to illustrate various forms of anti-Semitic subjugation and de-personification. I then interrogate how *The Second Scroll* "textualizes" these objectified bodies, as well as how Klein's novel turns Israeli society into a sacred text. This "textualization" offers a space to re-affirm God's providence in a post-Holocaust imagination—an imagination that strongly differs from the rejection of God in *Night*. Through this exploration of spirituality and dehumanization, both texts humanize those who have been dehumanized in the camps and re-face the victims whose personhood was stripped from them, inviting them to dwell in both the novels and the readers' memory.

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DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC INTENT

I intend to provide a close-reading of both Elie Wiesel's *Night* and A. M. Klein's *The Second Scroll* and to explore the spirituality of both texts' protagonists, by way of sacred and profane objects and bodies. Through the exploration of the sacred and the profane, this thesis's goal is to demonstrate how *Night* and *The Second Scroll* offer the de-personified victims of the Holocaust a space to live on and be humanized once again. Both texts intentionally cultivate and re-cultivate the collective memory of Holocaust victims, wherein both texts, as Miroslav Volf puts it, "erect a barrier against future misdeeds" (234). Collectively remembering the Third Reich's atrocities is the first step in preventing another Holocaust—or events like it—from occurring once more. And as D. G. Myers explains that "[b]eing human is living in responsibility" (8), both Wiesel and Klein's texts make it their responsibility to remember those who lost their lives in the camps, inviting us as readers to also live in responsibility and cultivate a space for the victims to dwell: our memories.

INTRODUCTION

*“Restoring them to the human nexus”¹: An Ethical Approach to Night
and The Second Scroll*

The Holocaust text is testimonial before it is propositional: it testifies to beings whose being has been eliminated from the suffering it represents

(D. G. Myers, “Responsible for Every Single Pain,” 17)

The first question, then, is whether we see Auschwitz as the epitome of life itself, an incarnation of the darkest expectations of Machiavelli and Hobbes, or whether we see it as a mirror image of the true life, a Satanic perversion of some divine plan that we have not yet discovered. From that central enigma flow all the lesser contradictions that still bedevil anyone who seeks to understand the mystery of Auschwitz. Did it represent the ultimate evil of the German nation, and was that the evil of German rationality or of German irrationality? Or did it represent, conversely, the apotheosis of Jewish suffering? And was that suffering simply the result of centuries of anti-Semitism, or was it part of the fulfillment of the prophecy that the tormented Jews would someday return to Palestine; return, as Ezekiel had written, to “the land that is restored from the ravages of the sword, where people are gathered out of many nations upon the mountains of Israel?”

(Otto Friedrich, “The Kingdom of Auschwitz,” 59–60)

In “The Kingdom of Auschwitz,” Friedrich asks a series of rhetorical questions concerning the Holocaust and Nazi ideology, not attempting to explain Nazis’ actions or beliefs, but investigating what the Holocaust revealed about the human condition. He interrogates not *how* any group of people could create and sustain a death factory like Auschwitz, but *what* the Holocaust represented: he wonders if the Holocaust was “the epitome of life itself” or “a mirror of the true life, a Satanic perversion of some divine plan that we have not yet discovered.” Such a dichotomy offers a bleak understanding of

¹ D. G. Myers, “Responsible for Every Single Pain: Holocaust Literature and the Ethics of Interpretation,” 14.

both humanity and humanity's future, for whether the concentration camps were anthropogenic or influenced by "Satanic" powers, history since the Holocaust seems to indicate that mankind is still fully capable of such atrocities. Friedrich's series of questions are powerful because he does not make definitive statements that rationalize the irrationality of Nazism, but instead he makes clear through his queries that there is neither a conclusive way to understand the senselessness of the Holocaust nor is there an intelligible mode of explaining how humanity or God could have allowed and/or caused such immense suffering. Like every concentration camp in WWII, Auschwitz "was a world unlike any other because it was created and governed according to the principles of absolute evil. Its only function was death" (Friedrich 59). In "Tracing Theory on the Body of the 'Walking Dead,'" Lissa Skitolsky sums up our inability to make sense of Auschwitz: "Thus the only appropriate response to the question of the meaning of Auschwitz is to affirm its incomprehensibility, our inability to make sense of it or derive moral lessons from the ashes of millions who died without reason" (79).

So if such evil resists explanation, how are we to interact with the history and memory² of the Holocaust and its victims? Regardless of our immense difficulty with

² Miroslav Volf examines the difference between history and memory. Volf, author of *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, states: "Though a sharp polarity between [history and memory] cannot be sustained, the distinction between a critical reconstruction of the past ('history') and the identity-shaping remembrance of the past ('memory') is necessary. Yet the boundaries are fluid. All historical reconstructions are shaped by particular identities and interests, and memory of the past must be distinguished from myths about the past" (240). When examining Elie Wiesel's *Night* in this thesis, I will mainly be focusing on the "identity-shaping remembrance of the past," but it must be noted that this memory is rooted in history—just as A. M. Klein bases *The Second Scroll* on the historicity of WWII. However, Klein bases his novel on his postmemory of WWII, which in turn affects our postmemory of the Holocaust, akin to how Wiesel's memoir also influences our postmemory. Therefore, both texts, and texts like them, establish a postmemory of—or a relationship between—the prisoners of the concentration camps and us, the "generations after"; by reading Holocaust texts, we who succeed the

understanding Nazi ideology or the suffering of the prisoners, I believe that as human beings we must remember the victims of the Holocaust because we have a *responsibility* to respond to not only current human suffering, but bygone suffering, as well. Despite differences in form, A. M. Klein's *The Second Scroll*, a fictional engagement with the Holocaust and Jewish history, and Elie Wiesel's *Night*, a spiritual autobiography of his time in the concentration camps (Birkenau, Auschwitz, Buna, Gleiwitz, and Buchenwald), both attempt to respond to the suffering of victims of Nazi persecution and objectification.³ This thesis seeks to explore how *Night* and *The Second Scroll* represent the dehumanization in the camps and how the protagonists come to perceive God, others, and themselves in the face of the Holocaust—or put more succinctly, to reveal the protagonists' spiritual journeys, which in turn reveals the individuality and sanctity of the victims. In reply to Geoffrey Hartman's claim that a Holocaust survivor's testimony is "a text in need of interpretation," D. G. Myers states that the way the reader is to read a Holocaust text is not to discover the

meaning beneath an intelligible surface of words. [Indeed, it] is not a matter of *meaning* at all, but of *need*. Ethically responsible reading does not seek to unmask

Holocaust inherit the collective trauma of the victims who came before us, which results in an affective response to the texts and leaves us with "memories" of our own.

³ Although my thesis is dealing with one text that is a fictional account of the Holocaust (*The Second Scroll*), I believe that we must take seriously the fictional victims in the same way that we take the inmates written about in *Night* seriously. Gregory Marshall, author of "Ethical Criticism: What It Is and Why It Matters," states, "When readers begin to see, then, that the figures of fiction figure the mind, they can be brought to take seriously, indeed to welcome, the insights of ethical criticism" (8). When reading *The Second Scroll*, we must re-figure our minds to engage in ethical questions. Indeed, both *The Second Scroll* and *Night* pay homage to Holocaust victims and as a result, we must honour their memory when reading either novel. As Melech explains in his letter to the nephew's family, "[W]e were all in that burning world, even you who were separated from it by the Atlantic—that futile bucket" (Klein 30). Melech's words indicate the Holocaust's impact on every human, even those "separated from it by the Atlantic," which is the basis for Klein's penning of *The Second Scroll*.

the interests behind the Holocaust texts, but rather to preserve it as the matchless revelation of a personality, requiring love. (5)

This “*need*” “to preserve . . . the matchless revelation of a personality” is of utmost necessity because to forget the atrocities of the Holocaust or the individuals who suffered and died in the camps would be to extirpate their memory, sending them into oblivion—which was the essence of the final solution.⁴ Myers continues:

Since the Nazis sought to destroy all evidence of the gas chambers and crematoria, it is not uncommon for Holocaust memoirists to declare that they write in order to bear witness to Germany’s crimes. They imply or state outright that their literary efforts are undertaken . . . out of a commitment to the dead. (10)

Bearing witness to Hitler’s crimes, albeit painful, must be done. It is vital to bring to light and ultimately allow the memory of the victims to *live on* through our memories—precisely what *Night* and *The Second Scroll* endeavor to do.⁵

Indeed, Holocaust literature requires us as readers to engage in victims’ suffering by being in “compassionate proximity” (15). Myers’s repeated call to be ethically responsible is strikingly close to Dorothee Soelle’s idea that to engage in suffering is to love *actively*: “We can avoid much suffering and the bitterness of suffering, but only for a price that is too high—ceasing to love” (170). In actively loving, we must “enter into” the

⁴ Wiesel expounds on this idea of giving the Nazis the victory by expunging Jewish victims’ memory from collective consciousness when he says, “In retrospect I must confess that I do not know, or no longer know, what I wanted to achieve with my words. I only know that without this testimony, my life as a writer—or my life, period—would not have become what it is: that of a witness who believes he has a moral obligation to try to prevent the enemy from enjoying one last victory by allowing his crimes to be erased from human memory” (viii)

⁵ In part, I agree with Emil Fackenheim’s idea of the “614th commandment” (or “614th *mitzvah*”). I agree with his statement that we must not give Hitler any “posthumous victories” by forgetting those who lost their lives in the Holocaust (300). However, I would not posit, as Fackenheim does, that despairing God is giving Hitler a posthumous victory. Additionally, I do not believe that the 614th commandment should be exclusive to Jews. Instead, I think that all are responsible to remember victims of the Holocaust. Otherwise—Jew or Gentile—we give Hitler the victory by erasing the memory of the victims.

suffering of others by “stepping into their time-frame” (15), into a state of solidarity with the victims. In “entering into” their suffering, we must first seek to attentively listen to the testimonies from the Holocaust and then—only then—can we respond; we first need to listen to the cries of the mothers being torn from their children and the weeping of orphaned inmates and then—only then—we can speak about the atrocities of the camps. I seek to interrogate how the authors of *Night* and *The Second Scroll* actively love by preserving “the matchless revelation of a personality.” I hold fast to the idea that “ethics are prior to interpretation” (Myers 3) and in being ethically responsible readers, we must take full heed to Myers’s consistent call to love:

All speech is testimonial before it is propositional. It is a confiding, a plea for acceptance, a building of trust. Everything depends upon how it is received. To listen exclusively for the message is to treat as nothing your courage in revealing yourself of, worse, to be suspicious of your sincerity. It is to humiliate or, worse, to reject you. In either case, it is a failure of love, because all self-revelation is an act of love and a summons to love in return. (9)

Holocaust texts leave little room to doubt the authenticity of the authors, for if we are suspicious and do not accept their testimonies, we refuse to acknowledge their suffering, which in turn perpetuates their victimization.⁶ Volf states, “[T]he will to give ourselves to others and ‘welcome’ them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, is prior to any judgement about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity. The will to embrace precedes any ‘truth’ about others” (29). Although speaking about the “other” as

⁶ Dr. Hyman has brought to my attention that there is, however, difficulty when exploring the truthfulness of individuals’ accounts of the Holocaust. As Benjamin Wilkomirski’s “memoir” *Fragments* was proved fallacious, in that he was never in the camps, we need to ask whether or not we should accept *all* accounts of the Holocaust because some *may* be “true.” Yet, there is a difference between a fabricated testimony (Wilkomirski) and a creative reconstruction of an actual experience (Wiesel). Despite several claims that *Night* is a fraudulent account of the concentration camps, this thesis holds that *Night* is an honest memoir at its core that correlates with his memory of the Holocaust, even if it is not completely historically accurate.

one who has done an injustice, Volf's notion that we must "embrace" any and every human being "prior to any judgment" applies to the authors of Holocaust texts and those whom the texts represent. We must "welcome" their accounts without suspicion because disregarding the veracity of the suffering in their texts is not just a dismissal of pain, but it is indeed a dismissal of personhood—a rejection of the reality of their suffering, which is a rejection of their humanity. Thus, to "embrace" their accounts is to attempt to counteract the Hitlerite marginalization of the victims.

However, when reading Holocaust literature, we must not only pay homage to the victims by remembering them, we must also attempt to mobilize the knowledge of the victims into a collective, public knowledge, as a means of connecting them back to the rest of humanity. Indeed, we must never allow the memory of the victims to be forgotten, which can be achieved by sharing the stories of victims with a wider audience. Myers states:

Holocaust literature is an invitation to responsibility for the victims of genocide. It beckons the reader, the spectator to genocide, to a rebuilding of community with the abandoned of the world, restoring them to the human nexus. The restoration is counterfactual, because in fact two-thirds of those who were abandoned to Hitler never returned. *But Holocaust literature creates the possibility after the fact of responding to their calls of distress.* (14, emphasis added)

Myers's idea of taking on the "responsibility" to rebuild a "community" with the victims is, in a sense, a conversation between us, the victims, and those around us. When we read Holocaust texts, we hear the voices from the camps and we respond not only by remembering them, but also by "restoring them to the human nexus"—sharing the victims' stories with others, thereby extending the "invitation to responsibility." In mobilizing the stories of Holocaust victims, by "responding to their calls of distress," we

are, as Elie Wiesel notes in “Why I Write,” “wrench[ing]” the victims from “oblivion” and “vanquish[ing]” them from “death” (911).

In this thesis, I am not attempting to interpret the Holocaust or attribute meaning to the events of WWII. Instead, I endeavour to explore how *Night* and *The Second Scroll* both humanize those affected by the Holocaust and personalize the victims. By illustrating the Nazis’ debasement of Jewish prisoners’ bodies and mapping out the protagonists’ spiritual journeys, both texts attempt to reveal the intrinsic dignity of the victims and their individuality. Myers states:

We must shift our attention from the text’s message to the face that it evokes. . . . To speak in response—to move back into interpretation, to reattach the face to being—we must enter into a relationship with people who, once having inhabited a world in which the Jews were selected for extermination, now dwell forever in Holocaust texts. (18-19)

Indeed, through the exploration of Holocaust literature, where victims now “dwell,” there is an invitation to readers to cultivate a place in their (post)memories for “the Jews who were selected for extermination” to “live on.” This thesis investigates the individuality of the protagonists in *Night* and *The Second Scroll*, exploring how one survivor of the camps and one Jewish Canadian express the ways in which the Nazi regime grossly impacted their spirituality and how each expresses a significantly different attitude towards God’s Providence.

Night and *The Second Scroll* each use a major set of symbols—religious sacred, and profane objects and sacred bodies—to emphasize the dehumanization in the camps and to reveal the protagonists’ spiritual journeys. Both novels invert traditional understandings of the sacred and the profane, reflecting the protagonists’ spiritual quests

during and after the Holocaust. In *Night*, as Francois Mauriac makes clear in his introduction to the 1960 edition, we see “the death of God in the soul of a child who suddenly faces absolute evil” (xxi), whereas in *The Second Scroll* we see an asseveration of Providence in the face of despair. Using Virginia Greene’s “‘Accessories of Holiness’: Defining Jewish Sacred Objects” as an analytic framework, I will investigate the transformation of sacred bodies into inanimate “objects” in both novels and then interrogate how *The Second Scroll* transforms bodies as “objects” into bodies as “texts.” The transformation from profaned objectified bodies into sacred “texts” offers a space to re-affirm Providence in a post-Holocaust imagination in Klein’s work—an imagination in stark contrast with the disavowal of God in *Night*.

Greene, reiterating Talmudic categorization of religious objects,⁷ places religious objects into two categories: “[T]hose that carry a quality of holiness and those that are essential to the performance of a particular ritual or commandment but have no intrinsic quality that can be defined as ‘sacred’ or ‘holy’” (31). The first class of sacred objects “is called *tashmishey kedusha*, ‘accessories of holiness’ or ‘objects which carry holiness’” (31). Greene notes that

[t]he common feature of the objects in the [*tashmishey kedusha*] group is that they contain words, specifically the name of God, but by extension any words divinely written or inspired, from which the quality of holiness is derived. The nontextual objects [such as the leather straps and cases of phylacteries or container for Torah scrolls (32)] all come into intimate contact with texts, and in doing so acquire some of the same quality of holiness. (34)

Examples of *tashmishey kedusha* include the Torah scroll, volumes of the Talmud, prayer books, *teffillin* (or phylacteries), and commentaries (31, 34). The second group of

⁷ Talmud, *Megillah* 26B; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* II.

religious objects “is termed *tashmishey mitzvah*, ‘accessories of religious observance,’ or, more clearly, ‘objects which make it possible to perform a commandment’” (35).

Tashmishey mitzvah are tangible aids to prayer. Examples of *tashmishey mitzvah* include the Hanukkah menorah, the Passover seder plate, the shofar, wedding canopies, wine cups, the *sukkah*, and the *tallit* (35).

As *Night* ends with the Holocaust and does not explore beyond the camps, *The Second Scroll* includes not only WWII, but also the mellah in Morocco and the objectification of Israelis in its broad exploration of anti-Semitism. Of course, Klein’s text does not posit that the evil of the Holocaust is comparable to the Casablanca slum or the maltreatment of Jews in Israel, but indeed he identifies the camps as more severe and magnitudinous than any other event that has ever affected the Jews. *The Second Scroll* recognizes the Holocaust as a part of a history of incessant discrimination of Jews—thereby not only examining the most extreme instance of marginalization, but interrogating several instances of the longest hatred to reveal a more complete depiction of anti-Semitism. In depicting this hatred, *The Second Scroll* debases and dehumanizes its characters to the status of “things,” but then restores their humanity by elevating them to a level of divinity—reflective of Melech’s restored faith; however, *Night* divests the characters of their humanity and leaves them objectified—illustrative of Eliezer’s loss of faith in both God and man. These two authors differ drastically in their conclusions, but both Wiesel and Klein use Judaism as a metanarrative to tell their stories, using Jewish culture, mysticism and religion to chronicle their accounts of the Holocaust and their protagonists’ spiritual journeys. Although Wiesel abnegates the God of the Hebrew Bible,

he uses Scriptural metaphors and religious symbolism to communicate his experience in the Holocaust—a way of defaming God’s goodness and inverting the sacredness of *tashmishey kedusha*. Conversely, as M. W. Steinberg explains in the 1961 introduction to *The Second Scroll*: “Through meaningful Biblical allusions and symbols in the text of the novel, Klein suggests the reconciliation of good and evil, necessary for the acceptance of God” (xiv).⁸ Through these Jewish allusions and symbols, both authors attempt to humanize the victims of the camps who have been dehumanized, thus preserving “the matchless revelation of [personalities]” (Myers 5) and attempting to “[restore] them to the human nexus” (14).

⁸ Klein illustrates Melech’s affirmation of a good God throughout the novel, including the Magnificat passage (referring to God as “Omnipotent, yes, and All-Compassionate” [112]), alluding to the shvarim (plural of shofar) “sounding liberation” as he leaves the Sistine Chapel (113), ending “Deuteronomy” with the Kaddish (93), and Melech’s inclusion of Psalm 30, which ends with “To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever” (142).

CHAPTER 1

*“It makes a very jagged spiritual graph”⁹: Mapping Faith and Nazi
Dehumanization with Religious, Sacred and Profane Objects*

Judaism refuses to separate the spiritual from the physical. *Tashmishey kedusha* and *tashmishey mitzvah* are not only reminders of religious duties, but they are also means of worship in and of themselves, providing Jews tangible connections to the Divine, while simultaneously acting as physical symbols that separate the Jewish people from Gentiles. Offering them a strong sense of separateness and identity, religious and sacred objects also allow observant Jews to perform commandments both in synagogue and at home. As a result, synagogal and domestic spaces are locales of worship and in turn become sacred spaces. Callie Narron, author of “Jewish Space,” explains,

In observing Torah, the lived space of Judaism exhibits the use of boundaries to separate sacred from profane, and public from private. The partitions that exist between domains are sometimes haptic, sometimes architectural, and sometimes conceptual; but nearly always [operate] on some form of time continuum. Often these boundaries come in the form of a ritual or ceremony that [correlates] with the Hebrew calendar, life passage, or biological functions of the body. (77)

Furthermore, religious and sacred objects contained within “lived space[s] of Judaism” also act as markers of Jewishness and become “boundaries,” which differentiate “sacred from profane, and public from private”—further establishing homes and synagogues as Jewish spaces. Thus, domestic and synagogal spaces become sacred not only by “observing Torah,” but also because of the religious objects contained within those spaces that help Jews observe Torah. Narron states, “Though these boundaries [may be]

⁹ Referring to Melech’s “hesitations,” this is a comment that the Monsignor makes when speaking about Melech’s spiritual journey (Klein 42).

ephemeral, they are not blurred” (77). She bases her claim that these “boundaries” “are not blurred” on the assumption that those “observing Torah” live in stable societies that do not threaten the partitions between religious and secular spaces. However, what happens when the boundaries between “sacred and profane, and public and private” *are* “blurred”? How do Jews negotiate their faith when the boundary between the sacred and the profane is erased as it was in the Holocaust, when for many Jews the sacred became profane and the profane became sacred?

Night and *The Second Scroll* explore the faith and spirituality of Holocaust survivors—fictional and non-fictional—through blurred representations of the sacred and the profane. Both novels upset the traditional conceptions of religious, sacred and profane objects, and sacred and profane spaces, to map the spiritual journeys of the protagonists and also to reflect Nazi dehumanization. In this chapter, I will specifically examine domestic and synagogal spaces, and the protagonists’ interaction with religious and sacred objects, like clothing and religious garments, phylacteries, food, bells, Bibles, and various profane objects like money and other valuables. In *Night*, religious objects, once hallmarks of life and aids to worship, become symbols of death and spiritual flux. Eliezer’s interactions with religious, sacred and profane objects depict his gradual rejection of God from his youth in the small Jewish community of Sighet to the first days after his release from the camps.¹⁰ However, *The Second Scroll* deals less with traditional ceremonial objects and focuses more on re-appropriating profane objects into sacred objects—a means of sacralising the everyday and finding the Divine in *everything*. As

¹⁰ Eliezer passes through several camps, including Birkenau (28–40), Auschwitz (40–46), Buna (46–84), Gleiwitz (92–96) and Buchenwald (104–115).

both texts invert traditional understandings of the sacred and the profane, the spiritualities of the victims and “the matchless revelation of [personalities]” (Myers 5) become clearer, putting a face to the victimized and personalizing the memory of the Holocaust.

Domestic and Synagogal Prisons: Disrupting and Desecrating Sacred Spaces

Night uses the displacement of *tashmishey mitzvah* within the domestic sphere to illustrate the first stages of Eliezer’s spiritual disruption. In the beginning of the book, Eliezer’s home contains *tashmishey mitzvah*—or what Greene defines as religious objects that “make it possible to perform a commandment” (35). Before the Jews leave Sighet, Eliezer asks his father “to sell everything, to liquidate everything, and to leave” (Wiesel 9). He believes that if they were “to sell everything” and flee to a place like Palestine they would be safe (51). However, Eliezer does not understand the ramifications of his request: “[T]o sell everything,” including their religious objects and their home, would be to abandon not only tradition, but also their identity—not to mention part of their faith. Barbara E. Mann, author of *Space and Place in Jewish Studies*, examines the concept of the Jewish *home* (versus a Jewish *house*):

The Hebrew word *bayit* means both house and home, exemplifying a tension between place and space: the fraught and delicate relation between actual, material space—abodes, domiciles, and the physical existence of communities across time and geography—and the symbolic, often metaphorical domain of being “at home.” . . . “Home” indicates a unique and imbued place of belonging, as opposed to the empty, affectless space of the house, itself merely an architectural shell waiting to be filled with the signs of actual and/or metaphorical belonging. (82)

Indeed, Eliezer does not understand that apart from their home, his family would lose their strong sense of “belonging,” for as Samuel Glasner states, “[T]o the Jew his home is

a temple” (4). However, before the Nazis force the Jewish citizens of Sighet to permanently vacate their dwelling places in 1944, they confine them to house-arrest: “First edict: Jews were prohibited from leaving their residences for three days, under penalty of death” (10). The Nazis’ promulgation limits the Jews’ mobility, converting their “temple[s]” into domestic jails and inverting their previously sacred, “imbued place[s] of belonging” into profaned, confined spaces of imprisonment. The civil authorities further marginalize the Jews by penetrating the Jews’ homes and imposing their controlling presence in the domestic sphere: “[T]he Hungarian police burst into every Jewish home in town: a Jew was henceforth forbidden to own gold, jewelry, or any valuables. Everything had to be handed over to the authorities, under penalty of death. My father went down to the cellar and buried our savings” (11).¹¹ As the fascist police “burst into every Jewish home,” they blur the boundary between public and private, depredating their homes, expunging the Jews of all authority over their domestic spheres and stripping them of any sense of feeling “at home”—thereby transforming their homes into “affectless” houses. When the Nazis eventually command the Jewish residents of Sighet to pack up their belongings, they leave their now “architectural shells” and become separated from their roots. Each family’s backyard “looked like a marketplace. Valuable objects, precious rugs, silver candlesticks, Bibles and other ritual objects were strewn over the dusty grounds—pitiful relics that seemed never to have had a home” (15). The Nazis force the Jews to relocate these “[v]aluable objects” outside. The displacement of

¹¹ In a comparable scene, Zevi Dorfman, in Phyllis Gotlieb’s *Why Should I Have All the Grief?*, sends his savings (“handfuls of coins, jewels, rings, brooches, bills, watch-cases” [126]) with his son Gershon out the window to hide as the Nazis invade Mr. Ostrowski’s home. Jews hiding and/or burying their savings from Nazis is an almost universal trope in Holocaust fiction.

the “[v]aluable” objects from inside the home to the backyard symbolizes a displacement of Eliezer’s self. Indeed, with the inclusion of “silver candlesticks, Bibles and other ritual objects” among the list of objects taken outside, the displacement connotes a spiritual upheaval. Thus, as the Nazis force the Jewish residents of Sighet to abandon their homes and the objects contained therein, they divide the Jewish community from their *tashmishey mitzvah* and their ability to properly worship—which, for Eliezer, reflects his departure from God; as the Nazis force the Jews to empty their homes of their religious objects, they cause Eliezer to “empty” himself of his faith.

The Nazis also vandalize the synagogue and leave the Sighetian Jews with no choice but to defile the synagogal sacred space and sacred time. Eliezer says:

The synagogue resembled a large railroad station: baggage and tears. The altar was shattered, the wall coverings shredded, the walls themselves bare. There were so many of us, we could hardly breathe. The twenty-four hours we spent there were horrendous. The men were downstairs, the women upstairs. It was Saturday—the Sabbath—and it was as though we were there to attend services. Forbidden to go outside, people relieved themselves in a corner. (22)

The synagogue, once a space of spiritual refreshing, becomes suffocating (“we could hardly breathe”). By leaving them no choice but to “[relieve] themselves in a corner,” the Nazis force the Jews to implicate themselves in the violation of their sacred space.

Moreover, that the Nazis confine them on the Sabbath denotes a defilement of the Jews’ day of rest. In *Sacred Celebrations: A Jewish Holiday Handbook*, Ronald H. Isaacs and Kerry M. Olitzky explain that the Sabbath is “the holiest day of the year for Jewish people, despite it occurring fifty-two successive times. It is not only a sacred day but one that is filled with joy and delight. It’s a time to pray, relax, and rejuvenate ourselves. It is a time to be together as a family” (23). For the Jews of Sighet, this Sabbath—in which

they are “[f]orbidden to go outside”—becomes unsacred, stripped of its “joy and delight.” Just as the synagogue becomes a suffocating space, the Sabbath becomes a “suffocating” time as the Nazis invert the “holiest day of the year”: the Sabbath becomes a time of miserable waiting, rather than worship. The Jews do not “attend service,” but instead, sit imprisoned in the synagogue, forced to desecrate the sacred.

The Second Scroll also explores Nazi subjugation of Jews through the desanctification of sacred space. The community is celebrating Rabbi Zelig’s youngest son becoming Bar Mitzvah—an age when a man is “biblically obligated to keep the commandments” (HaRav qtd. in Dubov). As the Rabbi’s “relatives and some worthies of the community had gathered to congratulate the young boy who this day was being confirmed into the congregation of Israel,” several SS soldiers raid Zelig’s home (33). The soldiers’ orders and actions pervert the Bar Mitzvah ceremony and deconsecrate those present. Explaining the significance of the Bar Mitzvah ceremony, the Alter Rebbe states that “although the G-dly soul has entered with the circumcision, and continues to be manifest throughout the years of education, it enters in the most complete manner only on the occasion of Bar Mitzvah” (qtd. in Dubov). The soldiers’ treatment of the Jews involved in the ceremony and their profanation of the sacred space divest the celebration of its sanctity, counterpointing “the G-dly soul” entering the Bar Mitzvah “in the most complete manner.” Melech states:

They were under the command of a young lieutenant who, it soon appeared, prided himself on being a specialist in Semitic affairs. . . How shall I tell you, how shall I bring myself to write down, the abominations which took place that day! The Scroll of the Law was polluted: between the parchment an infant was set and then tossed in the air—the specialist shouted: “*Hagba*”—was allowed to fall to the ground, its skull cracked crying: “Father!” Our women were made to strip and

circle the room—*hakofos*, explained the specialist—while the soldiery indulged in their obscene jests; and our men were each in turn called up to the improvised pulpit—*aliyoth*, said the authority—to receive their beard-pluckings and blows. (33)

Roger Hyman explains the significance of Hebraists: “The use by the Nazis of the Hebraists . . . to destroy Jews suggests the Nazis deliberate construction of a world in which expectation is continually confounded . . . and where the discourse of the victim is deliberately used in his destruction” (96). Indeed, the specialist in this Bar Mitzvah scene inverts Jewish customs to desecrate the ceremony. Normally, “to indicate the Torah has been read from,” a Rabbi would raise the Scroll above his head in the synagogue for the entire congregation to see—which is known as “*Hagba[h]*” (96); however, the lieutenant inverts *hagbah* and corrupts the practice to befoul the consecrated Scroll of the Law. The soldiers’ pollution of the Scroll can be understood as the equivalent to the sacking of the temple in that the Torah is often interpreted as “a new center of holiness equal to that of the temple” (Schleicher 14).¹² The Scroll of the Law—*tashmishhey kedusha*, a symbol of life, containing the name of God—becomes an instrument of violence and death against the infant who is “tossed in the air,” simultaneously using the sacred text to harm an innocent child and blaspheme God through both the brutal treatment of the baby and the Scroll’s defilement. Moreover, as the women “strip and circle the room” and the soldiers make “obscene jests,” the intruders eroticize the sacred space of the home, “strip[ping]”

¹² Schleicher further explains, “One significant factor in the holy status of the Torah as artifact appears to be the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE. As a consequence, Jews no longer had access to a sacred place, that is, an *axis mundi*, through which contact with God could be mediated. The Torah replaced the temple as the center of cultic activity. Accordingly, it became important to the early Rabbinic authors of the Mishnaic and Talmudic literature to provide prescriptions of how the Torah text should be conceived and handled in ritual contexts. . . . The saying in *Mishnah*, ‘Pikey Avot’ 1:1, is one among many illustrations of this replacement. It encourages Jews to ‘make a fence round the Torah.’ Segregating sacred space is a fundamental religious activity in that it marks the boundary between the sacred and profane” (13–14).

both the domestic sphere of its sanctity and the women of their marital purity. And the violence the men receive as they approach the “improvised pulpit” (“their beard-pluckings and blows”) is an ungodly substitute of the man’s routine task of reading from the Torah at the pulpit (“*aliyoth*”). The lieutenant not only publically shames the men, but replaces each father as the paterfamilias of his respective family. Given that he uses Hebrew words which are normally used as ceremonial expressions of worship (“*hagba*,” “*hakofos*,” and “*aliyoth*”) and inverts the words to execute exactly the opposite of what they mean, and that he takes on the dominant role in the ceremony (for Melech describes him as being both “a specialist in Semitic affairs” and “the authority”), the lieutenant becomes a secular and sacrilegious leader in place of the rabbi, thereby profaning the sacred space of Rabbi’s Zelig’s home.

“Wearing” and “Disrobing” Faith: The Spiritual Significance of Clothing and Worn Objects

Both texts use phylacteries to denote the protagonists’ spiritual quests. Dating back to antiquity, phylacteries—also known as *tefillin*—contain four biblical passages, which “represent divine names”¹³ (Schleicher 17). One of the verses contained within the *tefillin* boxes is Exodus 13:9, which states, “And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt.” Thus, *tefillin* are tangible “sign[s]” and “memorial[s]” of God’s commandments, reminders of His ability to save

¹³ A reference to *bTalmud*, “Gittin” 45b.

(His “strong hand”) and resultantly central to Orthodox Jews’ spiritual practice. In *The Complete Book of Jewish Observance*, Leo Trepp states: “Tefillin are a bond: the Jew binds his strength to God; he binds his mind and body; he signifies that he is ‘bonded’ to God in all he thinks and does” (32). When the men of Ratno recount the alleged details of when Uncle Melech rejects his faith, the nephew describes the details as “heinous” because it was said that “Uncle Melech had made his phylacteries part of his horse’s harness” (25). Melech’s profaning of “his phylacteries”—using them not to remember God’s commands by binding them to his arms and head, but by binding them to an animal—is a physiognomic transformation of the sacred object, which marks his rejection of God. By breaking his “bond” with God, he de-sanctifies God’s name—a disavowal of the Divine. In *Night*, Eliezer also speaks of phylacteries when he says: “I was in the midst of prayer when suddenly there was shouting in the streets. I quickly unwound my phylacteries” (16). Eliezer’s unwinding of his phylacteries is the point at which he begins to separate from God; in reaction to Nazi violence (the “shouting in the streets”), Eliezer stops praying and undoes his phylacteries, metaphorizing that separation.¹⁴ Indeed at this point in the text, Eliezer is still following God, but his initial interaction with Nazi soldiers marks the advent of his repudiation of God.

¹⁴ In light of *tefillin*’s inclusion of Exodus 13:9, which references the Israelites’ fleeing from Egypt, and since “[t]he ancient Egyptians are an analogue for whatever evil oppressor Jewish experience confronts” (Hyman 99), Eliezer’s unwinding of his phylacteries while the Nazis (or metaphorically “[t]he ancient Egyptians”) invade his town signals a reversed slavery-Promised Land metaphor. No longer will Eliezer remain in the “Promised Land,” Sighet (a land of abundance, prosperity and Divine protection), and remember God’s Exodus of His people from slavery, but instead Eliezer is about to depart from the “Promised Land” and enter bondage, the concentration camps. Of course, Hungary had a long history of anti-Semitism, so it could be problematic to equate Hungary to the Promised Land; however, when the Jews entered the Promised Land in antiquity, they met great opposition and anti-Semitism in their new land. Thus, as the Promised Land was not free from discrimination and oppression, Hungarian Jews also endured vulgar subjugation in Hungary. On page 24, I explore *Night*’s inclusion of another reversed slavery-Promised Land metaphor as the Sighetian Jews wait to be transported to the camps.

While *The Second Scroll* uses clothing to symbolize the restoration of Jews from a state of destitution to spiritual wholeness, *Night* uses clothing to depict the divestment of Jews' dignity in the camps. When the nephew in *The Second Scroll* travels through the mellah, he sees a "badge" that marks the subjugation of Jews: "Everywhere poverty wore its hundred costumes, tatters of red and tatters of yellow, rags shredded and rags pieced, a raiment of patches, makeshifts, and holes through which the naked skin showed, *a kind of human badge*" (62, emphasis added). The nephew's syntactical choice of the phrase "human badge" to describe the "costumes" seems to denote that the "naked skin" is incidental to the clothing—that the "*human badge*" is an addition to the "rags" and that the flesh of the person is of no more worth than the textiles described—reflective of society's perception of the Jews dwelling in the mellah. However, Klein's text eventually restores dignity to the Jews of the mellah and reflects this restoration through his description of their clothing in Israel. As he sees the Jews of Casablanca walk to synagogue on the Sabbath morning in Tel Aviv, the nephew says, "[A]t last, at last robed in *white*, white for the Sabbath of their week, and for the Sabbath of their lives—white!" (75). His emphasis on the colour "white" connotes heavenly attire—like that of an angel—and a sense of purity:

How Uncle Melech would have rejoiced to see them as I had that Sabbath morn seen them, the bearded dark-eyed little men, their delicate gazelle-like daughters, pacing with staid dignity down the streets of the city on their way to the service at the synagogue! Changed they were, and altered, transformed, not untouchables, but princes and princesses in coloured book. (75)

Although not directly associated with clothing, it should be noted that their "pacing with staid dignity down the streets of the city" illustrates their mobility, which starkly contrasts

their “*stand[ing]* at the gates of the mellah begging” (67, emphasis added). Their mobility speaks to their freedom from the confines of the slum; they are no longer the abject “rotteness” “[u]pon the cobbles of the streets” (63), but instead humanized individuals walking through the city like the rest of society, included in the civic sphere. Furthermore, the nephew’s description of the former residents of the mellah as “princes and princesses” marks a figurative restoration of their royal familial line—back to their positions as “dons and hidalgos of the golden age of Spain” (67). Indeed, *The Second Scroll* revivifies the collective Jewish Body,¹⁵ cleansing it of the mellah’s dehumanizing stain.¹⁶ Yet, although *The Second Scroll* eventually comes to use clothing to symbolize the humanizing of the mellah Jews, in *Night* clothing remains a symbol of death in the camps. Eliezer explains that once in the barracks, the inmates’ “clothes were to be thrown on the floor at the back of the barrack. There was a pile there already. New suits, old ones, torn overcoats, rags” (35). The denuding of the inmates is not only symbolic of the Nazis stripping the Jews of their identity and dignity, but the “pile” of clothes also foreshadows the pile of dead bodies in the camps.¹⁷

¹⁵ I choose to use the term “Jewish Body” (with a capitalized “B”) when speaking about groups of Jews collectively. I recognize that there is a lot of scholarship around the “Jewish body” and anti-Semitism (specifically Sander Gilman’s *The Jew’s Body*), but I will use the term “Jewish Body” to refer to Jews *en masse*.

¹⁶ I will talk in greater detail about the subjugation of the Jewish Body in Chapter 2.

¹⁷ We find a similar image in Michaels’ *Fugitive Pieces*. I refer to *Fugitive Pieces* to evidence a recurring trope in Holocaust literature: piles of clothing and/or possessions. Michael’s protagonist, Jakob, comes across a photo of a similar pile of belongings from the camps: “Later, in Canada, looking at photographs of the mountains of personal possessions stored at Kanada in the camps, I imagined that if each owner of each pair of shoes could be named, then they would be brought back to life. A cloning from intimate belongings, a mystical pangram” (50). As Jakob perceives “each pair of shoes” as representative of an individual person, so too does each outfit in “the back of the barrack” foreshadow the objectification and victimization of each inmate in *Night*. Michaels’s novel offers another second generation perspective, akin to the nephew’s viewpoint.

Furthermore, *Night* replaces sacred *tallits* with profane blankets as a reflection of Eliezer's belief in a malevolent rather than a beneficent God. In the camps, the profane becomes sacred: Eliezer explains that he and his fellow prisoners "threw blankets over [their] shoulders, like prayer shawls" (Wiesel 96). The supplanting of the sacred for the profane suggests that the inmates are in greater need for warmth than for prayer or dependence upon God. The Torah offers reasons as to why men should wear the *tallit*: "You will have these tassels [the fringes affixed to the corner of the *tallit*] to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them. . . ." (Numbers 15:39); however, as the *tallit*, an example of *tashmishey mitzvah*, is a reminder to obey commandments, Eliezer deconsecrates his prayer shawl to represent his repudiation of God.

Bundles of Illusions: Eliezer's Reduction of Faith into Objects and His Disposal Thereof

In *Night*, Jews carry "bundles" during their exodus from Sighet, which can be seen as an inverted reference to the Israelites who carried their belongings with them during their Exodus from Egypt. That which was the central symbol of escape from slavery to providentially ordained freedom here becomes a forced exodus from their homes to the camps.¹⁸ Eliezer explains, "One by one, the houses emptied and the streets filled with people carrying bundles" (16). The Nazis mandate the Jews to vacate their homes—once sacred spaces for observant Jews—and force them to condense their

¹⁸ The "bundles" they carry can also be seen as a reference to anti-Semitic iconography of the Wandering Jew. In "The Wandering Image: Converting the Wandering Jew," Joanna L. Bricchetto explains that the Wandering Jew, who carries a staff and has a long beard, also carries a purse or a sack (22). As the Jews leave from Sighet, they find themselves uprooted and in a state of placeless wandering with "bundles," similar to that of the hate-inspired archetype of the Wandering Jew.

domestic sphere, their worlds, into portable “bundles” of selected objects: “There they went, defeated, their bundles, their lives in tow, having left behind their homes, their childhood” (17). Conversely, the Israelites acquired great wealth as they left slavery. They “plundered the Egyptians” (Exodus 12:34) and departed from Egypt with “articles of silver and gold and . . . clothing” (Exodus 12:35), leaving bondage with more than enough provision, whereas the Jews of Sighet are divested of their possessions. Just as the Israelites departed from Egypt and entered the desert,¹⁹ the Jews of Sighet also enter into a desert-like place, waiting for their future in the camps. Eliezer describes them as they wait to leave the ghetto: “People must have thought there could be no greater torment in God’s hell than that of being stranded [there], on the sidewalk, among the bundles, in the middle of the street under a blazing sun” (16). Eliezer’s allusions to excessive heat (“no greater torment in God’s hell” and “a blazing sun”) and his description of them “being stranded” parallels the situation of the Jews of Sighet to that of the Israelites’ situation of being stranded and wandering in the desert—both groups of Jews separated from their roots. Such desert-imagery furthers the metaphor of upheaval; not only do the Nazis force

¹⁹ Narron states, “The geographic location and the history of the desert landscape, literally that of the Sinai, are foundational to the formation of Judaism and the nation Israel. A transitory season occurring approximately in the 11th Century BC, the desert is the place of ‘wandering’ for forty years after the exodus of the tribes of Israel from Egypt. This wandering was not without purpose, however. The fledging nation dwelled in the desert, in a divine holding pattern that allowed them to receive the Law, without which they would have little structure for developing the identity of a nation, or learning how to commune with the God of their fathers” (32). However, *Night* inverts the religious significance of both “[t]he geographic location and the history of the desert landscape”; the Jews’ “wandering” in Sighet becomes purposeless: they receive no divine words and do not learn “how to commune with the God of their fathers.” If anything, as in the case of Eliezer, they “unlearn” how to speak to God; in losing their faith, they stop talking to the Divine. Narron continues, “Most commonly in the scriptural text, the desert is described as a place of hardship, curses, and judgement; however, the text also presents the desert as a place of great intimacy with the God of the patriarchs. In this parched land, the livelihood of the people was sustained by His very presence. . . . The camp followed Him as a cloud by day and fire by night, remaining still when He was still, and moving only when He moved. . . . For all the hardships the people of Israel endured, the blessings prevailed” (36). However, in that the Jews of Sighet are not traversing towards the “Promised Land,” but instead towards “Egypt,” they only receive “hardship, curses, and judgements” and no “blessings” prevail.

the Jews to dislodge the sacred and religious objects from their homes, but they reduce Jewish lives to “bundles” of matter, to unsacred and agentless “*stücke*” or “things.”²⁰ Thus, Eliezer’s reversed bondage-desert-Promised Land metaphor not only inverts the biblical account of God’s redemption—thereby mirroring his forthcoming rejection of Providence—but uses the suffering he experiences on the blazing sidewalk as a precursor of the suffering he will endure in *his* “Egypt”: the camps.

As Eliezer leaves the ghetto and rides the train to Birkenau, he no longer perceives *tashmishey mitzvah* as aids to worship, but, as hindrances, mirroring his loss of faith in a beneficent God. He states: “On everyone’s back, there was a sack” (17). He goes on to describe the Chief Rabbi of Sighet who walks past them with “a bundle on his back. His very presence in the procession was enough to make the scene seem surreal. It was like a page torn from a book, a historical novel, perhaps, dealing with the captivity in Babylon or the Spanish Inquisition” (17). In their forced abandonment of *tashmishey mitzvah*, Eliezer and the Jews of Sighet lose part of their rich culture, identity and faith. Eliezer realizes that he is unable to lug *every* belonging with him, for his “bundle” would become a physical burden instead of a spiritual benison. He does not, however, lament their separation from their belongings. Instead, he equates their separation from their religious and sacred objects with a departure from their illusions: “The beloved objects that we had carried with us from place to place were left behind in the wagon and, with them, finally, our illusions” (29). As he leaves the cattle car and enters Birkenau, Eliezer begins to strip away any spiritual connection to the physical; as the Nazis separate him from his

²⁰ This idea of transforming humans into “things” is explored in greater detail throughout Chapter 2.

“beloved objects,” he divorces himself from “illusions,” his faith in a protective and loving God.

No Food, No Fellowship: Depicting Community and Spirituality through Hunger in *Night*

While still in Sighet, food and meal times foreshadow Eliezer’s loss of community—his connectedness and closeness with family and friends—and rejection of God in the concentration camps.²¹ Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, in Chapter 3 of Mishna 21(b), states, “If there is no flour there is no Torah; if there is no Torah there is no flour.”²² In Judaism, meal times take on spiritual significance and food directly relates to Jews’ understanding of God, to their personal piety, and to their faith that God will provide for them. Jonathan D. Brumber-Kraus, in “Meals as Midrash: A Survey of Ancient Meals in Jewish Studies Scholarship,” describes the dining table as a place for observant Jews “to envision God” (300). At the Jewish table, families consider the father a rabbi who leads his family in prayer and study (300) and “there is a pleasant conceit that the table is an altar; the food thereon a sacrifice to God; that the father of the family is the high priest, and the other members of the family are all lesser priests assisting with the sacrificial ritual” (Glasner 4). Before Eliezer and his family leave for the concentration

²¹ Indeed, there were many communities within the camps. For instance, Auschwitz had not only an orchestra, but “its own Polish nationalist underground and its own Polish Communist underground—not to mention separate Russian, Slovakian, French, and Austrian resistance groups—whose members fought and sometimes killed each other. It also had its underground religious services, Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish. . . . Auschwitz even had its own brothel, known as ‘the puff’” (Friedrich 37).

²² In relation to Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah’s statements that “[i]f there is no flour there is no Torah” and conversely “if there is no Torah, there is no flour,” he is making not just a comment on the centrality of food in Judaism, but he is also calling for social justice. Dr. Hyman has noted that he is explaining that as much as there is a need for Torah, there is also a need for “flour”: the basic necessities of life. He is, therefore, exhorting Jews to find a balance and the interconnection between Torah and social justice in life—each of which necessitates the other.

camps, they enter the small ghetto and find food items left uneaten. Eliezer describes the scene: “The chaos was even greater here than in the large ghetto. Its inhabitants evidently had been caught by surprise. I visited the rooms that had been occupied by my Uncle Mendel’s family. On the table, a half-finished bowl of soup. A platter of dough waiting to be baked” (20). The “half-finished bowl of soup” and the “platter of dough waiting to be baked” can be understood as “half-finished” fellowship “waiting to be [shared],” wherein Uncle Mendel’s family’s person-less dining table foreshadows Eliezer’s lack of community surrounding food in the camps. Indeed, his starvation in the camps proves to be a roadblock to communion with the Divine, severing him from a central means of worship and reflecting his separation from God. Mirroring the notion that “[i]f there is no flour there is no Torah,” for Eliezer, where there is no dining table there is no communion with God.

As he enters the camps, food and meal times symbolize the tension between self-preservation and community for Eliezer. He struggles with sharing food with his father and begins to see meal times not as catalysts for fellowship or times “to envision God,” but solely as occasions to consume for his own survival—dissolving any connection between food and faith. Eliezer says, “The Day of Atonement. Should we fast? The question was hotly debated. To fast could mean a more certain, more rapid death. In this place, we were always fasting. It was Yom Kippur year-round” (69). He deconsecrates the sacred holiday by conflating non-holy days and Yom Kippur into one, stripping the consecrated day of its set-apartness: “I did not fast. First of all, to please my father who had forbidden me to do so. And then, there was no longer any reason for me to fast. I no

longer accepted God's silence. As I swallowed my ration of soup, I turned that act into a symbol of rebellion, of protest against Him" (69). Eliezer's decision to eat removes all spiritual significance from Yom Kippur's requirement to fast. Following food laws is a way of reflecting faithfulness to God; thus, Eliezer's decision to not fast inverts the sacred import of food as a physical sign of faith into "a symbol of rebellion, of protest against him." However, at this point in the narrative, Eliezer still honours his father and heeds his advice; therefore, he fasts "to please [him]"—no longer viewing his dad as the familial "high priest," but nonetheless as a figure of authority. A prisoner later warns Eliezer that he should be concerned with himself and not his father, explaining,

In this place [Buchenwald], it is every man for himself, and you cannot think of others. Not even your father. In this place, there is no such thing as father, brother, friend. Each of us lives and dies alone. Let me give you good advice: stop giving your ration of bread and soup to your old father. You cannot help him anymore. And you are hurting yourself. In fact, you should be getting *his* rations. . .

. . . He was right, I thought deep down, not daring to admit it to myself. Too late to save your old father . . . You could have two rations of bread, two rations of soup. . . (110–11)

The struggle between sharing his food with his father becomes increasingly intense, further divesting meals of any communal or spiritual quality. Eliezer also sees a young man beat his father to death over a crust of bread and the father cries: "Meir, my little Meir! Don't you recognize me. . . You're killing your father. . . I have bread. . . for you too. . . for you too. . ." (101). For Jews in the camps, fathers no longer occupy the position of familial rabbi during meal times. As Eliezer's father is lying in the barrack, having not eaten that day, Eliezer gives him the remainder of his soup and says, "But my heart was heavy. I was aware that I was doing it grudgingly. / Just like Rabbi Eliahu's

son, I had not passed the test” (107). Eliezer’s “heavy heart” and “grudging” attitude are symptomatic of his struggle with community. The prisoners shift their attention from God and their fellow inmates to their stomachs, seeking to find strength exclusively from food, not God, which negates the Jewish idea that “man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 8:3). The Nazis’ “provision” of meagre scraps of food leaves them uninterested in “every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” because, in their estimation, God’s words have only left them hungry. The inmates perceive food to be a tangible means to remain alive, wherein God becomes superfluous, in that many of them believe He has abandoned them. In Wiesel’s “Yom Kippur: The Day Without Forgiveness,” the narrator states: “Here [in Auschwitz], in order to live, one had to eat, not pray” (57). Correspondingly, the Jews replace God with food and community with calories.²³

Further Re-appropriations of Religious and Sacred Objects

While Eliezer refers to the profane objects he receives from his father in the camps as his inheritance, the nephew perceives the documents he receives from Melech as his sacred inheritance; thus each character’s “inheritance” reflects each of their spiritual journeys. In *Night*, Eliezer’s father hands him a knife and a spoon in the camps—both of which are unsacred—and Eliezer identifies them as his “inheritance”

²³ Friedrich speaks directly to the issue of minimal food rations offered to prisoners and the inmates’ desperation to find food: “Officially, the prisoners were given just enough food to survive. . . . In fact, the prisoners never got more than a fraction of their rations” (40). He continues by breaking down their calorie intake: “An average man needs about 4,800 calories per day to perform heavy labor, about 3,600 calories for ordinary work. The average Auschwitz prisoner, by official post-war estimates that remain uncertain, received about 1,500. Many often got no more than half that amount. Apart from calories, of course, there were gross shortages of vitamins and minerals” (40).

(75). Indeed, the father's burial of the family's savings and his forced abandonment of their ceremonial objects in their backyard (11) is metaphoric of his inability to pass on his former prosperity and/or spiritual legacy to his son. And as a result, Eliezer's father has no choice but to bequeath profane cutlery to him as his material inheritance, gesturing towards Eliezer's profaned faith. In *The Second Scroll*, the nephew also speaks about his inheritance that he receives, stating that Melech "left no belongings. A few sheets of manuscript, drafts for a liturgy, obviously incomplete, were his sole legacy" (91). Irrespective of the documents being incomplete, the nephew considers them to be *tashmishhey kedusha*: not only do they contain the name of God, they become the "Second Scroll"—an extension of the Hebrew Bible for the nephew.²⁴ Upon receiving the letter from the Monsignor, the nephew states: "[N]ow came to me as last asset of my inheritance" (30). Melech passes on his spiritual legacy to his nephew in the form of a letter, which for him becomes a sacred document—akin to how the speaker in Klein's "Heirloom" receives *tashmishhey kedusha* from his father. The speaker states, "My father bequeathed me no wide estates; / No keys and ledgers were my heritage; / Only some holy books with *yahrzeit* dates / Writ mournfully upon a blank front page" (1–4). The speaker's father leaves him no worldly possessions, but instead only "holy books," sacred documents filled with words which bring forth *life*. His inherited "holy books" have "*yahrzeit* dates"—anniversaries of death—which by reading them offer the dead new "life" through remembrance. The letters from Melech also bring forth new "life": a renewed spiritual vitality. In light of the letter's praise of God, that the nephew not only

²⁴ I will speak more about the texts that Melech leaves behind become sacred in Chapter 3.

accepts and holds onto these documents, but also cherishes them, which reflects his affirmative perception of God. Eliezer and the nephew's inheritances differ drastically—the former profane, reflecting his loss of faith, and the latter sacred, indicating a restored belief in Providence.

Night goes on to re-appropriate the sacredness of bells to further illustrate Eliezer's state of spirituality in the camps. A bell is an example of *tashmishey mitzvah* in that the High Priest had them sewn onto his robe when he entered the Holy of Holies, which was considered the most sacred place in ancient Israel, for it was believed to be the place where God's presence dwelled. The High Priest was the only individual who could enter "the Holy of Holies, and all sacred things were under his direction. He offered the people's sacrifices, blessed them, and interceded for them" ("The Ark; The Priest's Robes; and the High Priest" 40). When the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies the bells on the bottom of his robe jingled to communicate to the priests on the other side of the veil that he was still alive—if the bells stopped jingling, the priests knew the High Priest was dead and they would retrieve his dead body by pulling on the rope that was tied to his waist (Hartman). However, *Night* profanes the bell as a means of inverting the religious object's intended purpose to aid in ceremonial worship—reflective of Eliezer's defamation of God. The High Priest's bells were symbolic of life, but in the concentration camps, the bell gradually becomes a symbol of death. When Eliezer first hears the bell, it announces the inmates' dismissal from roll call (44), which does not appear to symbolize death, but, in contradistinction, seems to be representative of rest. Yet, the bell soon becomes emblematic not of life or rest, but of the possibility of survival. Weeks after,

when the bell rings, it signals “that the selection had ended in the entire camp” (73). Here the bell becomes symbolic of life for those who “pass” selection, but it also becomes representative of death for those who do not. Eliezer goes on to explain that “[t]he bell regulated everything. It gave me orders and I executed them blindly. I hated the bell. Whenever I happened to dream of a better world, I imagined a universe without a bell” (73). The bell “that regulated everything” attempts to “organize” the senseless slaughtering of thousands of Jews a day. The bell also rings at the beginning of the march out of Buna, which Eliezer describes as “[t]he funeral” (84), foreshadowing the demise of the prisoners on their death march to Gleiwitz. What once was a symbol of life to the Jews becomes a promise of death to the weak prisoners in the camp; what once represented the redemption of sins through a sacrificial offering becomes representational of torture and annihilation.²⁵ *Night* replaces the priestly icon of bells with a secular substitution of this hallmark of the Jewish faith: “[t]he death knell” (84).

The Second Scroll gestures towards epochs of Jewish persecution by profaning both sacred and religious objects. The nephew sees such profanations depicted in the Arch of Titus:

. . . where the laurelled legionaries of Rome, soldier and centurion, were shown carrying away in triumph the sacred trophies of the Temple. The seven-branched candelabrum, lifted arrogantly in the air, had burned seven wounds in my eyes. The two tablets—rather that they had been shattered! And the trumpets—out of the stone they had sounded, not as aforesaid the sound of jubilee, but the broken murmur, the *shvarim*, the tragic triad of wandering and suffering and exile. (86)

²⁵ In “Yom Kippur: The Day Without Forgiveness,” the narrator says, “Our [Yom Kippur] services were dispersed by the camp bell” (60). Thus, the bell not only represents physical death, but also the censorship of religious observance—an attempt to “silence” their services and disallow the inmates to worship.

The nephew's description here is akin to that of Eliezer's description of the Nazis' removal of ceremonial objects from the Sighetian Jews' homes. However, in the nephew's description, the oppressors are the ones who remove the objects, not the Jews themselves; in the carved bas-relief, the Romans do not force the Jews to implicate themselves in their oppression, but, instead, they create a spectacle of the sacking of the Temple. The bas-relief of the Romans' "triumph[antly]" parading "the sacred trophies of the Temple" is a profane piece of art—the "sculpted taunts" "gloating in stone" mock the holiness of God's Temple (86). The nephew's inclusion of the thieving of "[t]he seven-branched candelabrum," a lampstand that the priests would have positioned on the left side in the Holy Place (Hartman), symbolizes a loss of "spiritual sight" and an infliction of pain; the candelabrum, which once provided light for the priests during ceremonial practices, now "burn[s] seven wounds in [his] eyes" and mars the nephew's "sight." He goes on to include "[t]he two tablets . . . shattered" in his description, referring to the stone tablets on which God wrote the Ten Commandments. The "two tablets" not only contained the name of God (rendering them *tashmishey kedusha*) nor were they just housed in the holiest geographical space for Jews (in the Ark of the Covenant, on which God's glory was said to have resided), but on these pieces of stone God wrote the Ten Commandments with His *own* finger (Hartman), elevating these "two tablets" to a level of sanctity beyond *any* other sacred object. Thus, the shattering of the "two tablets" is a paramount desecration of the sacred and an utmost profanation of the holiest of holy objects—even if only depicted in a bas-relief. Such de-sanctification of the "candelabrum" and "[t]he two tablets" mirrors centuries of Jewish persecution.

The Second Scroll, however, goes on to sacralise the profane art on the Arch of Titus—by destroying it—to symbolize the restoration of the Jewish nation back to Israel.²⁶ The nephew states: “I had avoided, of course, walking under that arch. Bitter enough it had been that my ancestors, at lance-point, *sub jugum*, had had to cross beneath this yoke of stone. I had scanned it, therefore, from a distance. I had walked about it, ‘surrounded’ it, thrown it the evil eye” (86). He “surround[s]” the Arch, just as the Israelites “surrounded” the walls of Jericho (Joshua 4) with intention to see the walls collapse and the blasphemy demolished, whilst imprecating the sacrilegious art.²⁷ Indeed, the nephew alludes to “a [future] homeland”:

But Uncle Melech’s words were with me: *When the years were ripened, and the years fulfilled, then was there fashioned Aught from Naught*. His words, his hopes, his intuition annulled and dispelled the captive spell that had held me bound. The Arch of Titus, from being a taunt, then, had become an irony, an irony detected against itself; the candelabrum, set against the new light that had been kindled across the Great Sea, had turned into satire; the trumpets symbolic now of jubilee, really taunted Titus! (87)

The transformation of “The Arch of Titus” from “a taunt” (blasphemous art) to “an irony” (the crumbled ruins) is a conversion of the profane into the sacred. The nephew re-appropriates “the candelabrum” to emit a “new light,” marking a hope for what lies “across the Great Sea”: Israel. The “new light” becomes a “satire” that “taunted Titus,” wherein Titus becomes representative of Jewish oppression *en masse* and the “new light”

²⁶ Israel was a nation in antiquity, known as the Kingdom of Israel (1 Samuel 15:28). I use the term “nation” to indicate the geography and politics surrounding the Israelites, as well as their common religion. Comparably, in 1948, Israel emerged as a Jewish State, where once again Jews shared a common geography, a unifying government and a State religion—even though not all Jews subscribe to Judaism.

²⁷ The Book of Joshua “is filled with bloody, ruthless battles as the ancient Hebrews strive to win their land from the Canaanites. Yet the issues facing Joshua are remarkably similar to the issues facing Israel and the Jewish people today: how to secure and maintain a homeland in the face of violent hostility from one’s neighbors” (Telushkin 69).

foreshadows a future refuge from anti-Semitic oppression. Consequently, “Melech’s words” render him a prophet, in that Israel is “*fashioned Aught from Naught*,” *ex nihilo*. The nephew continues: “There had come then a haze before my eyes, and the miracle—Jericho’s miracle—had taken place. The arch was not there! The stone had crumbled. I did not see the arch!” (87). “[A] haze” comes before the nephew’s eyes—a seeming “healing” of his sight, which moments before had “seven wounds” due to the sacking of the Temple; yet, paradoxically, the “haze” clears up his sight and offers him the vantage point to “re-vision” God’s restorative power. The “crumbled” stone he surveys becomes, what I choose to call, “sacred rubble”—these ruins erase the blasphemous bas-relief and declare God’s Providence. Connecting the Arch crumbling to the creation of Israel, Hyman sums up the nephew’s experience:

The imagined destruction of the arch is balanced by the reconstruction of the language. The crumbling of the walls of Jericho had allowed the Jews to enter the promised land for the first time. Here the crumbling of the arch is a symbolic re-enactment of that entry and the imaginative confirmation of the Return from twenty centuries of exile. As naught has come from aught with the ruins of imperial (and material) Rome, so aught has come from naught in the return to Zion. The crumbled walls of the arch are replaced by the still standing western wall of the Temple, and to the land on which it stands the Jews who were carried away by Titus return, and confirm in prayer the artistic, and linguistic, miracle of the end of exile. (132)

Monsignor refers to Melech’s spiritual journey, stating that it “makes a very jagged spiritual graph” (42). From before the pogrom to his time in Kamenets, from after his time spent with the Bolsheviks to the refugee camps, and from his visit to the Sistine Chapel up until his martyrdom, Melech’s spiritual journey is all but linear. To “map out” the fluctuating spiritual journeys of their protagonists, both texts make use of religious, sacred and profane objects. If we understand the objects that Melech and Eliezer interact

with to be the coordinates on “the spiritual graph,” we have a clear delineation of the protagonists’ relationships to God and their relationship to their fellow man, as well as how the texts symbolize Nazi dehumanization of Jews through profane, religious and sacred objects. For Wiesel, his dealing with sacred objects is a mark of his anger, fears, depression and experiences in the Holocaust, wherein the sacred loses its power and no longer links him to an orderly universe. Conversely, Klein also uses objects to reflect Melech’s return to God, re-affirming his faith which he lost during the war. However, both novels not only transform sacred and religious objects into profane things, but *Night* and *The Second Scroll* also strip human bodies of all sanctity by transmuting them into meagre “things,” insignificant “objects,” to mirror the spirituality of the protagonists and reflect Nazi ideology.

CHAPTER 2

“So we were men after all?”²⁸: *Dehumanization and Objectification of Jewish Bodies and the “Jewish Body”*

Clearly, the soul is of infinitely greater value than the body, for the body is only important as the soul’s earthly vehicle. But its association with the soul lends special, permanent importance to the body, whose relationship to the soul has been compared to that of the ancient Temple to God. The Temple was holy because it was consecrated as the earthly abode of the divine Presence; the body is holy because it is consecrated as the abode of the divine soul. Just as the Temple’s ruins retain their sanctity even after it has ceased to function as the divine abode, so, too, does the dead body retain its inviolability even after it ceases to be the abode of the immortal soul.

(Abner Weiss, *Death and Bereavement: A Halakhic Guide*, 15)

They died like flies from general physical exhaustion. . . . Overcome by the crudest instinct of self-preservation, they came to care nothing for one another, and in their selfishness now thought only of themselves. . . . They would beat each other to death for food. . . . They were no longer human beings.

(Otto Friedrich, “The Kingdom of Auschwitz,” 33)

In positing that the physical body is “the earthly abode of the divine soul,” a little Temple, Weiss elucidates Judaism’s inextricable connection between the physical and the spiritual. When God created man and woman, He made their bodies intrinsically sacred. King David speaks to the “inviolability” of the human body when he exclaims in Psalm 139:14, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” Indeed, God Himself declared that His creation was good, but only after He made man did He say that His creation was “*very good*” (Genesis 1:31, emphasis added)—emphatically distinguishing man’s worth and sacredness above the rest of creation. Dr. Hyman has called my attention to the Jewish

²⁸ Wiesel, *Night*, 84.

thought that establishes a connection between the 248 positive commandments (“mitzvot”) which must be followed to restore or repair the world (*tikkun olam*) and the number of bones in the human body, a belief system which renders the body an actual embodiment of the Divine. With such import placed on the immanent sanctity of the human form, maltreatment of or injury to sacred human bodies is an abomination. Moreover, the Jewish faith’s numerous rules concerning the body further elevate the human form to a level of utmost sanctity—prohibiting tattooing and self-mutilation, and also placing particular restrictions on interacting with certain bodies (i.e. sexual relations, handling dead bodies, etc.). Indeed, several other religions and faiths also share this concept of humanity’s intrinsic worth and place regulations on the treatment of human bodies to ensure a high level of respect. Yet, treating other humans with dignity is not just a religious concept—it is a practice that pertains to every human being, irrespective of one’s faith or lack thereof.

This chapter will interrogate the ways in which Nazis deconsecrate and destroy Jewish bodies in Klein and Wiesel’s texts. Also exploring the defilement of the human body in the camps, Michaels’ *Fugitive Pieces* speaks of the Nazis’ attempt to “rationalize” their treatment of Jews in the concentration camps:

Nazi policy was beyond racism, it was anti-matter, for Jews were not considered human. An old trick of language, used often in the course of history. Non-Aryans were never to be referred to as human, but as “*figuren*,” “*stücke*,” – “dolls,” “wood,” “merchandise,” “rags.” Humans were not being gassed, only “*figuren*,” so ethics weren’t being violated. No one could be faulted for burning debris, for burning rags and clutter in the dirty basement of society. In fact, they’re a fire hazard! What choice but to burn them before they harm you. (165)

“Nazi policy” tried to reject the humanity of Jews by not only turning them into mere objects, but by turning them into dangerous “things.” Hitler inculcated fear into German soldiers concerning the “dangerous” Jews (“burn them before they harm you”), which gave the Nazis further incentive—and in their opinion further justification—to marginalize and annihilate Jews. Volf uses the term “exclusionary practices” to describe this domination and elimination of others:

Most of our exclusionary practices would either not work at all or would work much less smoothly if it were not for the fact that they are supported by exclusionary language and cognition. Before excluding others from our social world we drive them out, as it were, from our symbolic world. (75)

Indeed, the Nazis employed “exclusionary language and cognition” in order to drive the Jews out of their “social world.” By using dysphemisms (“*figuren*,” “*stücke*,” “dolls,” “wood,” “merchandise,” “rags,” etc.), the Nazis symbolically eliminated the humanity of each prisoner—the first step taken in exterminating the Jews. Volf argues that the Nazis’ use of dysphemisms took Jews

outside ‘the class of objects of potential moral responsibility.’ . . . More insidiously, they insert[ed] the other into the universe of moral obligations in such a way that not only [did] exclusion become justified but necessary because not to exclude appear[ed] morally culpable. The rhetoric of the other’s inhumanity *oblige[d]* [each Nazi] to practice inhumanity. (76)

The Nazis’ xenophobic and ostracizing language became what they believed to be “moral” language, inverting “the universe of moral obligations,” wherein right became wrong and wrong became right. However, although German soldiers believed they were morally “*oblige[d]*” to exclude, they first had to *learn* Nazi “exclusionary language and cognition”; Volf argues that they had to be taught the hatred that compelled them to exclude:

Symbolic exclusion is often a distortion of the other, not simply ignorance about the other; it is a willful misconstruction, not mere failure of knowledge. We demonize and bestialize not because we do not know better, but because we *refuse* to know what is manifest and *choose* to know what serves our interests. That we nevertheless believe our distortions to be plain verities is no counter-argument; it only underlines that evil is capable of generating an ideational environment in which it can thrive unrecognized. (76)

In contradistinction to how the Nazis chose to “demonize and bestialize” the prisoners in the camps—attempting to erase their personhood—*Night* and *The Second Scroll* attempt to restore the dignity, humanity, and sanctity of the victims.

Klein and Wiesel’s texts depict sacred bodies as “objects” and then profane these “objects” by subtracting all sanctity from them to reflect Hitlerite dehumanization. *The Second Scroll*, however, not only portrays the desecration of living and dead bodies by turning them into “things” in the concentration camps, but also explores objectification and ostracism of Jews in the context of the mellah and in Israel. Of course, there is no comparison between the marginalization in the camps and the marginalization in the mellah or in Israel (even the marginalization of Jewish refugees in Israel after the war)—the brutality, violence and scale of Jewish persecution in the camps far exceeds any form of marginalization after the Holocaust. However, *The Second Scroll* interrogates various forms of subjugation of Jews in and outside the camps to offer a broad exploration of anti-Semitism. Both novels interrogate the ways in which Nazis erase the personhood of the victims—i.e. symbolic exclusion, commodifying and cataloguing bodies, etc. Yet, *The Second Scroll* and *Night*’s depersonalization of Jewish prisoners in the camps is not just demonstrative of Nazi alienation, but the texts’ desecration of sacred bodies also marks the protagonists’ spiritual quests, in light of the body being a little Temple. Both Wiesel

and Melch ultimately return to an affirmative view of humanity, but only Klein's protagonist re-establishes a loving relationship with the Divine.

Corporealized "Things": Transforming Bodies into Objects

Night begins its exploration of Nazi dehumanization through the *Judenstern*, the Jewish Star (or Shield of David). The Nazis not only force the Jewish prisoners to wear the *Judenstern* as a means of organizing and identifying them, but they attempt to turn the Jews *into* the Jewish Stars, into insignificant objects. When still in the large ghetto, the Sighetian Jews receive "a new decree: every Jew had to wear the yellow star" (Wiesel 11). The "yellow star," however, was not a Nazi invention. For hundreds of years Jews were forced to wear certain articles of clothing or badges to outwardly symbolize their Jewishness; Hitler did not devise this anti-Semitic system of using external symbols of identifying Jewishness, but instead adopted it from the oppressors of Jews who preceded him. In the 16th century in the Venice ghetto, Jews had to wear distinguishing clothing, like a scarf or a yellow circle, to differentiate themselves from the Gentiles (Weiner). Thus, as the Nazis coerce the Sighetian Jews to wear the pejorative "yellow star[s]"—rendering Jewishness punishable by law—they conflate the Jews with the badge on their lapel. To his father's comment, "The yellow star? So what? It's not lethal..." (11), Eliezer retrospectively responds, "Poor Father! Of what then did you die?" (11). His father's remarks signal his naivety towards Nazi objectification: as the Nazis reduce each Jew into a "yellow star," they collapse the walls between subject and object, and homogenize the two into an unimportant thing, fit for the crematoria.

Night and *The Second Scroll* further illustrate Nazi objectification by introducing the concept of “liquidating” Jews—a commodification of both Jews’ possessions and bodies. As the Nazis are evacuating the Jews of Sighet from their homes, Eliezer says that “[t]he ghetto was to be liquidated entirely” (13). Since the word “liquidate” has connotations of converting assets into cash, Eliezer’s diction has dual significance: not only do the Nazis pillage the ghetto of its valuables, but they additionally “liquidate” the prisoners, commodifying the Jews and transforming them into objects of capital gain. Indeed, the Nazis used their prisoners as labourers to advance the wartime cause.²⁹ Furthermore, after the Nazis gassed prisoners, a group of soldiers would sort through the bodies and “set about removing the gold teeth and cutting the hair from the women,” using the hair of the women to insulate buildings, while the gold would satiate the Nazis’ pure greed for riches—thus metamorphosing parts of Jews’ bodies into commodities.³⁰ In *The Second Scroll*, the speaker in Melech’s “Elegy” also speaks about the liquidation of humans into objects:

David, whose cinctured bone –
Young branch once wreathed in phylactery! –
Now hafts the peasant’s bladed kitchenware;

²⁹ Friedrich states that, in creating Auschwitz, Himmler’s “primary imperative was to protect and enlarge this new resource [of ‘sufficient labor’]” (33). In “Exploitation, Criminality, Resistance,” Panikos Panayi delineates the extent to which Hitler exploited camp labour: “The total number of prisoners of war and foreign workers used by the regime increased from 301,000 in 1939 to 7,126,000 in 1944, or from 0.8 to 19.9 per cent of all workers in Germany. The 1944 total included 5,295,000 civilians and 1,831,000 prisoners of war. Although those in the latter category consisted almost exclusively of men, the Nazis made much use of female foreign labourers. At the end of 1943 they employed 3,631,000 males and 1,714,000 females. The total number of foreigners who worked in Germany during the entire course of the war, taking into account those who died, fled or faced deportation, may have reached 15,000,000” (483). Panayi’s use of the word “employed” is somewhat misleading; by “employed” he means used for labour or coerced into working—not paid for their labour.

³⁰ “Background: The Camps” on the British Library website speaks of the Nazis using hair as insulation on U-boats.

And the dark Miriam murdered for her hair;
And the dark Miriam murdered for her hair;
The relics nameless; and the tattoo'd skin
Fevering from lampshade in a cultured home –
All, all our gaunt skull-shaven family. (98–99)

The conversion of David's arm "once wreathed in phylactery" into "kitchenware" is a profanation of his sacred body, literally transforming his arm from a limb that helped him remember God's commandments into an unconsecrated object. The speaker's references to Miriam being "murdered for her hair," and human "tattoo'd skin / [f]evering" after being stretched into a "lampshade" also speak to the Nazis' transformation of Jews into household possessions, insulators, and "relics nameless"—commodified "human" objects stripped of both life and humanity. As *The Second Scroll* depicts the murdering of Jews through the Nazis' literal liquidation of sacred bodies into profane objects, *Night* illustrates the ghetto being liquidated as a means of adumbrating the future of the Sighetian Jews being "liquidated" in the camps.

Eliezer's description and the prisoners' treatment of Madame Schächter on the train also foreshadow Nazi treatment of Jews in the concentration camps. Mrs. Schächter, who "had lost her mind," begins to scream in the middle of the night in the cattle car: "Jews, listen to me . . . I see a fire! I see flames, huge flames!" (25). Myers calls her "the prophet of the ovens" (12), in that her visions of "huge flames" soon come to fruition. Eliezer's description of Mrs. Schächter foretells the fate of the prisoners: "Standing in the middle of the car, in the faint light flittering through the windows, she looked like a withered tree in a field of wheat" (25). Not only does Eliezer's description of Mrs. Schächter as a "withered tree"—a plant on the verge of death—mirror the woman's

mental state and imminent fate, but the “field of wheat” symbolizes the other Jews surrounding her, in that when wheat is harvested it is beaten³¹ and then baked—just as the majority of the prisoners are soon beaten and “baked” in the camps, depicting the Jews as purposeless objects.

Both texts depict bodies as insignificant objects. In *Buna*, Eliezer states, “We were collecting corpses by the hundreds every day” (70). Later in the novel, as he and the other inmates are running from Buna to the abandoned village, Eliezer says that “[a]mong the stiffened corpses, there were logs of wood” (89). Eliezer juxtaposes the “corpses” next to the “logs of wood”—“objects” comparable in size and solidity—drawing a parallel between the inanimate, dead “logs” and the lifeless “corpses.” In Wiesel’s *The Town Beyond the Wall*, the narrator speaks about how the Jews “became objects—living sticks of wood—and carefully numbered victims” (148). The Nazis perceive these “living sticks of wood” to be purposeless, in that they see the Jews as *stücke*. Eliezer’s description of the “corpses” and “logs” corresponds to *The Town Beyond the Wall*’s illustration of “living sticks of wood” in that both descriptions of bodies are “faceless and nameless non-persons” (Myers 13), lacking any human descriptors. Eliezer furthers objectifies the corpses when he says that he and his fellow prisoners “trod over numbered bodies, trampled wounded faces” (93). The people lying on the ground are without name or significance—they are just numbers. Indeed, he even describes himself and the others running as “nothing but numbers” (87). His numerical description of himself and his fellow prisoners diminishes the individuality of each victim, reducing the prisoners to

³¹ In ancient times, when farmers harvested wheat, they would beat the wheat to separate the wheat berries from the chaff.

ambiguous figures. Melech also speaks of “the numbered dead” who “run through [his] veins” (30). However, Melech offers “the numbered dead” a place to “dwell”: his own body. Thus, as an act of profound intimacy, Melech’s invitation to allow “the numbered dead” to live on, to dwell, in his body connects the physical with the spiritual. He becomes a quasi-saviour, in that he saves the victims from oblivion by corporealizing their memory in his body; he performs a figurative blood transfusion, injecting “their plasma”—their lifeblood—into his veins (30). Steinberg argues that Melech, “the sole survivor of the massacre at Kamenets . . . felt the need to identify himself completely with the martyred Jews and to express their lives through his own” (ix). Indeed, Melech says, “I must live their unexpired six million circuits, and . . . my body must be the bed of each of their nightmares” (30). He “prolongs” their “unexpired” lives by living *for* them—fueled by “their plasma,” their memory. While Eliezer’s description of the “numbered bodies” attempts to give the victims new life through remembrance, Melech tries to “revive” “the numbered dead” by not only remembering them, but by re-remembering them in his own body.

Moreover, the Jews are forced to implicate themselves in the erasure of their individuality by being tattooed—which is to be unnamed—and reduce themselves to a mere series of characters. Eliezer states: “The three ‘veteran’ prisoners, needles in hand, tattooed numbers on our left arms. I became A-7713. From then on, I had no other name” (Wiesel 42). His new tattoo violates Levitical Law which commands Jews to not tattoo themselves because God created humans in His image (Genesis 1:27); thus, to be tattooed

is a desecration of His image.³² Upon receiving his tattoo, Eliezer explains that he “had no other name,” signaling an erasure of self. Trepp explains the importance of names in the Jewish faith: “At the moment a Jewish child enters the covenant, he or she is given a name and becomes a person in his or her own right. The name is important for a person’s development. It makes its bearer both identifiable and unique” (227). Therefore, as he is un-named, he is stripped of his old identity, uniqueness, and humanity.³³ By having such a large individualizing marker of his personhood stolen from him and by being diminished to a series of characters, Eliezer is objectified and subjugated to the status of an insignificant and codified object. In *The Second Scroll*, Melech also explores the erasure of individuality through tattooing. He mentions “the tattooed arms [of the man who] bears the number 12165” (31). Melech seemingly tries to decode the numeric tattoos of Jews when he states: “I look about me at the Jews of this camp . . . and try to compose backwards from these human indices the book of our chronicles. . . . and [I] wonder whether it is in gematria that there lies the secret of their engraving” (31).³⁴

Melech speaks of the Jews as “human indices,” as opposed to “indexed humans”—using

³² “You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:28). As well, God forbade tattoos because they were markers for pagans in ancient times and for the Israelites to remain un-tattooed was to remain “separate” and “set-apart.”

³³ Eliezer’s loss of his name not only signifies the Nazis’ removal of his identity, but also “marks” his rejection of his faith. Just as God symbols His covenant with His people through a cut (i.e. circumcision), so too does the tattoo, a different sort of “cut,” mark Eliezer’s rejection of any covenant with God—an inverted notion of kosherness.

³⁴ Melech’s attempt to decrypt the tattoos (the “human indices”) foreshadows his “reading” and interpretation of the Sistine Chapel. His reference to “gematria” (“the mystical meaning of Hebrew words based on the correspondence between the alphabet and its numeric values” [Hyman 95]) indicates that he is deliberating whether or not the numbers share a mystical relationship with the tattooed person. He is searching for a reasonable explanation for the systematic cataloguing of human beings; however, Melech does not find a rational justification for such dehumanizing objectification, for there is no reasonable explanation. I will explore the idea that he “reads” the Sistine Chapel in Chapter 3 in further detail.

the word “human” in the adjectival form, not nominally—which puts greater emphasis on the “index” aspect of the Jews rather than on the humanity of each of the persons. Furthermore, Melech’s use of the word “engravure” has objectifying connotation, in that engraving is a process that indelibly brands *things*—not humans. Therefore, by speaking of Jews’ “engravure,” he reduces the Jewish body to an object. He goes on to describe “the puny alphabetical files” to which he and his fellow prisoners are “reduced” (31). The reality of the prisoners’ flesh-and-blood and souls is rejected, rendering them mere *figuren* on paper—a way of “alphabetical[ly]” organizing bodies, rather than attributing to each individual an identity-giving name that affirms their humanity. Melech continues, “We were ghettoized, with none coming or going without special permission. We were catalogued: blue cards, yellow cards, red cards—our oppressors changed them at the whim so that even starvation in its various penultimate hues was uncertain” (32). The Nazis determine the Jews’ mobility through arbitrary cards, systematically “catalogu[ing]” them to “manage” the dehumanizing treatment of their victims (i.e. “starvation”). Yet, when Melech escapes from the camps, he says, “I bless the Heavenly One for my rescue. It is wonderful to be alive again; . . . *to have a name*; and to be of this world” (30, emphasis added). He connects having “*a name*” with being “alive” again; his re-adoption of his Jewish name and his disassociation with his tattoo parallels his discovery of a restored sense of humanity. Through tattooing Jews’ bodies, cataloguing prisoners, and un-naming the victims, both texts illustrate the objectification of the prisoners and erasure of individual victims’ identities.

Night also deconstructs humanity at the anatomical level, removing prisoners' social, mental and spiritual faculties and portraying victims' bodies as "objects"—void of souls or emotions. Eliezer reflects how the Nazis treat the inmates as objects by describing both his body and fellow inmates' bodies, not as whole human beings, but as fragmented body parts. During a public hanging, Eliezer pays no attention to the death of a fellow inmate, but instead, focuses on his hunger, attending more to his stomach than the suffering and death of another: "At that moment in time, all that mattered to me was my daily bowl of soup, my crust of stale bread. The bread, the soup—those were my entire life. *I was nothing but a body*. Perhaps even less: *a famished stomach*" (52, emphasis added). His obsession with food compels him to describe himself metonymically ("a famished stomach"), mirroring his stolen sense of holistic personhood (i.e. a unified body, mind and soul). He furthers the description of his fragmented self as he is running from Buna to Gleiwitz: "I was dragging this emaciated body that was still such a weight. If only I could have shed it! Though I tried to put it out of my mind, I couldn't help thinking that there were two of us: my body and I. And I hated that body" (85). Eliezer hates his burdensome body ("that body") and perceives it as ontologically separate from his mind ("I"). His hatred for "that body" exposes his hatred for Nazi abuse and starvation; he desires to "shed" the "object" that has been the tangible recipient of violence and negligence, transferring his hatred for his victimizers to the materiality of his "emaciated body." Eliezer continues: "I was putting one foot in front of the other, like a machine" (85), using a simile that connotes a removal of his innate humanity and a mechanization of his body parts. He goes on to say, "Long since, we had exceeded the

limits of fatigue. Our legs moved mechanically, in spite of us, without us” (87). He removes all emotion and feeling from his description of their robot-like limbs and refers to their bodies’ movement as perfunctory. Indeed, he depicts himself and his fellow inmates as “automatons” (85)—machines designed to automatically follow a predetermined series of operations or to respond to programmed instructions. Eliezer and the other prisoners no longer perceive themselves as persons, in that the Nazis’ treatment of the inmates removes all humanity from them. In speaking about his frostbitten foot, Eliezer says: “I felt I had lost that foot. It had become detached from me like a wheel fallen off a car. Never mind” (92). That he is indifferent to his “lost . . . foot” gestures towards a disintegration of self—Eliezer does not “*mind*” that his *body* is falling apart. Describing himself and the other prisoners in the train cars, Eliezer says, “Pressed tightly against one another, in an effort to resist the cold, our heads empty and heavy, our brains a whirlwind of decaying memories. Our minds numb with indifference” (98). He reduces himself and the other Jews to a burdensome physique (“mechanical” legs and “heads empty and heavy”) and spiritless cognitive faculties (“minds numb with indifference”), both without any purpose or value.

Both texts depict sacred Jewish bodies as murderous objects and illustrate Jews’ forced participation in the killing of their fellow Jews. Eliezer describes himself running near the end of the war: “Beneath our feet there lay men, crushed, trampled, underfoot, dying. Nobody paid attention to them” (89). He does not describe the men as “dead,” but as “dying.” Thus, those who are running are implicated in the death of the men on the ground; the runners’ bodies—their feet—become instruments of death, de-sanctifying

both the dying and the men running. Melech describes a comparable scene while he stands in the Sistine Chapel, remembering the Holocaust and speaking “of bodies cast upon a plat of ground to be trodden underfoot, of carcasses diminished to skull, and feet, and the palms of the hands, of murder, murder, murder that cutteth off all life” (107).

Once again, “feet”—and also “the palms of the hands”—become killing instruments.

Melech further depicts bodies as “weapons” in Kamenets:

Rabbi Zelig’s youngest son, the *bar mitzvah*, having been incompletely shot, crawled out of the grave. He was grabbed by one of the soldiers and flung back. *You are supposed to be dead, little Jew! Stay that way!* Soon the number of bodies heaped upon him stifled his cries. (35)

The Nazis transform the bodies of the individuals—who only moments before were *celebrating* “the *bar mitzvah*”—into bodies that “*stifle*” Rabbi Zelig’s son, converting their sacred bodies into pernicious “things.”

Eliezer’s dehumanizing descriptions of prisoners’ bodies, including his own, become descriptions of “living” corpses, obfuscating the distinction between life and death. He refers to the inmates’ walking in the camp as their “own funeral procession” (33) and calls the camp itself “our cemetery” (60), rendering the camp a Sheol-like environs.³⁵ As he lies in the camp hospital, the man next to him, who “was skin and bones, his eyes dead,” tells him to leave the infirmary before the next selection (78).

³⁵ Sheol is “an intermediate state” between life and death and “a place from which no one can save himself ([Psalm] 89:48). Once there, a person has no hope of returning to the realm of the living (Job 7:9; 17:13–16)” (Gemeren 1099). Indeed, Eliezer begins to see the camps as “an intermediate state” between life and death. Eliezer says, that in the camps, “We were incapable of thinking. Our senses were numbed, everything was fading into a fog. We no longer clung to anything. The instincts of self-preservation, of self-defence, of pride, had all deserted us. In one terrifying moment of lucidity, I thought of us as damned souls wandering through the void, souls condemned to wander through space until the end of time, seeking redemption, seeking oblivion, without any hope of finding either” (36). His description of the prisoners as “damned souls wandering” and “souls condemned to wander” renders the Jews placeless residents of “an intermediate state” where they are not quite living but not quite dead.

Eliezer says, “These words, coming from the grave, as it were, from a faceless shape, filled me with terror” (78). Eliezer’s description of the man having “dead” eyes—standardly considered “windows to the soul”—and “a faceless shape” points to the Nazis’ de-personifying perception of the Jewish inmates. Myers speaks to the impediment of the human face while attempting to deconstruct human beings:

[A] human being cannot be reduced to an object of knowledge; the effort to do so is “disturbed and jostled by another presence,” which cannot be “integrated into the world”—namely, the presence of a human face (“Meaning and Sense” 53). . . . The human face is the site of human personality. “The face is not the mere assemblage of a nose, a forehead, eyes, etc.,” he says; “it is all that, of course, but takes on the meaning of a face through the new dimension it opens up to the perception of a being” (“Ethics and Spirit” 8). The other is always already a *Thou*, because she has a face; she foredooms every effort to reduce her to an *It*, because objects do not have faces. When I look upon the other’s face, I perceive the presence of something more than a composition of interests: I glimpse a being. Her face establishes her uniqueness, her irreducibility to explanatory context, her being-in-herself. Perhaps I can account for her behavior, but I can never account for her face. (8)

Indeed, Eliezer’s description of the man in the infirmary removes the man’s “site of human personality” and reduces him to a marginalized “mouthpiece ‘from the grave.’” His account of the man next to him is suggestive of the views of Martin Buber’s concept of an *It*: Eliezer views his connection to the man not in terms of an *I-Thou* relationship, but instead perceives him as “a faceless shape” of “skin and bones,” an object—not a human being.³⁶ Eliezer also makes reference to a “Muselman” (sic), describing him as “good for the crematorium” (70). The *muselmann* is a symbol for “both the necessary product of a robust conception of the human and also its negation” (Skitolsky 86).

³⁶ In *I and Thou*, Buber states: “If I face a human being as my *Thou*, and say the primary word *I-Thou* to him, he is not a thing among things, and does not consist of things” (8). Buber connects facing another human with recognizing their “Thou-ness,” their human-ness. He refuses to speak of another human as a “thing,” an object.

Believing him to be solely “good for the crematorium,” Eliezer strips the *muselmann* of his humanity by not recognizing him as a person, labeling “the faceless shape” as useless and worthless matter. Indeed, by positing that the *muselmann* is nonhuman, Eliezer comes to understand the “walking dead” as a category of victims that are the “negative measure” (86) against which he frames his understanding of human dignity and what constitutes a human being.³⁷ Eliezer’s dehumanizing conception of the *muselmann* and his failure to recognize the “walking dead” are reflections of Nazi ideology, confounding the distinction “between human and the inhuman, life and death” (86). While they are running, Eliezer goes on to describe his father as a corpse: “How he had aged since last night! His body was completely twisted, shriveled up into himself. His eyes were glazed over, his lips parched, decayed. Everything about him expressed total exhaustion” (88). His father’s “shriveled” body, “glazed over” eyes and “parched, decayed” lips connote lifeless remains, despite still being alive. As they stop running, Eliezer trips and the inmates behind him begin to fall on top of him, smothering him under their weight. He says, “I scratched, I fought for a breath of air. I tore at decaying flesh that did not respond. . . . Who knows? Was I struggling with a dead man?” (94). However, Eliezer’s question—whether or not he is “struggling with a dead man”—complicates the query of what constitutes death in the camps. In the camps, there is no clear division between life

³⁷ Dorothee Soelle further describes *muselmanns* when she says, “There are forms of suffering that reduce one to a silence in which no discourse is possible any longer, in which a person ceases reacting as a human agent. Extreme external conditions such as exist in camps where people are starving or in destructive psychoses are examples of such senseless suffering. It is senseless because the people affected by it no longer have any possibility of determining a course of action . . . or of taking measures that would change anything. In the German concentration camps the people who existed only in a drowsy stupor, who allowed themselves to be deprived of food, were called in the jargon of the camp ‘Moslems,’ doubtless because of their submission to their fate. They are examples of suffering so extreme that it leads to the abandonment of all hope for oneself, to apathy in the clinical sense of the word” (68).

and death. Eliezer further muddies the separation between living bodies and deceased corpses:

When at last a grayish light appeared on the horizon, it revealed a tangle of human shapes, heads sunk deeply between the shoulders, crouching, piled one on top of the other, like a cemetery covered with snow. In the early dawn light, [Eliezer] tried to distinguish between the living and those who were no more. But there was barely a difference. [Eliezer's] gaze remained fixed on someone who, eyes wide open, stared into space. His colorless face was covered with a layer of frost and snow. (98)

Eliezer de-personifies the dead bodies by homogenizing them into a single heap, “a tangle.” He does not refer to them as humans but as “human shapes,” employing “human” adjectivally, which describes the bodies as “shapes” *similar* to humans. By depicting the camps and the cattle cars as graves and the prisoners as walking corpses, *Night* blurs the boundaries between death and life.

While looking at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Melech also deconstructs human life as a reflection of Nazi ideology that Jews are inconsequential objects. He initially looks at the human figures on the ceiling “entirely in terms of anatomy” (104) and he begins to break down the bodies into insignificant shapes:

At first I saw only geometry: triangle consorting with square, circle rolling in rectangle, the caress parabolic, the osculations of symmetry. . . . Theorems they are, but theorems made flesh; for at last it is not the whirlwind of forms but the tornado of torsos that abashes the little homunculus below, puny before the myriad bodies instant, ambulant, volant, who in their various attitudes and postures are turned and contorted to make of the ceiling the weighted animate corpus of humanity. (104)

He mirrors Nazi objectification by dividing the human form into inconsequential geometric forms (“triangle consorting with square, circle rolling in rectangle”) and different body parts into basic categorized figures. Describing the body as “theorems

made flesh,” Melech extends the dehumanizing metaphor of the human body as categorized *figuren*: he reduces sacred bodies into a mathematical equation—again, viewing human beings as a mere series of numbers (akin to the man who Melech sees in the camps with his serial number “12165” and to how he describes the Jews as “human indices” [31]). As he looks at the ceiling, his evaluation of the paintings percolates through his recollection of the Holocaust: “For as I regarded the flights of athletes above me the tint subcutaneous of well-being faded, the flesh dwindled, the bones showed” (106). As Melech watches “the flesh dwindle” and “the bones show,” he divests the bodies of corporeal wholeness and he subtracts from them “the colour of health,” gesturing towards the Jews’ appearance in the concentration camps. At first Melech describes the painted humans on the ceiling in the same way Nazis saw Jews: unimportant pieces of flesh. However, as Melech begins to “read” the paintings on the Chapel’s ceiling, as he refers to the body as “the human form divine,” he comes to realize that this deconstruction of humanity, and consequentially of God, is a form of “deicide” (110). Although the positive resolution Melech comes to in “Gloss Gimel” may appear in some ways contrived, this is an extraordinary passage in which Melech re-affirms Providence both God and humanity.³⁸

³⁸ It is not my goal to comment on the aesthetics of Holocaust literature or whether or not Melech’s re-affirmation is believable, but instead I aim, in part, to interrogate how *The Second Scroll* reveals the spiritual journey of Melech. I will explore in greater detail this idea of Melech “reading” the bodies to affirm Providence in Chapter 3.

Reflecting Relationship with God by Describing the Desecration of Jewish Bodies

Both texts explore the concept of blaspheming or rejecting God by watching the Nazis shed innocent blood and defile “the human form divine” (106). Melech’s nephew explains the divinity of man:

Since Adam is created in the image of God, the killing of man is deicide! Since Eve is a reproductive creature, the murder of the mortal is a murder of the immortal! Heinous crimes—it is at the threshold of his non-Jewish contemporaries that [Melech] lays them, corpse upon accusing corpse. (51–52)

Thus, as “the killing of man is deicide,” Melech and Eliezer’s descriptions of dead bodies are not just commentaries on Nazi dehumanization, but they also gesture towards the protagonists’ relationships with God.

As he surveys the execution of a child, Eliezer in turn “murders” his belief in a good God. Eliezer describes the hanging of a child: “To hang a child in front of thousands of onlookers was not a small matter. . . . All eyes were on the child. He was pale, almost calm, but he was biting his lips as he stood in the shadow of the gallows” (64). As the byword of purity—an innocent child—struggles to fight against his death, a prisoner asks, “For God’s sake, where is God?” (64). Such a probing question finds no immediate answer, but his questioning of God’s absence seems to be less of a question and more of an indictment against the Divine, linking God’s inaction to culpability. However, another prisoner responds, “Where He is? This is where—hanging here from this gallows. . .” (65). God “hanging here from this gallows” has more than one possible meaning. Firstly, the phrase could be understood as

an assertion [that] God is no executioner—and no almighty spectator (which would amount to the same thing). God is not the mighty tyrant. Between the sufferer and the one who causes the suffering, between the victim and the

executioner, God, whatever people make of this world, is on the side of the sufferer. God is on the side of the victim, he is hanged. (Soelle 148)

Such an interpretation of God “hanging” in the gallows is in stark contrast to how Eliezer perceives the boy struggling for his last breaths. The converse interpretation of God “hanging” from the gallows—which seems to be more in line with Eliezer’s newly adopted worldview and *Night* as a whole—is not that God “dies” that day, but the spectators’ previous conception of a good God dies. In the next line, the conclusion of the chapter, Eliezer states, “That night, the soup tasted like corpses” (65). The boy’s execution sours what Eliezer cherishes most: food. Eliezer’s observation of the child’s hanging translates into tasting the child’s death—and, by extension, the death of a good God—transmuting the sensorial experience of seeing death to tasting death. Thus, Eliezer’s description of dead bodies mirrors not only Nazi desecration of human life, but Eliezer’s rejection of Providence, as well.

In contradistinction, Melech’s “reading” of bodies on the Sistine Chapel ceiling leads him to avow God’s goodness. He states:

Comes then Michelangelo to teach us that he who spills but a drop of the ocean of our consanguinity exsanguinates himself and stands before heaven by that much blanched, a leper; that such beginnings have terrible ends: it is the first murder that is difficult: and that the single gout released sets cataracts of carnage on to flood. (107)

His explication of “the first murder” is an allusion to *the* first murder: Cain’s murder of Abel (Genesis 4:1–16). However, he re-appropriates “the first murder” to speak of the Nazis’ mass murdering of Jews in the Holocaust. In the same way that Cain and Abel were brothers, Melech’s reference to “the first murder” speaks to the “consanguinity” of every man—the shared fraternity and descent from the same blood—conflating every

individual into the category of “brother,” which renders the abomination of “exsanguination” all the more personal and severe. Melech continues: “I saw the husband in flight from the mounting flood carrying his wife on his shoulders, she looking in terror back; and saw both turned to salt and chemicals” (107). His description of the wife “looking in terror back” is reminiscent of the story of Lot’s wife.³⁹ As Sodom and Gomorrah “went up like the smoke of a furnace” (Genesis 19:28), so too did the land of war-torn Kamenets; however, Melech is not making the claim that the husband and wife “in flight” are escaping the judgement of God, but instead that they are fleeing from the unjust judgement of the Nazis. While interpreting the ceiling, Melech replaces “God as vindictive Judge” with “the Nazis as punishers,” thereby identifying Hitler and his soldiers as responsible for turning the Jews into “salt and chemicals.” Melech further establishes God’s goodness and the Nazis’ blameworthiness when he says, “Such homicide the sons of Belial committed in thousands of thousands, a thousand thousand for each day of the six days of creation” (109). He distinguishes between Nazi “homicide” and God’s “six days of creation,” between God’s *life-giving* actions and the Nazis’ *life-taking* atrocities.

Of Utmost Profanity: Inversion and Perversion of Jewish Law and Jewish Institutions

The camps represent the antithesis of that which is considered essentially human by Jews. Whether or not the Nazis intend to de-sanctify the bodies of Jews by forcing their victims to violate the Law and deconsecrate Jewish institutions, the Nazis intensify

³⁹ A reference to Genesis 19:1–29.

the de-consecration of Jewish bodies through their treatment of the prisoners. The tattooing of prisoners, as I have already explored in this chapter, is one of numerous instances of the Jews' obligation to heighten and participate in the profanation of their bodies. Other such examples include the Jews' breach of burial and purity laws, their desecration of sacred time, their inversion of the institution of marriage, and their violation of the fifth commandment.⁴⁰ In being coerced to invert and pervert Jewish institutions and Hebrew Law, the victims are forced to desecrate their sacred bodies to a level of utmost profanity.

The implementation of mass graves is not only an erasure of individuality, but also a defilement of Jewish burial and purity laws. When burying dead bodies, the *Halakhah* directs those who are preparing the dead body to dispose of the body in a dignified manner, "in purity and in holiness" (Weiss 15). Judaism is one of many faiths that views the burial of dead bodies as a sacred practice and understands burial grounds and cemeteries to be sacred places. Yet, once a person dies, his or her body becomes ceremonially unclean: "In keeping with the life-affirming nature of Judaism, the human body becomes the chief source of ritual impurity when it is bereft of life" (27). Thus, as the victims' bodies are thrown into large burial pits, the deceased are desecrated by not being disposed of "in purity" or "in holiness," stripping them of their individual and dignity, homogenizing all of the bodies into *one* lifeless heap. While surveying the ceiling, Melech is reminded of the mass graves in the camps and describes the victims in terms of fragmented body parts:

⁴⁰ The fifth Commandment says to "[h]onour your father and mother" (Exodus 20:12).

Certainly I could not look upon those limbs, well fleshed and of the colour of health, each in its proper socket, each as of yore ordained, without recalling to mind another scattering of limbs, other conglomerations of bodies the disjunct members of which I had but recently beheld . . . [A]nd I saw again the *relictæ* of the camps, entire cairns of cadavers, heaped and golgotha'd: a leg growing from its owner's neck, an arm extended from another's shoulder, wrist by jawbone, ear on ankle: the human form divine crippled, jackknifed, trussed, corded: reduced and broken down to its named bones, femur and tibia and clavicle and ulna and thorax and pelvis and cranium: the bundled ossuaries: all in their several social heapings heaped to be taken up by the mastodon bulldozer and scavenged into its Sistine limepit. (106)

He juxtaposes the “scattering of limbs” and the “conglomeration of bodies” in the same sentence, which mirrors the sundering of Jewish bodies into severed parts and then the amalgamation of Jewish bodies in piles of corpses—both means of annihilating the existence and individuality of the victims, while attempting to erase the memory of each person. Indeed, his description of fragmented body parts points to the Nazis' perception of the Jews as an insignificant agglomeration of body parts void of souls. After throwing the bodies into mass graves, the Nazis would then “disinter the corpses and burn them” (Wiesel viii). Wiesel states, “Thus, for the first time in history, Jews were not only killed twice but denied burial in a cemetery” (viii). Wiesel equates the tossing of the bodies into a pit (as when he speaks of the “tangle of human shapes” [98]) and the unearthing of their corpses to the victims being “killed twice” to be an intensified desecration of the human form and a double-erasure of individuality. Furthermore, in Judaism, “there is a special prohibition against failure to bury the body in its *entirety*. If, after autopsy, for example, part of the body is excised and not buried, it is as if *no* burial *at all* took place (J.T. *Nazir* 7:1)” (Weiss 15 [sic]). Thus, the Nazis' refusal to bury bodies in their entirety can be seen

“as if *no* burial took place *at all*”; as the bodies did not receive a proper interment, the corpses are rendered forever unclean and ceremonially “half-buried.”⁴¹

Eliezer further describes improper burial as the inmates throw the dead bodies out of the *Transport Juden*. He states: “The volunteers undressed him and eagerly shared his garments. Then, two ‘gravediggers’ grabbed him by the head and feet and threw him from the wagon, like a sack of flour” (99). Eliezer uses the term “gravedigger” facetiously by putting it in quotation marks to ironize how the men neither dig graves for the deceased prisoners nor bury them. Indeed, the “gravediggers” actually *remove* any covering or clothing from the bodies—as opposed to covering or inhuming them. Furthermore, the way the “gravediggers” grab the body “by the head” is indicative of their disrespect for the human form; they deface “the site of human personality” by impudently handling the dead man’s head like an incidental object (“a sack of flour”)—a mistreatment of the “most human” part of the body. Eliezer continues: “Twenty corpses were thrown from our wagon. Then the train resumed its journey, leaving in its wake, in a snowy field in Poland, hundreds of naked orphans without a tomb” (99). The undressing of the corpses is a shameful and impure exposure of the human form. As the “gravediggers” strip the bodies of their clothes and leave them unburied, they also strip the deceased of their dignity and humanity.

⁴¹ Moreover, the dead bodies also defiled the rest of the camp, in that the Nazis did not separate the burial grounds from the rest of the prisoners, rendering the rest of the camp unclean. Leviticus 19:11–22 explicates the laws of purification concerning dead bodies. These biblical verses explain that anyone who touches a dead body is unclean. Additionally, if an individual dies in a tent, everyone in the tent or anyone who enters the tent will become unclean, as well—thus linking the space and place the dead bodies occupy to uncleanness.

In *The Second Scroll*, the Nazis de-sanctify the Jews of Kamenets by not only murdering the residents of the pogrom in cold blood, but also by *the way* they murder them: by perverting Jewish sacred time, which further debases the victims. The specialist tricks the Jews into attempting to find the body of the Commandant and commands them to dig the “whole Sabbath afternoon” (33).⁴² Although there is no body to be found, the specialist’s order is a mandate to desecrate a burial ground—a directive which the Jews are forced to oblige. The Commandant’s imperative that they must dig on the “Sabbath”—a word that comes “from the Hebrew verb meaning ‘to desist from work’” (Witty 38)—is a sinful exercise, in that they are breaking Mosaic Law.⁴³ Trepp explains the significance of keeping the Sabbath:

The Sabbath was appointed that we might learn the meaning and the sanctity of time, experiencing time without exploiting it for work but simply as a holy gift out of the hand of God. No work may be done. With this sanctification of time, all relationships, between man and man and between man and nature, are transformed. Sabbath observance is, therefore, equivalent to observance of Torah as a whole (Yerushalmi; Nedarim 3:9). (66)

Thus, the Jews’ digging can be understood as a profanation of “the sanctity of time” of the Sabbath and a breach of the Jews’ “observance of Torah as a whole.”⁴⁴ Melech continues, “[W]e stood in the midst of a great pit, deep and wide” (33). Not only do they

⁴² In digging their own graves, the Nazis leave the Jews without anyone to witness their death—an attempt to further erase the memory of the victims.

⁴³ Exodus 20:8–11 states, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

⁴⁴ Indeed, the nephew even differentiates between the Sabbath and the other days of the week when he says, “[T]he Sabbath queenly as opposed to the weekdays, handmaiden and profane” (90), drawing a stark distinction between the sacred Sabbath and the “profane” weekdays.

command the Jews to break Sabbath, they coerce them to dig their own graves on the holy day, implicating the Jews in their own deaths.⁴⁵ Thus, *The Second Scroll* depicts the degradation of sacred time by illustrating the Kamenets Jews' forced violation of the Sabbath.

To further illustrate how the Nazis profane the sacrosanct bodies of the Kamenets Jews, *The Second Scroll* obliquely inverts the sacredness of the institution of marriage—an institution which affirms Divinity and community. Glasner speaks to the connection between Jewish marriage and God:

Frequently in Jewish literature, from the Scriptures on, the relation of husband and wife is employed to typify God's relation to His world. Our sages saw nothing cheapening or incongruous in a comparison of man's love of God to that of a man for his wife. The Hebrew name for the wedding ceremony was *kiddushin*, which means "sanctification." Marriage was regarded as essentially a religious sacrament. (4)

Thus, the wedding company's music—which was formerly played during sacred wedding ceremonies (ceremonies that celebrate the epitome of "God's relation to His world")—becomes profaned in that their music is orchestrating Jews' deaths. Melech describes their musical accompaniment:

Led with fantastic gestures by the flattered Itzka, the musicians trembled over their tune, at first hesitatingly, as if seeking and probing out their theme. Soon they reached the high ecstatic and repetitive notes, the expression of the bride's and bridegroom's ineffable union, the notes beyond, which it was impossible to reach, so strange, so other-worldly. (35)

The Nazis' employment of the town idiot, Itzka, to lead the music is a way of publically shaming the victims. Furthermore, the music's "other-worldly" etherealness connects the

⁴⁵ The Kamenets Jews' situation is akin to that of the Sighetian Jews, which I explored in Chapter 1 in the "Domestic and Synagogal Prisons" section. However, in light of how *The Second Scroll* uses the de-consecration of the Sabbath to amplify the profanity of desecrating sacred bodies, I chose to put place my analysis of Klein's text here in Chapter 2.

music to a heavenly and/or celestial reality. Thus, as the music has a quasi-divine sound, the musicians' music becomes a blasphemous orchestration of the desecration of the victims' bodies: "The specialist's voice had barked; barked, too, the guns. The volley reached its marks: screams, *shma-Yisroels*, upflung arms, the great toppling into the pit" (35). The "voice" of the specialist, "the guns," the "screams" and the "toppling" all add to the "music" and pollute the purity of the "other-worldly" notes. The wedding company plays in concert with the sounds of death and they synchronize the disunion of "bride's and bridegroom's ineffable union," inverting the bringing-together aspect of marriage by separating the victims through a dishonourable death. After they massacre all of the Jews, with the exception of Melech and Itzka, the Nazi soldiers toss shovelfuls of dirt on the pile of bodies and conclude that "the Jews are bedded for the night" (36). The word "bedded" connotes intimacy and sexual relations, thus debauching the pit of bodies and necrophilizing Melech who lies under the bodies. In Judaism, "[t]he marital relationship is one of holiness, and this applies to the sexual relationship" (Witty 112). Thus, the soldier's use of the word "*bedded*" denotes a destructive and adulterated interaction with corpses, mirroring the desecration of the Jewish institution of marriage and commandments, which compounds the defilement of the Jews' bodies.

Night also illustrates the despoliation of sacred bodies. *Night* upsets the fifth commandment by disrupting and inverting father-son roles and by the sons' brutal treatment of fathers who "abandoned the remains of their fathers without a tear" (92). Eliezer describes a man, chosen for his strength, who "had been forced to place his own

father's body into the furnace" (35).⁴⁶ According to *Halakhah*, it is the responsibility of the deceased's next of kin to bury the body in an appropriate manner. Here the man's role requires him to profane his father's body and violate Jewish burial laws.⁴⁷ Eliezer also describes "a boy of thirteen, [who] beat his father for not making his bed properly. As the old man quietly wept, the boy was yelling: 'If you don't stop crying instantly, I will no longer bring you bread. Understood?'" (63). Irrespective of age—whether teenagers or adults—the "boy of thirteen" and the man who cremates his father demonstrate the intensity of the Nazis' desecration of Jewish institutions and Law, which divest prisoners of their former selves.

Subjugation and Reassembly of the "Jewish Body" in *The Second Scroll*

The Second Scroll examines the persecution and subjugation of Jews not only as individuals, but as a collective Body, as well. Indeed, Eliezer also depicts the victims of the Holocaust as a collective group by identifying himself with other Jews in the camps; however, Klein seems to place a stronger emphasis on Jews as a collective group (most likely because of his Zionist leanings)⁴⁸—particularly evidenced in how he concludes his

⁴⁶ Weiss explains that "[t]he widespread practice of cremating Jewish bodies is a tragic commentary on the erosion of Jewish norms and values. Cremation is a gentile practice. It harks back to the pagan funeral pyre. It nullifies the atoning process of the body's underground disintegration. Cremation is unreservedly forbidden. There is no room for compromise on this issue" (80). Weiss's words reflect the Code of Jewish Law, Yoreh Deah 348:2. Thus, the man's cremation of his father is a direct breach of Jewish Law.

⁴⁷ Code of Jewish Law, Yoreh Deah 348:3; 362:1.

⁴⁸ When I refer to Klein's "Zionist leanings," I am referring to his support of the Jewish people's return to their homeland and the reclamation of Jewish sovereignty in Israel as ordained by God. Indeed, Klein believes that God is central to Zionism, as evidenced by the nephew's response to the man that he meets on the plane who speaks of secularized Zionism: "You have forgotten, in your thesis, to place God" (73). *The Second Scroll's* celebration of Zionism contrasts his essay, "In Praise of the Diaspora"; however, in *The*

novel with a re-formation of the Jewish Body in Israel, which re-affirms the dignity of the Jewish Body and mirrors Melech's celebratory return to God. Indeed, *The Second Scroll* interrogates the oppression and marginalization of Jews in a broader context than *Night*; Klein not only examines Nazi desecration of Jews' bodies, but also explores the subjugation of Jews in Casablanca and Israel. Of course, Klein does not attempt to compare or conflate the suffering of the concentration camps with the objectification of the mellah or in Israel, for the Holocaust was indeed the most extreme form of marginalization and exclusion in Jewish history. Instead, he explores the concentration camps, the mellah, and the tourists' objectification of Israeli Jews in his novel as a way of representing alienation and de-personification of the Jewish Body in its various forms, including the abovementioned instances of persecution as a way of giving a larger and more holistic perspective of a long history of anti-Semitism.

The Second Scroll depicts the objectification of Jews in Casablanca by de-facing the Jews of the mellah and reducing them to "hands." The text synecdochically uses the Jews's hands not only to symbolize physical poverty, but also to reflect how the rest of the population of Casablanca perceives them: a societal burden relegated to a slum:

As we made our way with difficulty through the congested lanes, avoiding a body here, evading a donkey there, we were everywhere beset—by hands! Wherever we turned—hands! I was reminded of those drawings illustrative of Dante's *Inferno* in which the despair of its denizens is shown rising from the depths in a digitation and frenzy of hands, hands snatching at straw, at air, at hands. This was a population of beggars greeting me with outstretched palms, with five-fingered plea. I was making acquaintance with the civic gesture of the mellah of Casablanca. (63)

Second Scroll, Klein does not offer a negative critique on Zionism, but instead, praises the return of Jews to the land of their ancestors.

Melech describes the “denizens” only by their “hands”—not as whole bodies—thereby removing their faces; reducing the beggars to “outstretched palms” divests the beggars of their humanity, in that “the site of human personality” as Myers calls it (8) is defaced.

Through the use of abject imagery, *The Second Scroll* establishes the Jewish Body in Casablanca as the excrement of society. The nephew states:

We entered, we slid into the mellah; literally: for the narrow lane which gaped through the gateway at the clean world was thick with offal and slime and the oozing of manifold sun-stirred putrescences; metaphorically: for in a moment we knew that the twentieth century (with all its modern conveniences) had forsaken us, and we were descending into the sixteenth, the fifteenth, twelfth, eleventh centuries. The streets, narrow and mounting, mazed, descending and serpentine, fornicated with life. (62)

There seems to be little distinction between the refuse in the mellah and those who inhabit it. The nephew describes eighteen “heaps of helplessness” (63), which parallels his inclusion of the word “offal.” His description of the mellah as foul and slick (“thick with . . . slime” and “oozing of manifold sun-stirred putrescences”) gestures towards the inhabitants’ base existence. “[P]utrescence” connotes the decomposition of organic matter, and the decay in the mellah can be seen as a reflection and a conflation of the mellah’s inhabitants’ “rotting” physicality and vitality. The nephew goes on to describe the smell of the mellah:

The odour of the centuries hovers over the mellah and will not dissipate. Not all the breezes of the Atlantic, less than a mile away, have yet effected a purification. It is an odour palpable and pervasive. . . . Only occasionally, as when upon the air there are wafted some few motes of the pulver of spice, only then are there subtleties for the nostrils; all, otherwise, is miasma and reek. The fish-heads scattered beneath the booth give off their peculiar smell; the viands, too, send up their intimations of ptomaine; there is a touch of the rancidity of dairies; garbage and refuse steam mephitic on the ground. Through the fanfare of stenches it is only the very sensitive who can distinguish the special contribution of the cat carcass drying in the sun. . . . It is that of ordure and dregs. Decades of digestion

raise their disgust through the streets. . . . The mellah's alleys are its cloaca. (64–65).

The “odour palpable and pervasive” signifies not just the “reek,” but also the offensiveness of the inhabitants to the rest of society. The mellah is both a garbage dump and sewage pool, and the Jews are indeed the “garbage and refuse” of Casablanca. The word “ordure” literally means excrement, but also suggests a morally degraded nature, which further identifies the Jews as a shameful waste-product. Casablanca has so degraded the Jewish Body that the nephew describes the mellah and those inside it as the most undesirable part of society (“dregs”). His depiction of the mellah's alleys as “cloaca” compares the streets to the orifice through which birds birth eggs and excrete urine and feces, connoting a space which brings forth both waste and life (where the beggars dwell next to the dead “the cat carcass drying in the sun”). And the nephew's description of the streets as a “cloaca” genders the mellah, in that a cloaca is usually associated with female birds, subjugating the slum to an inferior position to the rest of Casablanca-proper. Moreover, the nephew uses the term “miasma,” referring to both an atmosphere that corrupts, as well as to pollution of and/or stain on the soul. Thus, by virtue of living in the mellah, the corrupted inhabitants' metaphoric stain on their souls “marks” them as outsiders, rendering them unwelcome in the civic sphere. Indeed, the authorities “are very concerned over the good repute of Casa [and] . . . they do not wish begging in the streets. They pass, therefore, very severe ordinances to suppress the mendicancy” (68 [sic]). To keep the beggar Jews from “infecting” the rest of Casablanca, the nephew notes the degree to which the authorities abjectify and objectify them, spatially and socially isolating the Jews and relegating them to a position of moral

disgrace. The nephew's description of the mellah illustrates the oppression of Jews that *The Second Scroll* attempts to combat (and eventually does combat through the re-robing of the Sephardic Jews in white clothing [75] and through the re-membling of Israel [91–92]).

The Second Scroll also depicts anti-Semitic oppression through the tourists' photographing Israeli Jews. As a child, the nephew learns from his mother that "Jews don't make or permit themselves to be made into images," which is in line with "the second commandment" (19).⁴⁹ Therefore, as the tourists take pictures of the Israeli Jews, they objectify them by literally turning them into physical objects, into photos. They come to Israel not to participate in the culture, but to observe and photograph the Israelis: "They photographed everything, including the 'inmates' of refugee camps, who surprised their visitors by refusing to be treated as exhibits" (80). Not only do the Jews' wishes not to be photographed astound "the travellers"—somehow not realizing that their insensitive actions are subjugating and objectifying—but the tourists completely disregard the refugees' wish to not be imaged. The tourists here are oblivious—an example of another generation that does not recognize the suffering of the survivors. The tourists' dehumanizing treatment continues with their outlandish expectations and prejudices: the travellers "were disappointed . . . when they found that not everyone in Israel wore sidecurls, observed the Blue Sabbaths, prayed thrice daily" (80). As one would at a circus or a performance, the tourists expect the Jews to "perform" their Jewishness, stereotyping

⁴⁹ A reference to Exodus 20:4. However, Dr. Hyman has pointed out that resistance to being photographed is common in many cultures (for instance, First Nations peoples) and is not always a function of one's religion. Indeed, resistance towards being photographed is often a resistance towards being made into an exhibit.

the Israelis. As the tourists condescend the Israelis by putting on “patronizing airs” (80), their touristic gaze others the Israelis, subjugating them to a level akin to that of an animal on display at the zoo. Their expectations of performance and their photographing of refugees strips the Jews of their dignity, subjugates the Jewish Body to a level of inferiority. Klein includes the tourists’ objectification of Israelis not only to illustrate the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism, which exists even after the Holocaust, but also to ironize the objectification going on even within the Jewish community—how “these pilgrims” (80) marginalize other members of the Jewish Body. Klein reveals a new sort of insensitivity towards Jews after WWII—new examples of debasement—to illustrate a broader perspective of Jewish ostracism.

However, *The Second Scroll* “redeems” the Jewish Body by symbolizing Melech as both the Messiah of the Jews and simultaneously the nation of Israel, which in turn affirms God’s Providence.⁵⁰ Milton Steinberg argues that

[t]here is no contradiction or confusion in the fact that Uncle Melech seems to act in a dual symbolic capacity suggesting to the reader both the Jewish people and the Messiah. A traditional Jewish view, set forth by Maimonides, tends to identify Messiah with the people in a purified state, in what might be termed a Messianic condition. The people contain within themselves the Messiah idea. To this extent and in this way is the miracle naturalized.

Though the naturalizing of the miracle through Uncle Melech is a sound literary device and a not unsound Judaic doctrine, the author is not content with a simply secular explanation of the miracle; rather, he makes explicit the intervention of the divine. (xii)

⁵⁰ It should be noted how Klein chooses to explore the mullah in Morocco; his decision to focus on the Sephardic, and not just the Ashkenazi, is an attempt to explore every group of Jews in his novel. Additionally, he uses Morocco because it is a Muslim country, thereby not only including nations with strong ties to the Church or Christian roots (i.e. Italy). Klein does not preference the Sephardic over the Ashkenazi, Muslim nation over “Christian” nation, or vice versa, but instead includes both groups of Jews to reveal a holistic perspective of international Jewry.

Indeed, Melech's death ironically initiates a re-birth of the Jewish Body. As the nephew describes his uncle's funeral, he makes clear this idea of re-birth:

[It] was as if the tribes of Israel had come to life again and were travelling as in olden times, each with its devices and gems: Reuben of the sardius bearing a banner gules, its device mandragora; Simeon of the topaz banner vert, its device the city of Shechem; Levi of the stone smaragd; Judah of the emerald; Issachar of the sapphire, and Zebulun of the diamond; Dan, his banner azure with serpent couchant; Gad of the agate; of the amethyst, Naphtali; Asher of the stone of Tarshish; Joseph of the onyx, and jaspered Benjamin. (92)

As all of "the tribes of Israel" reassemble to remember him, Melech's death re-members Israel into a unified "convocation of mourning" (91). The nephew describes those present at the funeral as "sacerdotal" (92), which, in tandem with describing each tribe in relation to a precious "gem" (symbolic of royalty and valuableness), implies that the "congregation" is related to an august priesthood. By re-membering the Jewish Body through Melech's death, *The Second Scroll* re-affirms the preciousness and sanctity of the Jewish Body and re-avows Providence, in that God orchestrates the "convocation of mourning," but more importantly, there is the re-establishment of the Jews as God's chosen people and a restoration of the Holy Land.

Affirming and Denying Providence via Fire and the Cremation of Sacred Bodies

Both texts' protagonists come to very different conclusions about God's beneficence as they watch the Nazis transform sacred Jewish bodies to ashes and smoke. While smoke becomes symbolic of Eliezer's rejection of God, smoke becomes emblematic of Melech's affirmation of God's Providence. Eliezer states:

Never shall I forget that smoke.

Never shall I forget the small faces of the children whose bodies I saw transformed into smoke under a silent sky.

Never shall I forget those flames that consumed my faith forever.

Never shall I forget the nocturnal silence that deprived me for all eternity of the desire to live.

Never shall I forget those moments that murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to ashes.

Never shall I forget those things, even were I condemned to live as long as God Himself.

Never. (34)

Because God is silent while he watches “small faces [become] . . . transformed into smoke,” Eliezer disavows God’s Providential hand; the atrocities of the concentration camp “murder” his faith, stripping Eliezer of his former faith in a beneficent God. However, despite initially defaming God after leaving Kamenets, Melech eventually comes to understand the smoke as instrumental to the creation of Israel. Initially, the nephew subverts cloud imagery associated with God⁵¹ as a way of illustrating Melech’s rejection of God in Kamenets: “The German invasion of Poland trapped [Melech] in Kamenets, not far from Ratno, where he was enveloped by the great smoke that for the next six years kept billowing over the Jews of Europe—*their cloud by day, their pillar of fire by night*” (26, emphasis added). “[T]he great smoke” of the crematoria, the derivative

⁵¹ The nephew is referencing Exodus 13:21: “And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.”

of desecrated bodies, replaces the presence of God in the cloud, mirroring Melech's profane replacement of God with Bolshevism, his rejection of his faith.⁵²

However, although Melech uses smoke as a symbol of his repudiation of God, he comes to interpret smoke as symbolic of phoenix-like re-birth. He says in the letter to the nephew's parents: "**Out of the furnace there issued smoke, out of the smoke a people descended**" (38). Klein establishes the relationship between the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel, but does not implicate God in the matter. Instead, Melech believes that as God turns His face back to His people after the Holocaust, He begins to restore the Jewish Body back to health, reviving the "dry bones" (111). Furthermore, as Melech surveys the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, he re-appropriates his understanding of Levitical burnt offerings, referring to the crematoria during the Holocaust: "[W]e are offered for a burnt offering upon Noah's altar" (108). Although this could be considered a problematic metaphor—in that a burnt offering was a sacrifice for sin—Klein employs this image to speak of how the Holocaust led to the establishment of the State. Melech sees that "it is not blood that is the tale, but the white leukemia of ash" (108), referencing the cindered by-product from the death-factory fires. He understands the ashes as the derivative of a sacrifice—a sacrifice for the creation of Israel. Although he sees the ashes as utterly catastrophic, he understands that it will ultimately produce a new life for the Jews. Isaiah 61:3 says that God will provide comfort to those "who mourn in Zion—[and will] give them beauty for ashes." Correspondingly, "the white leukemia of ash" ultimately allows for the beauty of Israel—a regrouping of the Jewish Body. So when

⁵² The nephew refers to Bolshevism as irreconcilable with Judaism: "Bolshevism uprooted our religion" (23). He continues: "Bolshevism meant the denial of the Name" (24).

Melech connects the “white leukemia of ash” with the sacrifice “upon Noah’s altar,” he is wrestling with and re-accepting Providence despite the atrocities of the crematoria.

Melech then links the fires of the Holocaust with both the sacrifice of Isaac and God’s consuming fire to re-establish an affirmative view of God despite Nazi evil:

[A] swooned generation opened its eyes once more to see... to see the Author of their Days [in] the form of formlessness, unphrasable, infinite, world-quickenning anima, the shaped wind!—not in any manner image, nor body, nor the similitude of body, but pure pervasive Spirit intelligential, the One (oh, musculature of flame!) the First, the Last (oh, uncontainable fire unconsumed!) Cloud numinous with Creation, Omnipotent, yes, and All-Compassionate, who in the heavens resides and in the heart’s small chambers (beating little heart of Isaac on the faggots...) magnanimous with Law, and who even to the latest of generations fulfils His prophets’ prophesies, rebuking, rewarding, hastening for them who wait him who tarries, merciful-munificent with ascensions, aliyoth, resurrections, authorizing Days... (111-112).

By virtue of Melech’s perception of the ceiling as a text and not as an image, he erases “that which is seen as corporeal” and replaces it “with that which is imagined as spiritual” (Hyman 117), thereby *imagining* God, instead of *imaging* Him. Additionally, his reference to Isaac in the Magnificat passage alludes to the human sacrifice that Abraham is prepared to make—his own son’s body as a burnt offering to God—and simultaneously hints at the concentration camps. Melech then complicates the connection between God and the camps by juxtaposing God’s “uncontainable fire unconsumed” next to his description of God as “All-Compassionate,” suggesting a “re-establishment of divine Providence after the Holocaust. Indeed, the entire passage signifies a turning of both Melech and the people back to God, and a turning of God back to the people” (115). However, Hyman notes that the tension between an omnibenevolent God and the Holocaust “is not a tension satisfactorily resolved, nor, I think even satisfactorily faced”

(116). Yet, whether or not the tension is resolved “satisfactorily,” Melech’s triumphant affirmation of God’s Providence parallels his forthcoming celebration of the establishment of Israel—which, of course, the “Omnipotent” orchestrates. Melech’s inclusion of “ascensions, aliyoth, [and] resurrections” are each significant in regards to his reading of the chapel ceiling. Firstly, through his reading, he “ascends” to a new Jewish consciousness, interpreting both a “resurrected” Body of Holocaust victims and a “resurrected” vision of Providence. Secondly, there is a strong connection between his reading of the ceiling—which can be understood as a reading of *tashmishey kedusha* (i.e. the Torah)—and the immigration of Jews to Israel. Indeed, Melech’s participation in “aliyoth” (his reading of the textualized Sistine Chapel ceiling) leads to a re-discovery of Providence, which in turn results in him undertaking “aliyoth” (moving “up” by going to Israel)—both of which are divinely inspired.

CHAPTER 3

Sacralising and Profaning Tashmishey Kedusha and Bodies of “Text”

Language is like a body, alive, the poet, like God bringing that body to life.

(Roger Hyman, *Aught from Naught*, 20)

This chapter will interrogate how *Night* and *The Second Scroll* illustrate both Nazi dehumanization of Jews and the protagonists’ spiritual journeys via the characters’ interactions with and reading of traditional *tashmishey kedusha*. *Night* profanes sacred texts to illustrate Eliezer’s lost faith in man and God. *The Second Scroll*, however, does not just use sacred texts to reflect Melech’s spirituality, but Klein’s novel actually “textualizes” the Sistine Chapel ceiling and Tel Aviv—rendering them both “sacred texts”—to depict a return to Providence. Indeed, in their exploration of sacred texts, both novels can be understood as *tashmishey kedusha* in and of themselves—*Night* subverting its own sacredness and *The Second Scroll* establishing itself as a sacred extension of the Hebrew Bible.⁵³

Rejecting (and Returning to) *Tashmishey Kedusha*, Rejecting (and Returning to) God

Eliezer’s separation from sacred texts mirrors his renunciation of his faith in a beneficent God. In the beginning of the novel, there are several references to Eliezer’s ferocious appetite for reading, but upon entering Auschwitz he ceases to make mention of

⁵³ Although both texts explore spirituality and dehumanization through *tashmishey kedusha*, there is a stronger emphasis on sacred texts in *The Second Scroll* than there is in *Night*. As a result, this chapter focuses on Klein’s text in greater length than Wiesel’s.

sacred texts.⁵⁴ After the Hungarian police expel the foreign Jews from his hometown, Eliezer comments on the centrality of books to observant Jews: “Days went by. Then weeks and months. Life was normal again. . . . The shopkeepers were doing good business, the students lived among their books, and the children played in the streets” (6). While still in Sighet, he “continued to devote [him]self to [his] studies. Talmud during the day and Kabbalah at night” (8). Even the day before being expelled, Eliezer and his friends are “studying a Talmudic treatise” (12). However, the Nazis’ forced separation of Eliezer from his holy texts marks the beginning of his divergence from God. Upon his arrival in the concentration camps, he pinches himself: “Soon I would wake up with a start, my heart pounding, and find that I was back in the room of my childhood, with my books” (32). His desire to be among his “books” is a vain hope for restored normalcy—to return to the comfort of his childhood faith. Regardless, the atrocities he witnesses in the camps erase any hope of returning to his “books,” his old faith: “I too had become a different person. The student of Talmud, the child I was, had been consumed by the flames. All that was left was a shape that resembled me. My soul had been invaded—and devoured—by a black flame” (37). By connecting himself as being a “student of the Talmud” with being a “child,” Eliezer identifies his faith as juvenile and naïve, equating his rejection of God as a function of his newfound spiritual maturity and revelation. He finishes his original version of *Night—Un di Velt Hot Geshvign (And the World Remained Silent)*, an 865 page Yiddish manuscript—by stating: “Books no longer have the power they once did” (xiii). Indeed, by no longer being blinded by his “books,”

⁵⁴ Eliezer does not reference sacred texts past page 38 of *Night*.

Eliezer's experience in the camps offers him what he perceives to be the truth concerning God's malevolence, thereby stripping sacred texts of their "power."

The Second Scroll uses the characters' interactions with Torah to illustrate Melech's rejection of God, but also uses sacred texts to reflect a restoration of Providence and an affirmation of Life. Just before the nephew's father receives the letter from Melech explaining the news of the pogrom in Ratno, the Montreal Jews are in synagogue celebrating:

The cantor kept trilling forth pertinent versicles, answered by the congregation in antiphon. A year of reading of the Law had been concluded, a year was beginning anew, the last verses of Deuteronomy joined the first of Genesis, the eternal circle continued. Circular, too, was the dance, a scriptural gaiety, with wine rejoicing the heart, and Torah exalting it to heights that strong wine could not reach. (20)

The phrase "eternal circle" suggests that the Scripture reading would be unbreakable and never-ending. Yet, as WWII starts the "circle" becomes "cracked"—as evidenced by Melech's temporary breach of faith. When he receives the letter about the pogrom, the nephew's father withdraws "to a more secluded spot in the synagogue" (21), removing himself from the ongoing antiphony—moving from "spiritual gaiety" to utter despair—a movement which foreshadows Melech's separation from his fellow Jews and God. However, as Melech returns to God, the nephew reflects both his and his uncle's restored faith upon observing a young boy and a Talmud scholar studying the Law: "They affirmed it for me, the young boy prodigy and the old man who looked like Elijah: Israel had not only returned back into Time; it *still* belonged to Eternity" (88, emphasis added). By employing the word "*still*" when describing how Israel "belonged to Eternity," the nephew affirms God's continued omnipotence and the protection of His people despite

the Holocaust. Moreover, that he affirms Providence by watching the young boy and old man read *Torah* signals the significance of the Hebrew Bible in observant Jews' lives—especially in light of his admission that “the study of Torah . . . is Life” (88), thereby establishing Torah itself as “Life”-giving.

Em(body)ing Text: Affirming Providence Through the Reading of the Sistine Chapel as Sacred Text in *The Second Scroll*⁵⁵

Not only do the characters' interactions with sacred texts reflect Melech's restored view of humanity and Providence, but also the transformation and sacralisation of the human form—from body as “object” to body as “*tashmishey kedusha*”—depict a return to God. According to the Talmudic thought there is a “correspondence between the 613 commandments (which orthodox Jews are ideally supposed to follow) and the number of bones in the human body” (Hyman 106–107). In that the body's skeletal structure directly ties Jews to God's Law, this correspondence supports the idea that the human body is sacred, which is compounded by the belief that God created man “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:26). Thus, *The Second Scroll* “textualizes” the sacrosanct human form (describing the bodies in the Sistine Chapel as “writ” [109], as opposed to a group of paintings) and uses Melech's interpretation of sacred bodies to communicate an overcoming of Nazi objectification and a celebratory return to God.

⁵⁵ It is not within the scope of this thesis nor is it my goal to attempt to analyze how Klein reconciles God's silence during the Holocaust with God's omnibenevolence. As a result, this thesis will not attempt to offer a theodicy.

Just as Michelangelo receives divine guidance while painting the ceiling, Melech receives heavenly inspiration as he reads the painted bodies, signaling God's providential omnipotence. When he first enters the Sistine Chapel, Melech describes "[t]he white statuary of that ghostly gauntlet," which he "recall[s] as but a series of pale shadows, a spectral escort" (103). By describing the "gauntlet" as "ghostly" and speaking of the "series of pale shadows" as "a spectral escort," Melech alludes to the spirits of victims of the Holocaust who accompany him on his visit to the Chapel, helping him interpret the ceiling and leading him to a new Jewish consciousness, "rather than a Christian consciousness" (Hyman 109). Comparably, as he receives "a spectral escort," Melech explains that "the spirit of prophecy . . . veiled the painter's memory and took hold of his brush and changed a chapter of genesis into the vision apocalyptic" (109). Melech perceives Michelangelo's fresco to be a re-appropriation of Jewish history, where the text of the ceiling simultaneously speaks of the Holocaust and the creation of Israel:

It may well be that Michelangelo had other paradigms in mind: there is much talk of zimzum and retractations; but such is the nature of art that though the artist entertain fixedly but one intention and one meaning, that creation once accomplished beneath his hand, now no longer merely his own attribute, but Inspiration's very substance and entity, proliferates with significances by him not conceived nor imagined. Such art is eternal and to every generation speaks with fresh coeval timeliness. In vain did Buonarotti seek to confine himself to the hermeneutics of his age; the Spirit intruded and lo! on that ceiling appeared the narrative of things to come, which came indeed, and behold above me the parable of my days. (106)

Here, Melech is referencing Isaac Luria's concept of "tzimtzum." Luria posits that when God created the world He contracted His infinite light, which provided finite realms (i.e. Earth) a space to exist (Scholem 75). Melech then connects this concept of "zimzum and retractations" to Michelangelo's "creation": as God removed Himself and allowed for the

void to affect His created vessels, so too did Michelangelo remove himself from his painting and allow God to work through him, removing all “authorial intent” from the painter and denoting God (“Inspiration,” “the Spirit”) as the One who “proliferates” the art. Indeed, ethereal forces guide both Michelangelo and Melech as they interact with the text of the ceiling, linking the former’s work and the latter’s interpretation as a part and affirmation of God’s providential plan.

By textualizing the human form, Melech does not just elevate man from the status of object to dignified human, but he raises man to a divine level:

This—these men writ big—this is the flesh majuscule: there are also the charming minor ones, the lesser clan springing from the heels of giants—a stance of caryatids, a conjugation of cherubim. But the idiom of the twins and doubles . . . though not of a lordly utterance, still speaks its tribute to the divine quickness of mortal flesh. . . . They embrace, ambivalent *bambini*, and their contacts and touchings are copy, an ingratiating and pathetic imitation, of that first famous finger-touch. The ceiling sounds with their diphthongs. (105)

His reading of “the charming minor ones,” the lowercase babies (“*bambini*”) who stand next to the uppercase (“majuscule”) “men writ big,” is an affirmation of every human being’s worth regardless of age or size, esteeming *all* human life to have intrinsic value—even “the lesser clan[s].” By perceiving “the charming minor ones” as “a conjugation of cherubim,” he transforms their bodies into angelic forms, further elevating human dignity through his reading. Moreover, by describing the ceiling as “a tremendous paean to the human form divine, a great psalter psalmodizing the beauty and vigour and worth of the races of mankind” (105), Melech again textualizes (“psalmodiz[es]”) and celebrates the holiness of man’s body; he re-humanizes man who during the war was dehumanized and humiliated. By speaking of the “*bambini* . . . [imitating] that first famous finger-touch,”

Melech is alluding to the moment God imparted life into Adam or more specifically Adam Kadmon—the “primal man” who was in perfect relationship with God and “the essential emanation of God at the moment of Creation” (Hyman 103). By comparing the “*bambini*” to Adam Kadmon, Melech further ennobles every human body and re-imagines himself and the other victims of WWII as reconciled to God. As he understands the ceiling as a “parable” in which he “must encounter [his] semblable and like” (105), he reads himself into the text of the ceiling—perceiving himself in the “majuscule” and miniscule, the objectified bodies and the now-dignified bodies, those dead and those alive. Thus, Melech becomes representative of all the bodies on the ceiling, and as a result, the entire Jewish Body, which renders him an everyman of sorts. His reading of the ceiling starts with a deconstruction of the human body, as outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis, but he reforms his interpretation to affirm “the divinity of humanity” (51). Melech continues to acclaim man’s likeness to God:

For four long years suffering the ordeal of the scaffold Michael Angelo [sic]—say rather the Archangel Michael—inscribed this testament, his pinion for a brush; and one sole word it was that stood him for lexicon, one word from the changes and declensions of which he phrased the Law and the Prophets: *The Flesh*. (Twelve score and eight the limbs, parts, and members of the body, and eighteen score and five its organs and sinews – the sum all-embracing of commands and forbiddings, the six hundred and thirteen, *curriculum taryag!*) In that altitude one temperature prevails—the temperature of the human body. One colour dominates this ceiling—the colour of the living skin; and behind the coagulation of the paint flows the one universal stream of everybody’s blood. (105)

His description of Michelangelo as “the Archangel Michael” is an aggrandizement of the painter’s ontological status in that Psalm 8:5 says God created man “a littler lower” than

the angels. In that angels carry direct messages from God,⁵⁶ Melech's elevation of Michelangelo to the status of "Archangel" in turn furthers the idea that the ceiling is a sacred text containing the words of God. His statement that "*The Flesh*" is the "one word from the changes and declension of which he phrased the Law and the Prophets" implies that bodies and words are coterminous, further rendering the human form's sanctity comparable to the holiness of sacred texts. Indeed, as stated earlier, there is a connection between the bones in the human body and the 613 laws in the Hebrew Bible (Hyman 106–107). And Melech refers to this connection when he speaks of the human form ("the limbs, parts, and members of the body") and the sum of the positive and negative biblical commandments ("the six hundred and thirteen, *curriculum taryag!*") in tandem, which Dr. Hyman has suggested to me establishes the body as a literal embodiment of the Divine. He goes on to explain that when Michelangelo—whom he describes as both a "poet" (106, 108) and "the prophet" (107)—painted the ceiling, he "dared not transliterate it . . . [and] dared not point the burden of his charge. But [Melech] read it plain and spell it out—summation and grand indictment—the unspeakable nefas—decide" (110). Thus, Melech deifies man—especially in light of his admission that man holds "eternity" in his seed (109). With such a reading of the Sistine Chapel ceiling, Melech begins to re-read the intrinsic worth of the human form, resisting Nazi dehumanization by interpreting bodies as sacred texts containing the likeness of God in the same way that sacred Scriptures contain the name of God.

⁵⁶ "The primary Hebrew term for angel is *mal'āk*; the corresponding Greek word is *angelos*; in each case, the basic meaning is messenger" (Erickson 155).

By re-appropriating God's covenant of the rainbow and applying it to the Holocaust, Melech reads the Chapel ceiling and perceives God's ability to restore His people, thereby affirming His protection and omnibenevolence after the war. Melech explains that deicide

is the evil possible only in its attempt, not in its perpetration. A covenant stands between man and his destruction, the covenant of sea and sky: the bow in the cloud. Not otherwise than by this, God's seal, were the people spared. Though bloody coursed the red and orange fevered bright, though the pus yellow yeasted, the gangrene green and the smitings waxed bruise-blue contused to indigo and the virulent violet, violet waned, the indigo fled, the veins throbbled azure, and green was the world once more and golden, high sanguinary, and the body ruddy with health. The remnant would be whole again. . . All colours melled to hope; the spectrum fused to white. (110–11)

His words are a re-appropriation of the covenant between God and the earth in Genesis 9. Melech's reference to "the bow in the cloud" alludes to when God states: "I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. . . . And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Genesis 9:13–15). However, Melech's reference to the "covenant" does not deal with another flood of water, but instead a flood of blood: "The people endured [and] floated out of the flood" (111). He uses the seven colours of the rainbow to depict the victims' journeys into the camps and their exodus out. Melech first refers to the colours to describe physical injuries ("the smitings waxed bruise-blue contused to indigo"), festering wounds ("the pus yellow yeasted") and potentially lethal infections ("the gangrene green" and "the virulent violet")—ailments that become progressively severe—but then exchanges the negative adjectives for positive descriptors as a means of returning to an affirmative view of Providence. Hyman notes that through Melech's reading of the rainbow, Klein is

symbolically restoring “Adam Kadmon to health,” which links the first Adam’s re-vitalization “to the restoration of Israel as people; indeed, the passage [also] restores the shattered light of Creation. . .” (114). As “the spectrum fused to white,” Melech connotes a sense of purity (“white”) and repair (“fused”), which reflects a return to God. In the same way that God removed the clouds from the sky after the flood and offered a rainbow—a symbol of hope—Melech sees the “rainbow,” which “melled to hope,” as a divine promise for an optimistic future. By alluding to the “flood,” Melech connects the story of Noah to the Holocaust as a means of illustrating the resilience of God’s Chosen People who are protected by Providence.

Melech reads a message of re-birth on the ceiling and interprets various scenes as prophetic of God’s re-remembering of the Jewish Body, as well as his reborn faith. His reference to Jonah’s prayer (Jonah 2:5–9) signals the re-formation of the Jewish Body that is to come (112–13). When Melech writes the letter in 1949 (29) the tribes of Israel are not yet re-congregated in the Holy Land—the Jewish Body is yet to be re-birthed. Comparably, when Jonah prays to God, he is still inside the whale and is yet to be spat out—or yet to be “re-birthed” back onto dry land. Furthering this anticipation of re-formation, his statement that “dry bones stirred” (111) is a reference to Ezekiel 37, where God commands Ezekiel to prophesy over dry bones to generate life (after Ezekiel prophesies, “breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army” [Ezekiel 37:10]). By remembering the victims, Melech re-appropriates Ezekiel’s prophecy to fit his Zionist vision of the reconstruction of the Jewish Body, for as “as Linda Rozmovits has pointed out, [he is] ‘re-remembering’ his people, reconstructing

Israel” (Hyman 111). His interpretation of the ceiling is an affirmation of Providence, wherein Melech begins to trust His promise for a future. Melech reflects his hope in God’s promise when he transforms the ram’s skulls—“Catholic iconography” (117)—into shofars “sounding liberation” (113). Because Melech ignores all of the frescos depicting scenes from the Christian Testament on the Sistine Chapel ceiling—the pinnacle of Christian art—he powerfully rejects a long history of clerical anti-Semitism. Thus, his triumphant departure from the chapel signals not only his rejection of the Monsignor’s attempt to convert him to Christianity, but Melech’s resilience (and by extension the resilience of the Jewish people) despite the various forms of the longest hatred. By reading the text of the bodies on the ceiling, he restores his faith in Providence even in the face of God’s absence during the Holocaust.

Sacralising the Mundane: The Search for Melech and Everyday Poetry⁵⁷

The nephew sacralises both the mundane and profane as he discovers “everyday poetry”—the art of everyday life—which in turn gestures toward God revealing Himself again after the Holocaust. His search for everyday poetry, as Hyman posits, is a “search for that which will signify the creative process of redemption from exile in the promised land” (129). The nephew “reads” Tel Aviv, discovering that the poetry he is searching for is all around him: “In the streets, in the shops, everywhere about me. I had looked, but had not seen. It was all there all the time—the fashioning folk, anonymous and unobserved, creating word by word, phrase by phrase, the total work that when completed

⁵⁷ This section is based on Jacob Keszei’s seminar presentation entitled “Presentation on A. M. Klein’s *The Second Scroll: A Second Serving*.”

would stand as epic revealed!” (84) He textualizes “the streets” and “the shops” as a means of turning Tel Aviv into a sacred poem, which in turn he transcribes to create an “epic”: *The Second Scroll* itself.⁵⁸ He describes the average citizens of Tel Aviv:

They were not members of literary societies, the men who were giving new life to the antique speech, but merchants, tradesmen, day labourers. In [the average citizen’s] daily activity, and without pose or flourish, they showed it to be alive again, the shaping Hebrew imagination. (84)

The nephew celebrates the Israelis’ creative re-appropriation of “the antique speech,” perceiving them to be “authors” of everyday poetry—or of everyday life—who sacralise the commonplace and the profane. As the Hebrew language has survived for centuries, so too have the Jewish people; thus, the permeation of Hebrew in the text of the everyday signals not only Jewish perseverance and resilience, but also God’s return to His people. The name of the insurance company “*Sneh*”—named “after Moses’ burning bush, which had burned and burned but had not been consumed” (84)—is seen as an allusion to Jewish history and an infusion of the Divine into the mundane. The nephew perceives the name “*Sneh*” as a reminder of the survival of Jews during and after the Holocaust; just as God kept the bush from being wholly burned up, so too did He protect the Jews in the camps from being completely consumed. “And this discovered poetry,” says the nephew, “scattered though it was, had its one obsessive theme. It was obsessed by the miraculous” (85). Not only does he establish the “miraculous” or divine inspiration of the everyday, but by referring to the poetry as “scattered,” he is pointing out how Tel Aviv “speaks” of international Jewry that was once scattered in the Diaspora, but is now congregated in

⁵⁸ Indeed, by using poetic diction throughout the novel, *The Second Scroll* further renders itself sacred by virtue of its beauty.

Israel. The old sage that the nephew meets in the synagogue in Israel speaks to this idea of the Jewish Body coming together:

It is written also that with the coming of the Messiah there would take place the wonder of *gilgul m'choloth*. A true resurrection! The cadavers and corpses of Jewry deceased in the Diaspora would roll and strive and roll through subterranean passages, through catacomb and grave, directed all to rise at last and stand erect on the heights of Carmel, on the hillocks of the Negev, on the mountains of Galilee. This, too, we have seen. Blessed are my eyes that have seen them, the risen from the dungeons, the pursued through the undergrounds of Europe who have taken up their stand here in Israel... We live in Messiah's days. Do you not see them, these signs, as well as I, an old man, do? (89)

The sage speaks of the re-membering of Jews in the Diaspora as they sojourn from many nations to re-form the Jewish Body. Indeed, the Holocaust survivors' immigration to Israel renders the sage's comment about the dead ("cadavers and corpses") rising "from the dungeons" and "through the undergrounds of Europe" true—especially in light of how Melech rises from the pit in Kamenets, where he figuratively fulfills the prophecy of the "dead" rising.⁵⁹ Connecting the nephew's search for everyday poetry with the nephew's search for Melech (a Messianic figure), Hyman sums up the textualization of the everyday:

It is not surprising, then, that the artistic quest is resolved when the narrator realizes that the art of the everyday, of the people, is, in Israel, the true art. The nephew cannot find the poet, but he finds the poetry. The 'completely underivative poet' for whom he vainly searches is the country itself. That poetry, like Melech's spirit in the new land, is everywhere, in the street signs, the names of companies, the names of products. (131)

The nephew's search for the everyday poetry is a microcosmic quest for the creative, wherein his discovery of the creative—or more accurately the Creative (i.e. God)—

⁵⁹ Furthermore, by including the victims of the Holocaust in his poetry (in "Elegy" [98–102]), Melech does not just remember the millions of Jews who died in the Holocaust, but he re-members them by giving them a "place" to live on: his poetry.

signals a re-discovery of Providence: “Creativity is a becoming, a process, like the divine process of creating meaningful history; art, also like history, is the consequence of the intersection between two creative powers—God and the people” (130). As the nephew reads Tel Aviv, he affirms the Biblical vision of God returning to the Holy Land and to His people (Zechariah 8:3); the nephew’s discovery of the Creative can thus be understood as a re-established divine order (*tikkun olam*), wherein Israel becomes a sacred text that speaks of both Melech’s re-discovered divinity after the Holocaust and his uncle’s restored relationship with God.

“New” Testaments: Klein and Wiesel’s Re-appropriations of *Tashmishey Kedusha*

Through their exploration of the sacred and their characters’ interaction with the Divine, *Night* and *The Second Scroll* can be understood as *tashmishey kedusha* in and of themselves. Just as Klein’s work can be seen as a sacred addition to the Hebrew Bible, Wiesel’s text can be understood as a replacement of holy texts and a repudiation of God’s goodness.

Night can be perceived as a “sacred text” that subverts its own sacredness—defaming God and elevating man to a position of power. Eliezer’s spiritual “epiphanies” about God throughout the novel defame Him and reveal Eliezer’s belief in God’s malevolence. As a result, Eliezer rejects God’s power and elevates man to a position of authority: “And I, the former mystic, was thinking: Yes, man is stronger, greater than God” (67). He does not just talk *about* God, but he speaks directly *to* God, receiving no response from the Divine. And there is of course no reverence in his one-sided “prayer”:

When Adam and Eve deceived You, You chased them from paradise. When You were displeased by Noah's generation, You brought down the Flood. When Sodom lost Your favor, You caused the heavens to rain down fire and damnation. But look at these men whom You have betrayed, allowing them to be tortured, slaughtered, gassed, and burned, what do they do? They pray before You! They praise Your name! (67-68)

Eliezer's "prayer" condemns God for not saving His people despite their belief in Him.

His continued denunciations further establishing him above God:

I no longer pleaded for anything. I was no longer able to lament. On the contrary, I felt very strong. I was the accuser, God the accused. My eyes had opened and I was alone, terribly alone in a world without God, without man. Without love or mercy. I was nothing but ashes now, but I felt myself to be stronger than this Almighty to whom my life had been bound for so long. In the midst of these men assembled for prayer, I felt like an observer, a stranger. (68)

Eliezer's failure "to lament" is not an inability to express pain, but is rather an inability to find comfort from God *while* expressing pain. Elucidating the concept of lamentation, which she believes to be a form of prayer,⁶⁰ Soelle notes that "[t]he first stage towards overcoming suffering is, then, to find a language that leads out of the uncomprehended suffering that makes one mute, a language of lament, of crying, of pain, a language that at least says what the situation is" (70). Indeed, Eliezer finds a new "language" to express his suffering, albeit it removes any notion of a good God from his vocabulary. The inversion of his and God's roles mirrors the inversion of his faith, changing from a student of the Talmud judged by God into a judge who condemns God. During the Holocaust, Eliezer's world becomes inverted—his faith in man and God becomes

⁶⁰ Phil Zylla, author of *The Roots of Sorrow*, furthers the idea that lamentation is form of prayer when he says, "The lamentation has an implicit faith dimension. The very stating of one's situation is a desperate cry to be heard by God" (77). When Eliezer states that he is "no longer able to lament," Eliezer is saying that he no longer desires God to help him. However, he does desire "to be heard by God," not to find solace in knowing that God hears his cry and understands his situation, but so that he can tell God what he thinks of Him.

shattered by what he witnesses—and he reflects this upside-down world by inverting the sanctity of his text. Wiesel’s profanation of his text is blasphemous—a way of repaying God for His inaction during the war. In “Why I Write,” Wiesel states, “I never intended to be a philosopher, or a theologian. The only role I sought was that of witness” (907). Indeed, *Night* is a witnessing of a removed God and a *removal* of people, which in turn defames the Divine.

The Second Scroll, on the other hand, becomes a sacred text, in that it becomes an extension of the Hebrew Bible, supplementing and adding to the Scriptures. Melech re-embraces his Judaism, abandoning the Marxist jargon and “revert[s] to the epistolary style of his Talmudic days,” addressing the nephew’s “mother as ‘virtuous woman prized above rubies,’ and [his] father as ‘the keen blade of jurisprudence, familiar of the Law, mighty hammer of Torah’” (29). In both form and content, Melech’s letter gestures towards his return to Judaism, which in turn sacralises the epistle that will eventually become “canonized” in *The Second Scroll*. At the end of his letter, he expresses his desire to go to Israel, writing “in language Biblic” (37), in “a Mishna” discourse (37), in a “Talmudic commentary” locution (37), and in “Cabbala” phraseology (38)—further illustrating a return to God through his re-adoption of religious styles of writing. Moreover, by describing Melech’s second letter as “my uncle’s epistle to the Romans” (44), he re-appropriates the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans, elevating the letter to a level of God-inspired sacredness, albeit he changes his missive to fit the Jewish vision. Indeed, this epistle—and the entire novel—is a replacement of not only Paul’s letter to the Romans, but the entire Christian Testament. Indeed, Michael Greenstein correctly

perceives “*The Second Scroll* as an *apologia* which, in its support of the Old Testament rejects the other Second Scroll, the New Testament” (qtd. in Hyman 117). *The Second Scroll*’s re-appropriation of Paul’s epistle and its Jewish apologetic discourse subvert the Christian Testament, attempting to reject both the validity of the Christian faith and the Church’s long history of Jewish oppression. Thus, *The Second Scroll* seeks to affirm both God’s Providence and Life itself. In doing so, the novel rejects the Christian tradition and affirms the validity of the Hebrew Bible despite the atrocities of the camps.

In establishing themselves as “sacred texts,” both *Night* and *The Second Scroll* explore the authority that words have to bring forth life or bring forth death. Proverbs 18:21 states: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue; and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.” Both novels endorse this concept; however, each text interacts with such proverbial insight differently. *The Second Scroll* establishes the creative and restorative power of language, as evidenced by the speaker’s words in Melech’s “Stance of the Amidah”: “Who with the single word hast made the world, hanging before us the heavens like an unrolled scroll, and the earth old manuscript, and the murmurous sea, each, all-allusive to Thy glory” (139). The speaker not only posits that God created the world with a “single word,” but he also textualizes the heavens, comparing them to the likeness of “an unrolled scroll.” Comparably, Melech textualizes the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and in doing so, comes to understand the human form as “all-allusive to Thy glory.” In reading textualized bodies on the ceiling and interpreting the everyday poetry, *The Second Scroll* affirms Language, Providence, Torah and Life simultaneously, which seemingly all fuse into One. Conversely, Wiesel’s rejection of sacred texts reflects his

rejection of God; however, in penning *Night*, he comes to terms with not only God, but also man—killing an-all good God with his words and preserving the lives of the victims by including them in his text. Thus, as *The Second Scroll* establishes itself as a sacred text in its life-giving praise of God and of man's divinity, *Night* becomes a profane text in its rejection of a beneficent God.

CONCLUSION

“[L]iving in responsibility”⁶¹: Final Thoughts and Exhortation

If people cannot speak about their affliction they will be destroyed by it, or swallowed up by apathy. It is not important where they find the language or what form it takes. But people’s lives actually depend on being able to put their situation into words, or rather, learning to express themselves which includes the nonverbal possibilities of expression. Without the capacity to communicate with others there can be no change. To become speechless, to be totally without any relationship, that is death.

(Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, 76)

Soelle exhorts her readers to fight against apathy and mutism—both of which she believes compound human anguish and are the banes of sufferers’ suffering. As “the capacity to communicate with others” is the ability to emerge from the suffocating waters of pain and strife, Soelle believes that to remain “speechless, to be totally without any relationship,” is to drown helplessly in one’s pain. Both Klein and Wiesel share such a view and as a result give voices to those who can no longer speak, retrieving the victims of the Holocaust from oblivion. *Night* and *The Second Scroll* explore the past to bring the victims into the present. By remembering the victims, both novels attempt to re-establish the humanity of those who were dehumanized during the war. Indeed, by restoring the face of the victims, Wiesel and Klein not only give new life to those who had their lives stolen from them, but also attempt to bring the victims into “relationship” with the reader.

Night and *The Second Scroll* strongly differ in their treatment of sacred and profane objects and bodies, calling attention to two very disparate views of Providence.

⁶¹ D. G. Myers, “Responsible for Every Single Pain,” 8.

While *Night* presents God as inimical, *The Second Scroll* ultimately renders a positive view of the post-Holocaust Divine. Indeed, *The Second Scroll* celebrates Providence in the face of death—specifically Melech’s demise in Tel Aviv—which seemingly paves the way for a re-membered Jewish Body, where there is a paradoxical “springing” forth of life after death (in that “Tel Aviv” means “Hill of Spring”). As a result of Melech’s martyrdom, *The Second Scroll*

ends with the recital by the nephew of the *kaddish*, the mourner’s prayer which, significantly enough, does not mention death once. It is not a lament, but on the contrary, a Magnificat, an exulting of God and an acceptance of His Ways [and an asservation of life]. (Steinberg xv)

Wiesel finds no reason to celebrate God’s goodness and praises Him not. *Night* resonates with the words of a Hungarian survivor of the camps, Eugene Heimler who said, “[I]f men could be herded like beasts toward annihilation, then all that I had believed in before must have been a lie. There was not, there could not be a God, for he could not condone such godlessness” (qtd. in Friedrich 60). However, as Friedrich points out,

[S]uch declarations have been made at every moment of extreme crisis by those who see God only in success and happiness. Since all efforts to prove or explain God’s purposes demonstrate only the futile diligence of worker ants attempting to prove the existence of Mozart, Auschwitz can just as well prove a merciful God, an indifferent God, or, perhaps, best, an unknowable God. William Styron, in *Sophie’s Choice*, suggested the answer as a riddle: “At Auschwitz, tell me, where was God?” The answer is only another question: “Where was man?” (60)

Such a probing question finds no satisfactory answer and both *Night* and *The Second Scroll* do not attempt to justify man’s inaction in any way. Instead, through the de-sanctification of the sacred and of the ceremonial, both texts discuss Nazi dehumanization and attempt to redeem the victims by remembering and re-membering

them. Both texts' exploration of Nazi de-personification are attempts to save Holocaust victims from being forgotten. In his preface to the new translation of *Night*, Wiesel states:

For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead *and* for the living. He has no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory. To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time. (viii)

Wiesel argues that to forget is a double killing of the victims, as well as an erasure of the Nazis' culpability and an expurgation of the reality of their crimes. Both *Night* and *The Second Scroll* fight to preserve the memory of the victims.

The ways in which both authors conclude their texts are the best indicators of how the protagonists see others, themselves, and God. Although Klein has a broad vision for the future and Wiesel focuses solely on the Holocaust, the endings of both texts have a striking commonality: the preservation of the victims' personalities. *Night* employs the image of the mirror to illustrate Eliezer facing his past in the Holocaust. When he is released from the camps, Eliezer de-personifies himself by describing himself as "a corpse" in the mirror: "The look in his eyes as he gazed at me has never left me" (115). His inability to identify with the reflection of the corpse's face—the site of his own personhood—is a disassociation from his self. As the corpse is "contemplating" him (115), he is "reflecting" on the corpse, literalizing the "reflection" of his spiritual demise; his description of his body as "a corpse" "mirrors" the "black flame" that devoured his soul (37). The mirror also functions as a depiction of how Eliezer faces his future after the war. He must find a new way forward by "reassembling" his divided self and reconciling his past with his future. With no one to turn to and no God left to face, he ends his novel with a self-examination, which seems to suggest an individualistic future. However, by

“de-facing” himself, the “corpse” becomes representative of every corpse from the Holocaust, thereby inviting those who lost their faces—their individuality and their sanctity—to be reintroduced to a collective memory.

Klein’s text also attempts to humanize the defaced, but in sharp contrast to Wiesel’s rejection of God, *The Second Scroll* concludes with a celebration of God and Zionism.⁶² Although the nephew was “within the degree of mourning” at the end of “Deuteronomy” (92), he concludes by noting how “the beacons [announce] new moons, festivals, and set times” (93), signaling a new light, a new hope for the future. Despite the death of his uncle, he finds hope for a future. Furthermore, the last poem by Melech in “Gloss Hai,” “And in that Drowning Instant,” furthers this sense of hope: “. . . [N]ow the backward march / of many / I among them / to / Jerusalem-gate and Temple-door! / *For the third time my body rises / And finds the good, the lasting shore!*” (141). This “backward march” is an imaginative return to Zion (“Jerusalem-gate and Temple-door!”). By referring to himself as one of “them” on “*the good, the lasting shore*”—in tandem with his inclusion of Psalm 30—affirms a positive end to Melech’s life, while upholding a creatively restored homeland, a creatively restored sense of Providence and a broad optimistic vision for the future. Indeed, both Klein and Wiesel end their novels by reintroducing the victims of the Holocaust into the “human nexus” (Myers 14), offering them a place to live on and inviting us as readers to live in responsibility by also cultivating a space for the victims to dwell: our memories.

⁶² Dr. Bruce has brought to my attention that Klein was very much disappointed with Sabra arrogance against the history of the Diaspora. However, *The Second Scroll* does not offer much of a critique of Zionists or their ignorance.

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