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### *Women making art: history, subjectivity, aesthetics (Chapter one)*

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## Chapter 1

### Exiled Histories: Holocaust and *Heimat*

In addition to the 'intervals of silence' that I made visually palpable, there are the omissions of time - both narrative time and chronological time - that I recorded in my interviews. ...The significance of these narratives thus lies in the very fact of disruption. What remains unsaid cannot simply be pieced together, or adroitly bridged. [Deborah Lefkowitz on her film *Intervals of Silence: Being Jewish in Germany* (1990)]<sup>1</sup>

Buchenwald

shaven dome of a skull

the cerebral execution machine camouflaged inside a height scale

neck bone oracle

no birds upon the hill, no sound

the dead are joined in fear

forming a leaden skin belljar suspended over Weimar

even trees refuse to grow here

the energy absorbed from inside the earth

weighing down with stones the camp's perimeter

[Rebecca Horn, from her work *Concert for Buchenwald* (1999)]<sup>2</sup>

What address can be made to the Holocaust which does not contend with absence, exile and loss? Holocaust survivors live in an exilic condition, past and present permanently inscribed by an inexorable abyss. Those of us who come after the Holocaust live in a history scarred by the extreme evidence of inhumanity. Both Deborah Lefkowitz's film *Intervals of Silence: Being Jewish in Germany* (1990), and Rebecca Horn's Weimar installation, *Concert for Buchenwald* (1999), worked within the conditions of exile and loss, engendering history against the grain of a forgetfulness seeking to 'unlearn' the terrible lessons of the past. *Intervals of Silence* did not shrink from evoking the traumatic void expressed by silence and temporal discontinuity and *Concert for Buchenwald* intoned an ashen, voiceless performance. But if these works acknowledged the

magnitude of the exilic chasm which was and is the Holocaust, they never implied that such devastation stands beyond history, a *tremendum* which leaves us mute and helpless. Arguing against the possibility of recovering what Jurgen Habermas termed a 'conventional' history or identity,<sup>3</sup> *Intervals of Silence* and *Concert for Buchenwald* offered the potential to reconstitute history and identity by other means. The work of this art enacts what Geoffrey Hartman called 'a counterforce to manufactured and monolithic memory',<sup>4</sup> materialised by an attention to location, corporeal specificity and coextensive difference.

Exile is constitutive of the Holocaust; the Third Reich created exiles throughout the world as political dissidents, homosexuals, left-wing artists and intellectuals joined Jews, gypsies and other 'undesirables' in a mass exodus from Germany and its occupied territories. The millions murdered in the death camps, and the smaller number who survived, created a generation torn by exilic trauma, pain and longing, and for those who stayed, yet remained in opposition to the Nazis, the period has commonly come to be figured as one of 'inner exile', a painful loss of community, agency and subject-hood. Yet exile cannot be conceived as a blanket term. Thinking exile refutes fixed, abstract theories and universal subjects - exile demands specificity. As Hamid Naficy put it, exile is not a 'generalized condition... Exile discourse thrives on detail, specificity and locality. There is a there *there* in exile.'<sup>5</sup>

Refusing to universalise exile finds it parallel in the rejection of monolithic historical narrative in the post-War period. Simply, an unwavering faith in progress and the coherence of history could not withstand the Holocaust. As Ronnie S. Landau put it: 'The Holocaust shattered Western liberal dreams of reason and culture as forces which necessarily humanise us and which promote genuine tolerance of difference.'<sup>6</sup> Landau's emphasis upon tolerance and the recognition of difference does not stand alone. Indeed, it is the dialogue with difference which many historians and cultural theorists argue is the most crucial element missing from monologic histories of the Holocaust and their purposeful 'forgetfulness'.<sup>7</sup>

Forgetful accounts polarise the Holocaust as *either* beyond history *or* as an easily contained, indeed inevitable, result of reasonable historical processes. This is too limiting a paradigm; it is a

paradigm born of conventional historical dualism which views the diverse, individual experiences of the Holocaust, and its universal significance, as mutually exclusive rather than complementary. In resisting forgetfulness, it is imperative to resist reductive binary thinking as well and to address the Holocaust as simultaneously universal and specific, both a breach of historical certitude, yet utterly within our histories. The work of memory, history and art in the wake of this cataclysmic rupture falls precisely at this point, enabling the connections between the general and the particular, contradictory motives and actions, to emerge through negotiations with difference.

*Intervals of Silence* and *Concert for Buchenwald* each support the dynamic interaction between incommensurable differences as a way of making histories anew. In Lefkowitz's film, the dynamic emerges in the interplay of silence and testimony, suggesting that coming into voice in post-Holocaust Germany is a function of both presence and absence at once. In Horn's installation, the tension between German high culture and the technical barbarity which was the Final Solution demonstrated their simultaneity as well as their irreducibility. Both works made distinctions between the universal and the specific seem artificial; close attention to particular materials, contexts and ideas was the mechanism by which the vast historical chasm which marks the Holocaust came into view.

*Intervals of Silence* takes no singular point of view on the problems of history, knowledge and community in post-Holocaust Germany, yet the voiceless intervals which speak so eloquently within these personal stories mirror the exilic chasm created by the Holocaust and the destruction of the very possibility of unified historical narrative. The film's premises are straightforward: Lefkowitz juxtaposed (in narrative voice-over) her experiences as an American Jewish woman getting to know her German (non-Jewish) husband's family and home town in Westphalia, with the varied voices of the residents of the town discussing their own histories, the significance of history in the present and their understanding, as Jews and non-Jews, of being Jewish in Germany. While the voices might be addressing similar themes, they do not correspond in tone, intent or position. The visuals, consisting of both 'straight' footage of the town and heavily worked replays of this footage (negatives, slowed motion, overlays, fragments) no more readily reveal a coherent historical narrative. As Hartman wrote of testimony, '[e]very story or testimony... is and is not like

every other.’<sup>8</sup> These intervals of silence are like and not like every silence which attends the reconstitution of European history after the Holocaust.

Horn’s installation, *Concert for Buchenwald*, was in two parts, located such that they inscribed an arc over the city of Weimar, home of Goethe and cultural capital of the German Enlightenment. The significance of Weimar was critical to the meaning of Horn’s double installation which sited a ghost-like concert in the vacant White Salon of Schloss Ettersburg against a desolate dirge in an abandoned factory depot in the city below. The transportation to the death camp, barely beyond Weimar’s city limits, was repeatedly reimagined in the depot by a mechanised skip truck from Buchenwald running ceaselessly between a brick wall and a heaped pile of discarded stringed instruments. The concert in the castle was an empty, mechanical repetition of two bowed notes on a bass, played to the sound of bees in their hives, reflected by rotating, sometimes shattered, mirrors on the floor. Light and darkness, sound and its absence, hope and its loss, were brought together in this concert played for the contradiction of Weimar and its camp, Buchenwald. The counterpoints of cultural power Horn invoked do not inform a singular historical narrative, but coexist as the central problem of western history ‘after Auschwitz’. Horn’s double installation attends to the specificity of location and material to articulate coextensive differences as a history-making process in the present.

Significantly, both *Intervals of Silence* and *Concert for Buchenwald*, are premised upon corporeal specificity. In interviewing for the film, Lefkowitz noted that silence, the failure of voice, usually accompanied the narrative break at the point of deportation and that this pattern was especially pronounced in women’s testimonies. Noting the prominence given to silence in feminist literary theory and, increasingly, in feminist scholarship on the Holocaust, Lefkowitz wrote:

Several years after completion of my film, I am struck by the possibility that my interviews with women may, in fact, have influenced my thinking about the material I collected as a whole, as well as inspired some of the specific visual and structural ideas I employed in presenting this material.<sup>9</sup>

The film was not intended to take the positions of women as formative of its structural logic, but their address to silence was too compelling to be ignored. It could be argued that Lefkowitz's own position as a woman engaged in a process of cross-cultural translation and communication, made her more receptive to the voices of women which resonated with her own. Whether or not this is the case, the film's interplay of presence and absence, (mis)communication of multiple differences and signification through silence, were determined by women's stories and amplify feminist perspectives on female subjectivity and voice.

Similarly, Horn's installation was not designed to privilege a woman's viewpoint, yet its powerful evocation of corporeal loss, in addition to its critical take on both Enlightenment high culture and modernist technology, are common themes in feminist philosophical work seeking to undermine dualism and the privilege of the masculine centre over its marginalised others. Horn had a long history of feminist practice behind her by the time she produced *Concert for Buchenwald* and its resonant connection of Weimar with paradigms which eradicate difference, would not be misread as a feminist gesture.

Holocaust scholarship and feminism, however, have not formed an easy alliance. Not surprisingly, some feminists have been accused of trivialising the Holocaust by attending to the banality of misogyny,<sup>10</sup> of marginalising the event by looking at women's experiences, or of setting women against men, suggesting for example, that women were 'better suited' to the rigours of the camps or had better chances of survival.<sup>11</sup> Such arguments assume that women's perspectives upon, and experiences of, the Holocaust must be taken in opposition to those of men, that there is here posited yet another binary choice between a universal or specific account. This choice is itself wrong-footed. In a moving passage from one woman survivor's remembrance of her liberation, Sara Horowitz contends that the gender-specific testimony of subjects is inseparable from the wider picture of devastation in the Holocaust. To further my argument here, it is worth quoting the testimony at length:

All on earth that I had left after liberation from Malchow, Germany, was my skeletal body minus all my hair, minus my monthly cycle, a tattered concentration camp shift

dress without undergarments, a pair of beaten up unmatched wooden clogs, plus my “badge of honor”, a large blue number 25673 that the Nazis tattooed on my left forearm on the day of my initiation to Auschwitz inferno. I was homeless, stateless, penniless, jobless, orphaned and bereaved.<sup>12</sup>

Following Vivian Sobchack, I would argue that corporeality and embodiment are also crucial concepts for exile, since the body (*a body*) is the first ‘home’ of the subject and the productive locus of both history and knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, women’s embodied experiences of the Holocaust are not opposed to those of men, but are as Myrna Goldberg described them, ‘different horrors, same hell’.<sup>14</sup> Their voices give us access to histories formed through attention to difference, specificity and location.

These critical connections inform my thinking about women’s art and the Holocaust. Looking carefully at exile and female embodiment brings new perspectives to our understanding of the Holocaust, while the negotiation of female exilic subject-positions through the materiality of art reiterates the significance of corporeality to theory. Women’s art thus offers a unique praxis through which to consider the connections between embodiment and articulation, beyond the legacy of universal representation and monolithic history. It is not a separate or oppositional ‘women’s history’, but a nuanced intervention into those singular narratives which so easily permit us to forget.

To develop these ideas of exiled histories and women’s art further, I would like to take the cipher of *Heimat* as a theme. In German, *Heimat* can evoke both ‘home’ and ‘homeland’, a critical nexus for considering the Holocaust as exilic, as a loss of home in the widest sense. Lefkowitz’s film explores the deep meanings which reside at the heart of the domestic and the everyday, while Horn’s installation connects spirit and matter in a negotiation of high culture and homeland. In the German context, which both *Intervals of Silence* and *Concert for Buchenwald* use as their principal framing device, there can be neither a simple return home, nor an easy reconstitution of the identity of the homeland after the breach inscribed by such corporeal devastation. As James E. Young has argued elsewhere, German memorials for the Holocaust almost always focus upon

absence and the problem of national identity.<sup>15</sup> I would suggest that thinking this identity at the point of connection between home and homeland, while attending to corporeal specificity, exile and difference, enables *Intervals of Silence* and *Concert for Buchenwald* to intervene in the processes of inscribing histories in the present. These artworks do the work of history, memory and mourning in allowing voices to be heard, and covenants formed, for the future.

### **Home, Covenant and the Profundity of the Everyday**

*Intervals of Silence* is a meditation on the very possibility of home and community after the Holocaust. Combining images of the small German town in which her husband was raised with taped interviews of its residents, produced a thoroughly local nexus from which to examine the wider phenomenon of post-Holocaust social fragmentation. While the film is in many ways a personal portrait of the artist and her ambivalent<sup>16</sup> relationship with this community, it is also a structured dialogue with memory, history and the inscription of the past in the language and material substance of the present. In this sense, I am invoking the term *Heimat* in connection with *Intervals of Silence* to signify both its focus upon local, even domestic, detail and its attention to the practices by which community comes into being. In the case of post-Holocaust Germany, explorations of *Heimat* thus imply more than a return to a pre-lapsarian homeland; as exilic histories, they do not return to, but reconstitute, home itself.

One of the tactics *Intervals of Silence* uses to reconstitute home is to amplify the gap between the spoken and unspoken, the seen and unseen, within the histories of its subjects and their local environment. In the second half of the film, for example, there are a series of key image-text passages which concern death, mourning and remembrance. Directly following a woman's declaration that the Final Solution destroyed the Jewish presence in Germany, 'We actually no longer exist',<sup>17</sup> we see women's hands tending a grave, placing beautiful orange marigolds as a marker. In the next passage, footage of the council-tended Jewish cemetery is overlaid with varied comments, ranging from pleasure in being reminded of the former strength of the region's Jewish community, to concern that Jews have become a cipher for death, loss and victimisation, and the pointed remark, 'We are not a cemetery culture.'

After strategic breaks to scenes of a carnival and excerpts telling of the unimaginable horror of seeing the documentary images which emerged from the death camps after liberation in 1945, a voice declares that the incessant coverage of the Holocaust has made it 'forgettable' and another longs for the imagery onslaught to cease, saying 'maybe grass would grow up over some of this.' At this point, the visuals change to a long-shot of an idyllic, sunlit scene of children in a playground, while Lefkowitz's voice-over explains the pleasure she took in filming this place. We are only then told that this was the site of a Jewish cemetery before the war; the grass has indeed grown up.

In attempting to precis the film above, it may sound as though the work made an over-obvious point about the devastation experienced by the Jewish community and their absence from key sites of remembrance, mourning and history. That is the effect of my brief account only; the film makes no such unsubtle connections, developing these ideas instead through layered effects of sound and image, or what Matthew Bernstein astutely termed filmic palimpsests.<sup>18</sup> It is especially significant that such meaningful historical insights emerge in and between filmed images of the everyday. Recasting these, Lefkowitz realised the fuller potential of the ordinary to eloquently express historical knowledge. As the artist put it, 'Eventually I realized that the images of everyday life I was filming embodied both meanings simultaneously, were at once both profound and trivial.'<sup>19</sup>

The profundity of the everyday is crucial to the film's dynamics, and it is hardly surprising that so much of the material in the film, and of course, its structural logic, are drawn from the domestic. Women cleaning homes, caring for children and tending graves, do the everyday job of recording familial histories, making times and places significant. In *Intervals of Silence*, we not only learn to hear the unvoiced intervals which typified women's accounts of the Holocaust, we orient our vision by entering into the local and the domestic. The most deliberate break in the temporal progression of the film, the interval of silence which marked the moment of deportation in the female survivor's narratives, is a case in point.

While the film's visual sequence consists of slowed, negative footage of cables passing above a tram-line, a woman speaks:

Being taken away, that was not the worst of it. For years one had been waiting, knowing it would happen... One evening I was preparing dinner and about to slice some tomatoes. And my husband said to me, "Why are you trembling? Why are you cutting the tomatoes so thick?" And I said, "Please, you cut. I can't anymore." I was waiting for the things which were to come.

Her story, and the incessant negative images, continue to the inevitable knock on the door: 'I didn't say a word. I was just waiting for the things which were coming. I knew then that I would be taken away.' At this point, the film becomes utterly silent for a whole minute, while we watch factory smoke stacks, clearly reminiscent of the terrible chimneys of crematoria, yet located within the local narrative as I.G. Farben, the chemical plant founded in the district in 1936. That the most profound and meaningful silence of the film ensues from a story of cutting tomatoes, in the voice of a woman, should not be underestimated. Nor should the fact that the voice of this same woman breaks the silence with the continuation of her narrative of disrupted, impossible homecoming after internment:

How happy we were - just knowing that we were coming home. ...I was given a big welcome. ...The women were delighted and had already opened a bottle of wine. And I thought, dear God, where have you ended up? The loud talking and laughing and merrymaking - and they were happy that the war was over. But they really didn't have to go through much, just a few nights in a bunker. Then I said, "Please." I folded my hands and said, "Please leave me to be alone."

The negative visuals, articulate silences and signs of corporeal absence within the film, materialise the incomprehensible differences between survivors and those others who lived through the war years unscathed. Communication cannot be resumed, what remains unspoken cannot be 'adroitly bridged'. Lefkowitz made the brave move not to veil what she understood in the subjects' voices,

as ‘...speaking not to each other, but in the absence of the other.’<sup>20</sup> In so doing, she addressed a central paradox - one just does not come home after Auschwitz, yet one does. The question remains how to move forward through this profound disjunction.

To consider this, I want to turn to a fascinating text written by Griselda Pollock on the potential of feminist art to reconceive covenant and begin the work of mourning and communication in difference so needed in the wake of the Holocaust. In ‘Gleaning in history or coming after/behind the reapers’, Pollock examined the art and theory of Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, raising particular points about the reinvention of history painting following the corporeal loss of the Holocaust. Yet her text’s concerns with history and art, ‘*after history*’ and ‘*after painting*’,<sup>21</sup> are equally resonant with the problems Lefkowitz faced in constructing a documentary concerning the loss of community and the very possibility of communication in/after exile.

Significantly, Pollock takes as her key figure of covenant the relationship between Naomi and Ruth, a mother- and daughter-in-law, who make their bond in and through differences of culture, generation and experience. This figure of covenant in difference is not a form of easy pluralism, forgetfulness or silence; it is the work of mourning and memory in reconfiguring histories against the violent eradication of the other by the one. I want to suggest that Pollock’s insistence on the significance of feminism, art and female agency to such reconfigured histories is a powerful strategy to think otherwise and one which parallels Lefkowitz’s filmic tactics. As Pollock wrote:

The violence of the foreclosure of the feminine... can be associated with the violence of Christian western culture towards the Jews as strangers, as one of Europe’s intimate, structuring Others. ...There can only be a future through alliance, through covenant, through what the artist [Lichtenberg Ettinger] calls a coexistence in difference.<sup>22</sup>

Some of the parallels between Pollock’s text and Lefkowitz’s film are quite literal; as a daughter-in-law from another culture, Lefkowitz’s first, formative dialogues across this historical gap were with the women in her husband’s family.<sup>23</sup> This surface link with the Naomi and Ruth story, however, obscures the more significant sense in which women’s words, stories, voices and actions underpin

the structural logic of both Lefkowitz's film and Pollock's text in far more sophisticated ways. Indeed, I want to argue that the most compelling forms of covenant enacted by the film and the text do not reside in any explicit content, but in the modes of address they so skilfully deploy. That is, Pollock's text writes *with* the story of Naomi and Ruth, the work of Lichtenberg Ettinger, psychoanalysis and the concept of the matrix, to come after/behind the Holocaust and envisage the possibility of covenant. Never obscuring the material differences between these diverse sources, Pollock interweaves them with her own distinct voice to form a kind of heteroglossic constellation; the text is a work of covenant-in-difference in its own right. Lefkowitz's film similarly moves next to its sources, allowing the resonances and dissonances to emerge through material connections between the texts, images, words and sounds.

In *Intervals of Silence*, the coexistence of difference reveals painful rifts between individuals and in the fabric of community, but there is also hope. This hope comes precisely in the form of tentative, but decisive, communication between individuals. During the production of the film, Lefkowitz considered including a highly personal segment about her husband coming to learn Hebrew songs and Jewish celebratory customs with her family. In the end, she found this part of the narrative too intimate for inclusion, but continued to work with the concepts of song, celebration and memory in the constitution of home and community. The final words spoken at the close of the film mark the hesitant but positive reconstruction of a sense of 'home' after exile in the place of her husband's birth:

When I come to this city, I don't have the feeling that I cannot be Jewish here, although there are other cities that are more comfortable for me as a Jew. Sometimes the presence of other Jewish voices here or the singing of a melody familiar to me from my childhood is enough to give me the feeling that I am home.

The sequence finishes with the joyous song *Adon Olam*, which often closes Sabbath services. Arguably, both the explicit content of this filmic sequence and the process of its composition, through tentative inclusions, excisions and careful editing, perform the kinds of creative work necessary for building bonds through communication and love in the wake of terror.<sup>24</sup>

Lefkowitz's powerful evocation of the profundity of 'home' as a mechanism by which to enact a covenantal bond is nowhere more strikingly mirrored than in the work of Kitty Klaidman and her daughter Elyse. Kitty Klaidman was born in Czechoslovakia in 1937, survived the war in hiding and later emigrated to the United States where she now lives. Like many survivors, it took Klaidman nearly four decades to confront her experiences at mid-century directly; in the 1980s, she travelled with her daughter to look at the building in which she and her family had hidden from the Nazis for a year, and in 1991, the attic store became the subject of Klaidman's triptych *Hidden Memories: Attic in Humence*. In three large paper panels (the whole triptych measures over a meter high and three meters in length), this barren space in the eaves was transformed into a highly evocative image of loss and restitution.

The spartan composition of the piece cannot but express the traumatic experience of this place and the noticeable joins between the panels is an effective metaphor for the break in personal and historical continuity signified by hiding and exile. Yet the whole scene is made palpable through light - light from windows at the end of the store and an ambiguous atmospheric light where the floor would be found. This light is crucial to the meaning of the work, both for Klaidman personally and for viewers. As the artist said,

In each of these works, I have introduced a seemingly paradoxical fusion of light, which may represent the remarkable reality that my immediate family survived intact. What it surely represents, however, is that the existence of people like Jan Velicky, the man most responsible for saving us, serves as a beacon of hope in the most desperate times.<sup>25</sup>

This ordinary storehouse, infused with light, becomes both a space of catharsis and covenant, a marker for the work of memory, mourning and connection across difference. In a mirroring act of covenant for the future, Elyse Klaidman also painted the attic store in which her mother remained safe long before she was born. These reflecting works are a dialogue between mother and daughter, despite the incommensurability of their experiences, the pervasive logic of silence and

the terrible possibility of forgetfulness. Like the bonds described by the artist's narrative in *Intervals of Silence*, these works offer hope for the future through the reconstitution of 'home'.

### **High Culture, Assimilation and Modernity**

As a non-Jewish German born in 1944, Rebecca Horn has a personal, as well as aesthetic, investment in the reconstitution of *Heimat*. In *Concert for Buchenwald*, Horn engaged in a dialogue with the internal contradictions of post-Holocaust German culture from Enlightenment to modernity. The installation's two parts/sites, Part 1: Tram Depot and Part 2: Schloss Ettersburg, unfolded their stories like two acts in a play, inextricably connected, yet self-contained. In this defining gesture, Horn demonstrated the interdependence of oppositions within the assimilative logic of dualism, as well as their limits. In *Concert for Buchenwald*, 'civilised' high culture is saturated by brutality, the Enlightenment and modernism are parts of a whole, the spirit connects with the machine and any simplistic division of the one from its 'others' is shown to be fatally flawed.

The correspondence of opposites is typical in Horn's work and accounts for much of its dynamism.<sup>26</sup> In *Concert for Buchenwald*, these dynamics effect a particularly concise critique of German high culture and its exclusions. The Tram Depot of Part 1 is Taylorism gone mad, the monstrous potential of technological modernity to make even the most horrific acts of genocide a mere matter of machinic efficiency. The skip truck travelling back and forth on its deadly journey, the broken bodies of violins, guitars and mandolins, heaped on the track, and the walls of the depot, formed by layers and layers of ash, bear witness to the inevitable tragedy caused by eradicating 'others' in a desperate attempt to maintain a self-same, monolithic culture. Yet the Tram Depot was not the only scene of devastation; the White Salon too was derelict. This was a different form of dereliction, one which wrought its destruction from within. There was no concert intoned in Schloss Ettersburg, just disembodied sound reverberating within an evacuated shell, itself cracking from the pressures of abandonment and self-induced devastation.

It is in the White Salon that we come to understand the internal destruction of an assimilative culture gone wrong. 'Assimilation' is doubly valent here; there is the important historical issue

raised by the fate of assimilated Jews in Germany, Austria and other German-speaking European regions, and the theoretical problem of assimilative epistemes which homogenise, rather than recognise, differences. I am suggesting that these two features of 'assimilation' are connected and have important ramifications for addressing history and making art after the Holocaust, especially when those histories and art are made by women.

As we now know, the assimilation of Jews into German culture did not save them from the Holocaust; none of the extraordinary contributions of generations of Jews to German literature, art, philosophy, music, politics, economics, science, medicine or psychology mattered when biology became destiny. It is more than a brutal irony that the very culture which Jews helped to forge was mobilised against them and so many diverse 'others', it is a feature of the terrible inability of reductive, self-same thinking to acknowledge the motor-force of change and development which resides in difference. In this sense, assimilative logic and the historical conventions which depend upon it, need to be resisted in order to move forward and reconfigure histories as covenantal, dialogic and mindful of the past. This is why I find Horn's reconfiguration of *Heimat*, of high culture and its internal dynamics of difference, so compelling.

Take again the damned performance in Schloss Ettersburg. Signalling German high culture through classical music, the 'concert' further hearkens to the significance of music as a motif within European Jewry expressing assimilation while, at the same time, remaining transportable.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the trope of the deconstructed 'concert' was not new in Horn's *oeuvre*; her 1987 installation in Münster, in the former Hitler Youth headquarters, used as a prison/execution chamber by the Nazis during the war, was entitled *Concert in Reverse* and consisted of a cacophony of mechanical noises and diametrically opposed visual devices. And, in 1994, Horn installed the *Tower of the Nameless* in Vienna, a series of ascending ladders punctuated by violins playing their discordant notes as a memorial to both the Yugoslavian refugees pouring through the city at the height of the Bosnian war and their nameless predecessors, the thousands who fled the Third Reich prior to Vienna's occupation. These projects brought together the corporeality of the instruments, as 'bodies' whose 'voices' sound a tragic chorus, with the corporeality of memory itself, through which culture and history are transmitted, or, of course, lost.

As the site of a concert of remembrance, mourning and madness at the destruction of the other within, Schloss Ettersburg could not have been better chosen. Schloss Ettersburg was where Goethe first performed his *Iphigenie*;<sup>28</sup> the story of Orestes, whose guilt and madness were brought on by an act of matricide. The self-induced tragedy of destroying the (m)other, upon whom life, culture and the self depend, is a mythic rendition of male autogenesis and the attempt to assimilate difference into the same. Reading Goethe's invocation of Orestes through the work of Horn, emphasises the role of sexual difference in western knowledge systems and has powerful ramifications for exploring the dereliction of European culture in the brutal eradication of Jews and all others whose difference singled them out for destruction during the Holocaust.

The fact that Horn interrogated elite culture through the space of the salon is significant. As a crossing point between public culture and private life, European salons were one of the sites in which women could and did participate readily in the cultural life of the community. Horn was not the only woman artist to invoke this spatial trope to explore sexual difference, bourgeois culture and history; in a fascinating parallel, British artist Rachel Whiteread drew these very strands together in her design for the *Holocaust Memorial* (1996-2000) in Vienna.

Sited in the Judenplatz, Whiteread's work is based on an inverted library,<sup>29</sup> whose books have been shelved in reverse, so that their spines are hidden, and whose doors remain permanently locked. Invited to bid for this prestigious commission on the strength of her only other public work, *House* (1993), Whiteread was already practised in materialising domesticity's negative spaces to trigger powerful social memories. Whiteread read the Judenplatz itself as a domestic space, a vast room with doors and hallways running from it, and scaled the memorial to the typical dimensions of a bourgeois salon in the square, including domestic architectural details such as a ceiling rose and panelled doors.<sup>30</sup> The Vienna project, intimately tied to the salons of the Judenplatz, linked home with homeland, to remember the 65,000 Jews from the city who were killed and their important public presence, as part of bourgeois Viennese cultural life.

Beneath Whiteread's 'library' lay the remains of a synagogue, destroyed in a mediaeval act of anti-semitism. The present memorial, therefore, refuses to forget a much longer history, and beyond the simple equation of the Jews with the book, key sites of historical record, articulation and knowledge are invoked materially and spatially by the piece. There is a traditional precedent for linking the work of memory with envisaged spaces/objects in rhetoric. To train the memory for connective, rhetorical thought, subjects imagined ideas 'stored' as objects in rooms; to 'retrieve' the ideas, they envisaged moving through the spaces of the rooms and bringing the stored memories back to the present. The memory-training of rhetoric connects the individual's imaginative powers with a collective knowledge-base and a system designed to operate in analogy, rather than the effacement of differences.<sup>31</sup> I would argue that Whiteread's locked library, and the evocative 'rooms' of Horn's *Concert for Buchenwald*, draw upon just this sort of embodied, situated memory-work, producing a form of cultural mnemonic which materialises spaces and objects against forgetfulness.

It is almost too obvious to note that both Whiteread and Horn frequently conduct dialogues with the legacy of modernism in their work. However, one particular element of this troubling legacy, its tendency to be used as a justification for the elimination of difference and the construction of a monolithic form of history and art practice, is of interest to me here. Suzi Gablik, following her colleague Patricia Catto, has termed this evacuated legacy 'bad modernism',<sup>32</sup> a mode of alienated, distanced, self-referential praxis which encouraged the violent objectification of others to sustain its privileged, individualistic autonomy. It is this facet of modernity and modernism which is challenged by the unflinching installation in the Tram Depot, yet Horn's work does not simply negate or reject modernism wholesale.

The Tram Depot articulated the inhuman, mechanical progress from transport to death, recalling Hartman's question, 'How fatal has administrative and instrumentalized reason become in the modern era?'<sup>33</sup> Many critics have been quick to note that Horn here, and in other machinic work, stressed the loss of individual responsibility in systems of technological power and industrialised violence.<sup>34</sup> I would agree that the Tram Depot expressed with extraordinary force the technical brutality of the factory death camps and the way in which such nameless violence stripped human

beings of their individuality so to group them more definitively as 'non-human' and available for disposal. I would also agree that Horn's factory of annihilation is derived from the dark and destructive fantasies of modernism, as they came to such a bitter conclusion in the crematoria at Buchenwald, Auschwitz and elsewhere.

However, Horn's machines, as they animate objects and inhabit rooms, enter into a productive dialogue with modernism, technology and corporeality, which enables them to defy their absorption within the paradigm they cite and body forth their critique in their material specificity. In the Tram Depot, for example, the piles of discarded instruments are anything but devoid of human referents or lacking in individuality. They call to us as reminders of lives lived and voices heard, their contours, like bodies, bear the marks of individual journeys and, at the same time, they bring us back to our senses, 're-mind' us, of the exilic longing expressed by simple objects separated from their owners, by accident or design. As the skip truck impacts with the far wall, a small spark travels up Jacob's Ladder, releasing a charge, an immaterial force, into the sky. Horn imbued this with hope; the spirits of the tortured finally ascending beyond the factory of death.

I am not the first to argue that Horn's machines and objects are corporeally significant. Mina Ronstayi referred to them as objects with 'souls', citing Horn's interest in alchemy and animism, rather than high-tech modernism, as the origin of their particular calls to our own bodies.<sup>35</sup> Bruce W. Ferguson noted the polyvalence of Horn's machines, both cold and articulate of human desires, motives and hesitant attempts at communication.<sup>36</sup> I would suggest that Horn's machines play with the contradictions of the modernist project itself, invoking both its incredible dynamism and its terrible destructive power. We should remember, for instance, that the inter-war years in Europe and America were the scene of a flourishing women's culture,<sup>37</sup> some of the earliest acknowledgement of the rights of gay men and lesbians and an intellectual/political climate in which Jews played an absolutely vital role. Modernism could embrace difference, but its more powerful appropriators could not. Like the White Salon, the Tram Depot speaks again of the devastation suffered by a culture which attempts to eliminate difference from within. Yet, taken together as interconnected sites, the two parts of *Concert for Buchenwald* make corporeality and coexistent difference a locus of potential connection, or covenant. As Horn wrote, 'They meet in

human beings/as a catalyst/connecting the above and below of the mind./Through the process of transformation/cautiously writing the language of new signs.<sup>138</sup>

Lefkowitz's *Intervals of Silence* and Horn's *Concert for Buchenwald* acknowledge the devastation they address, but make covenants-in-difference in ways which echo Gablik's concept of 'connective' aesthetics, the kind of praxis which can redirect bad modernism. Her words nearly describe Horn's double installation:

Connective aesthetics strikes at the root of this alienation by dissolving the mechanical division between self and world that has prevailed during the modern epoch. World healing begins with the individual who welcomes the Other.<sup>39</sup>

*Intervals of Silence* and *Concert for Buchenwald* do not suggest the impossibility of culture, aesthetics or political agency in the wake of the Holocaust, but demonstrate the reinvention of art as a significant social force. Facing the void, communicating in and with difference, creating strategies by which to articulate exilic histories of home and homeland, Lefkowitz and Horn do not forget the past or negate the future. It will suffice to end with Pollock's hopeful words:

Within modernity, both woman and the Jewish people stand for a recalcitrant 'difference' from, or 'strangeness' within, what appear to be the dominant norms. They have come to represent a troublesome ambiguity which has often led to discrimination and persecution. Yet we must grasp the possibility, offered by that very dissidence, for a model of society that could genuinely celebrate and value difference.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deborah Lefkowitz, 'On Silence and Other Disruptions' in *Feminism and Documentary*, edited by Diane Waldman and Janet Walker, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, pp. 244-66, pp. 256-7

<sup>2</sup> Rebecca Horn, 'The colonies of bees undermining the moles' subversive efforts through time', *Concert for Buchenwald*, Zurich, Berlin, NY: Scalo, 1999, pp. 23-26, p.23

<sup>3</sup> Habermas's comment on 'conventional' histories was cited by Eric L. Santner in discussing the *Historiker-Streit* in *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory and Film in Postwar Germany*, Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1990, p. 50

<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996, p.104

- <sup>5</sup> Hamid Naficy (ed), 'Introduction', *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media and the Politics of Place*, London and NY: Routledge 1999, p.4
- <sup>6</sup> Ronnie S. Landau, 'The Nazi Holocaust: Its Moral, Historical and Educational Significance' in *After Auschwitz: Responses to the Holocaust in Contemporary Art*, edited by Monica Bohm-Duchen, Sunderland: Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, in association with Lund Humphries, 1995, pp. 17-24, p. 18
- <sup>7</sup> For an excellent account of the problem of anamnesis (following Lyotard), the occlusion of difference and the role of monuments and memorials in coming to think about the Holocaust, see Andreas Huyssen, 'Monument and Memory in a Postmodern Age', in *Holocaust Memorials: The Art of Memory in History*, edited by James E. Young, Munich and NY: Prestel-Verlag, 1994, pp. 9-17
- <sup>8</sup> Hartman, op.cit., p. 32
- <sup>9</sup> Lefkowitz, 'On Silence and Other Disruptions', op.cit., p. 246
- <sup>10</sup> See the excellent work of Joan Ringelheim on this topic, including 'Thoughts about Women and the Holocaust' in *Thinking the Unthinkable* edited by Roger S. Gottlieb, NY and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1990, pp. 141-49, p. 145
- <sup>11</sup> There is now some excellent work on women and the Holocaust of which the following are a few sources: Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (eds), *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust*, NY: Paragon House, 1993; Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (eds), *Women in the Holocaust*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998.
- <sup>12</sup> Itka Zygmuntowicz, cited by Sara R. Horowitz in 'Women in Holocaust Literature: Engendering Trauma Memory' in *Women in the Holocaust*, op.cit., pp. 364-77, p.370
- <sup>13</sup> Vivian Sobchack, "'Is Any Body Home?'" Embodied Imagination and Visible Evictions' in Naficy, op.cit., pp. 45-61
- <sup>14</sup> Myrna Goldberg, 'Different Horrors, Same Hell: Women Remembering the Holocaust', in *Thinking the Unthinkable*, op.cit., pp. 150-66
- <sup>15</sup> James E. Young, 'The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History', in *Holocaust Memorials*, op.cit., pp. 19-38, p. 20
- <sup>16</sup> Lefkowitz herself used the phrase 'uneasy ambivalence' to describe her relationship to German history and contemporary culture. See Deborah Lefkowitz, 'Editing from Life' in *Women in German Yearbook 8: Feminist Studies in German Literature and Culture* edited by Jeanette Clausen and Sarah Friedrichsmeyer, Lincoln, NB and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993, pp. 199-215
- <sup>17</sup> All film quotes are taken directly from the subtitles, translated and excerpted by Lefkowitz.
- <sup>18</sup> Matthew Bernstein, 'Review of *Intervals of Silence: Being Jewish in Germany*', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 4, Summer 1994, pp. 29-35
- <sup>19</sup> Deborah Lefkowitz, in the artist's statement from *Illuminations from a Moment Past*, exhibition catalogue, Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Wignall Museum/Gallery, Chaffey College, 1998, no page numbers.
- <sup>20</sup> Lefkowitz, 'Editing from Life', op.cit., p. 206
- <sup>21</sup> Griselda Pollock, 'Gleaning in history or coming after/behind the reapers: the feminine, the stranger and the matrix in the work and theory of Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger', in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: feminist Readings*, London and NY: Routledge, 1996, pp. 266-88.
- <sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p.285
- <sup>23</sup> In my own correspondence with Lefkowitz about the idea of covenant and the mother- and daughter-in-law relation, she noted that while her mother-in-law was not interviewed for the film, her image appears twice - as the woman cleaning the window and laying flowers on a grave. These appearances are both critical junctures in the film and reinforce the complexity of remembrance in creating covenants across difference.
- <sup>24</sup> In a long exchange, Lefkowitz was kind enough to describe the choices (both included and excluded) from this final scene as well as her multi-layered working methods. I felt that the negotiations with materials - visual, aural, textual - that she made were both sophisticated and meaningful and I hope that sense has been conveyed in the text.
- <sup>25</sup> Kitty Klaidman's artist statement in Monica Bohm-Duchen, *After Auschwitz*, op.cit., p.150
- <sup>26</sup> There are a number of critics who have pointed to this feature of Horn's practice. See, for example: Mina Ronstayi, 'Getting Under the Skin: Rebecca Horn's Sensibility Machine', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 63, pt.9, May 1989, pp. 58-68 and Holland Cotter, 'Rebecca Horn: Delicacy and Danger', *Art in America*, vol.81, pt. 12, December 1993, pp.58-67
- <sup>27</sup> Irit Rogoff made this connection in a fascinating essay on the occlusion of gender difference within Israel's European-dominated Jewish cultural tradition. See Irit Rogoff, 'Daughters of Sunshine: Diasporic Impulses and Gendered Identities', in *Diaspora and Visual Culture: Representing Africans and Jews*, edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff, London and NY: Routledge, 2000, pp. 163-78, p. 175
- <sup>28</sup> Martin Mosebach, 'Concert for Buchenwald' in Horn, *Concert for Buchenwald*, op.cit., pp. 11-16, p. 15
- <sup>29</sup> Unlike a number of Whiteread's sculptures, the *Holocaust Memorial* is not a direct cast from an actual building, but a construction derived from casts Whiteread had been making of library shelves.

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- <sup>30</sup> Lisa G. Corrin, Patrick Elliot and Andrea Schlieker, *Rachel Whiteread*, exhibition catalogue, Edinburgh and London: Scottish National gallery and Serpentine, 2001, p. 60
- <sup>31</sup> Interestingly, the German artist Grethe Jürgens, who spent the war years in ‘inner exile’, produced a small book in 1944 entitled *Das Atelier*. The volume moved through the spaces of the studio, connecting these with stories of the artist’s activities and thoughts, to produce a profound self-portrait *sans* figurative likeness as the performance of female exilic subjectivity in memory. See Meskimmon, ‘*Das Atelier: Spatiality and Self-Portraiture in the Work of Grethe Jürgens*’, *Woman’s Art Journal*, vol. 21, no. 1, Spring/Summer 2000, pp.22-6, 64.
- <sup>32</sup> Suzi Gablik, ‘Connective Aesthetics: Art After Individualism’ in *New Genre Public Art* edited by Suzanne Lacy, Seattle: Bay Press, 1995, pp. 74-87, p. 78
- <sup>33</sup> Hartman, *op.cit.*, p. 7
- <sup>34</sup> See, for example, Doris von Drathen, ‘Les Délices des Eveques and other scenes of the crime’ in *Rebecca Horn: The Glance of Infinity* edited by Carl Haenlein, Zurich, Berlin, NY: Scalo Verlag and Hanover: The Kestner Gesellschaft, 1997, pp. 338-41, p. 339
- <sup>35</sup> Ronstayi, *op.cit.*, p. 65
- <sup>36</sup> Bruce W. Ferguson, ‘Rebecca Horn: Really Dangerous Liaisons’ in *Rebecca Horn: Driving Through Buster’s Bedroom*, exhibition catalogue, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, and Milan: Fabbri Editori, 1990, pp. 19-27, p. 19
- <sup>37</sup> For the German context especially, see Meskimmon, *We Weren’t Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, Berkeley, CA and London: University of California and I.B. Tauris, 1999.
- <sup>38</sup> Horn, ‘The colonies of bees’, *op.cit.*, p.26
- <sup>39</sup> Gablik, ‘Connective Aesthetics’, *op.cit.*, p. 86
- <sup>40</sup> Griselda Pollock, ‘Is Feminism to Judaism as Modernity is to Tradition?: Critical Questions on Jewishness, Femininity and Art’ in *Rubies and Rebels: Jewish Female Identity in Contemporary British Art*, edited by Monica Bohm-Duchen and Vera Grodzinski, London: Lund Humphries, 1996, pp. 15-27, p. 17