trespassing journal

an online journal of
trespassing art,
science, and philosophy
www.trespassingjournal.com

Trespassing Memory: Issue 3, Winter 2014

Sin's Black Memory: Contact Points and Empathic Understanding in Roee Rosen's *Live and Die as Eva Braun*

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I take as my title, "Sin's Black Memory," a line from John Donne's "Holy Sonnet 9." In this sonnet the speaker wonders, "Why should intent or reason, born in me, / Make sins, else equal, in me more heinous? (Donne, 5-6)." The speaker rationalizes that if minerals, fruit, and goats (all naturally occurring) can poison people and the earth without punishment, why should he, a mere mortal, be punished for his own seemingly natural sins. After the turn, the speaker concedes God's power over him and asks that a Lethean flood drown "my sin's black memory" (Donne, 9-10). In classical mythology drinking from the Lethe River, one of the five rivers of Hades, caused forgetfulness. Memory is employed here on two fronts: the speaker pleads that his sin's black memory be drowned and that God forgets his unnamed indiscretions. Thus the image conceived communicates a desire to drown away sins in forgiveness, and also in forgetfulness.

Similar desires are drawn and written over Roee Rosen's exhibit, *Live and Die as Eva Braun: Hitler's Mistress in the Berlin Bunker and Beyond – A Virtual Reality Scenario Not to Be Realized.* In this exhibit, the visitor is asked to empathize: to inhabit, to trespass, and to contemplate Eva Braun's sinful memories of loving and supporting Hitler. The visitor is meant to follow Braun, Hitler's mistress, both narratively and visually, through *her* seemingly natural sins of loving and supporting Hitler. As in Donne's poem, there is a tension in the exhibit between forgiveness and forgetfulness. Questions of intent and reason flow within Rosen's work, and through the visitor's position, who is meant to stand in the middle of Braun's black memories, there is a sense that a Lethean flood may be the only thing that could drown the power of Rosen's exhibit from the mind of the visitor.

Exhibited around the world since 1997, most recently in London's INIVA Gallery (2012),[1] Rosen's show contains sixty-six black and white acrylic images accompanied by ten narrative

scenes written in second-person prose. The images, which are rooted in the style of nineteenth-century German fairy tale woodcuts, are layered with Nazi symbols and sexual signs. Though black and white, the images are not clearly decipherable, and allude to the ungraspable memories of the Holocaust and the sins of forbidden lovers. In one image, simply titled "Number 65,"[2] the traces of layered memory are evident: an abstract circle is laden with spokes of the swastika (these spokes are repeated in a later image, attached to a moon), a harmless looking train enters from the top left (harmless in the context of fairy tale, yet not so in the shadow of the Holocaust), all while a pair of lovers strike a coy position (could Braun and Hitler have struck this same pose?). The prose, which serves as the basis for my analysis, is a fictional imagining of the last days of life/first days of death of the Nazi leader's long-time mistress. Second-person perspective is an uncommon narrative choice, and even more so in the space of a museum exhibit. The text does not just imagine Braun's thoughts and memories; it imagines "you" right alongside her. This dialectal choice intensifies the experience of the memory-laden images by putting the exhibition-visitor in direct psychological and experiential *contact* with otherwise uncomfortable ideas and seemingly sinful memory.

In "Contact Points: Museums and the Lost Body Problem" Jeffrey Feldman defines the contact point as a "general category of object that results from physical contact with the body, and then subsequent removal or destruction of the body" (246). Predominantly, contact points are objects that were once connected to or in contact with a body: shoes, masks, clothing, journals, etc. Through violent pasts, contact points are removed from the body, and in cases such as the Holocaust, the body is destroyed leaving a physical re-connection impossible. Museum curation exacerbates this lost connection to the body by favouring aesthetic display and presentation over a connection with the bodies and people who were the victims of trauma. In Feldman's article contact points are seen as important to the museum encounter, since they are physical connections with the past, but they are ultimately not fully experienced because of the visual emphasis of most museum displays. Feldman argues that contact points are "embodied memories whose conventional presentation in museums often limits the ability or dulls the will of museum visitors to perform the 'memory work' necessary for comprehending them" (248). The visual nature of the museum limits the visitor's other senses along with his/her imaginative and mnemonic capabilities. Thus, the body, which was connected to the object, is removed or destroyed through traumatic history, and through the process of curation the visitor's body and mind are limited and dulled. What we are left with are museum experiences that fail to create both sensory and cognitively rich connections with the past.

Both the text and images in Rosen's exhibit serve as extensions of the "contact point" as defined by Feldman. To be clear, Rosen's exhibit does not include *metonymic* or artifactual contact points, such as shoes once worn by the body. We can however consider the images and the text as *mimetic* contact points, defined as resulting from "one action, while in other cases it is the product of a more drawn-out series of actions – such as measuring or photographing the body, then producing a reproduction of one or more parts" (Feldman, 255-6). Rosen's exhibit does not include direct artefacts from Braun's life nor does it include text taken from a personal journal or historical archive. His fascination with Eva Braun is a product of Rosen's relationship

with one of the most extreme characters in history, Hitler. Rosen's exhibit falls under the category of a "more drawn-out series of actions" wherein Braun's body is taken, textualized, imagined, and reproduced in various parts. While Rosen's representational style might be seen as a second-order contact point, his imaginings are provocative in their connection to Braun's body and thoughts, and thus invite the audience to use its imagination vis-à-vis the drawn out mimetic contact points.

The scope of Feldman's argument focuses on museum displays and how they *sever* a connection to bodies and memories from the past. I, however, am interested here in furthering Feldman's conception of the contact point by focussing on how Rosen's exhibit makes *connections* to the visitor's body and consciousness. I aim to connect the concept of the contact point with conceptions of empathy in order to show the limits of contact points and identify the responsibility of the museum visitor. *Live and Die as Eva Braun* functions as an optimal example of an exhibit that strives to create an empathic encounter through the use of contact points, yet ultimately it proves to highlight the limits of contact point confrontations and the necessity of empathic exchange between narrative exhibits and the museum visitor. Highlighting the connections between contact points, empathy, trauma, history, and aesthetics, I argue that contact points can be refigured as cognitively and ethically rich facilitators of otherwise uncomfortable memories. While the exhibit promotes an empathic connection, it is ultimately up to the visitor to engage with mimetic contact points through a practice of testimonial reading tailored to the specifics of the museum space.

Exhibiting Empathy

In Rosen's exhibit the visitor's body and consciousness is invited in by the text, closing the gap between past and present. Scene One, "The Wait," asks the visitor to imaginatively don "state of the art head-gear, body suit, and electronic sensors" (Rosen, 1).[3] Instead of distancing the visitor's body from difficult memories through the dominant visual nature of the museum, Rosen invites the viewer to become highly aware of his/her own body, and imagine inhabiting another's body and consciousness. Rosen's exhibit strives to create a physical and emotional encounter with the visitor's body through an invitation to adopt a different identity and inhabit Braun's "sinful memory"; quite literally Rosen asks his audience to walk in the shoes of the Other, a hallmark of empathic identification. As a concept, the term empathy has been in use since the late 1700s. Before empathy became a psychological term, it was embedded in aesthetic discourse and then "to a psychology that rigidly separated the perceiving and understanding subject from its objects" (Pigman, 238). Put another way, empathy originated as "involved perceiving and understanding the non-human" (Pigman, 238) in art, architecture, or everyday objects. It is apt to think of Rosen's exhibit in the frame of empathy, for it complies with empathy's historical function *and* in its modern day conception; Rosen's exhibit invites the viewer to not only contemplate and comprehend the object/art, but also to inhabit the Other as subject. Considering empathy as contemplating the non-human is also quite fitting in regards to the subjects of Rosen's exhibit. The visitor is asked to occupy and contemplate the lives of people who have been staged in history as characters beyond the pale of human action and moral understanding. Although Hitler has been more so demonized than dehumanized, there is

still a tendency to consider Hitler and his friends, includng Eva Braun, as sub-human or monstrously non-human. Rosen's invitation to inhabit another's experience therefore complies with both facets of empathy, and it demands that visitors work to understand the "non-human," while at the same time promoting identification with a human subject.

Today there are two dominant conceptions of empathy used in the discussion of aesthetics and the exhibition space: the crude/consumptive model and the political or "radical" model. Using Bertolt Brecht's critique of identification, Jill Bennett defines crude empathy as "a feeling for another based on the assimilation of the other's experience to the self" (10). The consumption of the other's experience has been a longstanding concern for empathy theorists. How do we walk in the shoes of the other without assimilating his/her experience as our own? Megan Boler, author of "The Risks of Empathy: Interrogating Multiculturalism's Gaze," is sceptical that such a balance can ever be struck. Taking as a starting point her classroom experience of teaching Art Speigelman's graphic novel, *Maus*, Boler is critical of the idea that reading and empathy are necessarily linked to democracy, morality, or social justice. She argues that while empathy may prove useful in "lived contexts," it is all too often a passive experience when it comes to literature and the arts (Boler, 255). There is, in her estimation, an "untheorized gap between empathy and acting on another's behalf" (Boler, 255). At the centre of this problem, parallel to Bennett's understanding of crude empathy, is the risk that an empathic experience is "more a story and projection of myself than an understanding of you" (Boler, 257). This, Boler contends, creates a binary of self/other that "situates the self/reader unproblematically as judge" (258). Although Boler agrees that empathy makes us recognize our differences, she asserts that recognition is undermined by consumptive identification:

> What is ignored is what has been called the 'psychosis of our time': empathetic identification requires the other's difference in order to consume it as sameness. The irony of identification is that the built in consumption annihilates the other who is simultaneously required for our very existence. In sum, the social imagination reading model is a binary power relationship of self/other that threatens to consume and annihilate the very differences that permit empathy. (258)

In this conception, identification blocks any meaningful understanding of the other's experience by equating and consuming it with one's own experiences. Problematically, if the self consumes these differences there would be no need for empathy in the first place.

Representations connected to the Holocaust are particularly open to consumptive empathy, primarily because it has been widely believed that to understand the other's experience is connected with the call of "Never Again." It has been presumed that to know the experience of another, especially experience tied to genocide and human rights abuses, plays an integral role in preventing similar abuses from occurring *again.*[4] In Jill Bennett's, *Empathic Vision,* she acknowledges the potential "hubris in colonizing such experience" (3). There is a tendency within viewers to overestimate their knowledge of the traumatic experience and claim the resulting history as their own as a fulfilment of this call. This tendency is heightened with respect to exhibits that employ contact points, which act as physical, textual, or visual

markers meant to connect audiences with people from the past. While not all exhibits are as direct as Rosen's, the use of contact points signals a desire to close the gap between past and present through the use of material objects and art. The experience of being with pieces from past atrocities gives museumgoers an intimate connection with that past. While Feldman saw the visual domination of the exhibits as prohibiting sufficient memory work, there is no denying that contact points are meant to fulfil the visitor's sense of owning and knowing a part of history, with an eye towards never letting it happen again in the future. With regards to *Live and Die*, it is designed to have the visitor colonize the experience. Rosen takes the *natural* tendency to "colonize such experience" to his advantage. He does not nod to the struggle one should have about over-identifying with the victim of trauma, but rather asks the visitor, repeatedly, to trespass across the boundaries of memory and history, and step into the imagined experiences of Eva Braun.

It is easy to see in Rosen's exhibit as an acknowledgment of this consumptive practice. The opening line of Scene One, "The Wait," addresses the museumgoer as "Dear Customer;" here there is no veiling the exchange system that governs culture at large and museums in particular. Although this mode of address can be read as critical of cultural consumption, rather than conformative, there is no attempt to overcome this problematic exchange system within the exhibit. Further, Rosen does not just tell the story of Eva Braun's death or ask the viewer to understand her position. Instead, through the narrative he forces the viewers to put themselves *in* her place. In this way, the viewer consumes Braun's subject position not out of choice, but by design. Moreover, because Rosen uses second-person prose the word "you" is repeated two hundred and six times. The emphasis is, in this qualifier, not placed on Eva Braun, but on *you*, the visitor, truly making this a "story and projection of myself than an understanding of you" (Boler, 257).

If Rosen had created a virtual reality scenario wherein the viewer was meant to identify with a clearly defined *victim* of trauma, his exhibit could be easily defined as promoting a consumptive model. However, what is most interesting about Rosen's exhibit as it concerns empathy is the tension that exists between being invited to identify with another person and simultaneously being repelled/appalled by Eva Braun and her place in history. It is this tension that promotes a political practice of empathy, and ultimately a healthier relationship to a distant other.

In *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture,* Alison Landsberg defines and advocates for a new radical politics of empathy. She defines empathy in contrast to sympathy, stating that, "unlike sympathy, empathy does not depend on a 'natural' affinity or some kind of essential underlying connection between the two subjects. Empathy recognizes the alterity of identification and the necessity of negotiating distances and is therefore essential to any ethical relation to the other" (24). In this conception, empathy is not only aimed at understanding the other, but a way of "inhabiting other people's memories *as other people's memories* and thereby respecting and recognizing difference" (Landsberg, 24). Empathy for Landsberg is a way of understanding the other without having actually undergone the other's experiences. A practice of empathy, of understanding the other

while maintaining an understanding of difference, is crucial for Landsberg as it is an *act* of respect and essential for knowledge creation.

Despite the overt invitation to inhabit another's experience, *Live and Die* makes the correct representational moves to shift away from a colonizing experience and towards an ethical understanding of another's highly aestheticized memories. Rosen's exhibit can be seen as a political facilitator of empathy, both through his invitation to identify with an unsavoury political figure and through his use of imagined memory. First, Rosen asks his audience to identify with a woman who is not particularly deserving of our compassion. Signalled by the title of Rosen's exhibit and narratively primed in the first scene, we are explicitly meant to identify with and inhabit the textual and cognitive skin of Eva Braun. The visitor is likely to keep his/her perceptive distance from Braun because of her place in history, as "Hitler's Mistress." However, we might ask ourselves, who was/is Eva Braun? We know from the title that she was "Hitler's Mistress," two qualifiers that are loaded with stigma and historical meaning. To be associated with Hitler, as part of his inner circle, is usually enough incrimination. To be associated as his mistress, as someone who was intimate with one of history's greatest villains, is a scandal. But, again, what do we really know about Eva Braun? Was she a victim, a perpetrator, or a bystander to the Nazis crimes? The answer to this question is, like many others concerning the Holocaust, unclear. Braun never kept official diaries, or if she did they were destroyed along with many other incriminating documents at the end of World War II in an attempt at self-protection.[5] She left no first-person testimony behind and Rosen's exhibit is thus a product of the lack of truth and the need to create a usable past. We can see Rosen's narrative as a surreal secondary testimony, which exceeds the facts and related historical truth claims. What Shoshanna Felman sees as a "crisis of truth" is amplified in Rosen's exhibit. The narrative provided does not serve as conventional testimony, which Felman defines "not as a mode of *statement of,* but rather as a mode of *access to,* that truth" (27). Rosen's narrative does not provide access necessarily to Eva Braun's truth. Rather it acts as access to Rosen's own artistic working through of this facet of history, and further facilitates in unsettling the visitor's own preconceived ideas of who Braun was and what her role was in the history of the Holocaust.

Rosen's exhibit does nothing to determine once and for all Braun's actions or her place in historical memory. While Braun is portrayed as adoring her lover, Hitler, the latter's menacing power is present throughout the exhibit in the text and the images. In the first scene, when Braun/you look(s) in the mirror, the exhibit states that he, Hitler, does not care for make-up or perfumes (Rosen, 1). Is this a woman in love, wanting to please her lover, or a woman fearful of disappointing her lover's preferences? In Scene Three, "Control," Hitler's power is immanent; despite the fact that *you* cannot seem to understand his words, which shout orders over the telephone, "clearly [his words] are secondary to his power, his might, his conviction and anger" (Rosen, 3). Braun's seemingly innocent love of Hitler is questioned by the revelations of such power dynamics. Braun's identity is further put destabilized when she dies; here Rosen writes, "there is no question, you are being led to hell – but why?" (Rosen, 10) This question, while simple, is loaded with historical visions and revisions. It is easy to condemn a lover of Hitler's to hell, "but why?" To return briefly to Donne's sonnet, "Why should intent or

reason, born in me, / Make sins, else equal, in me more heinous?" There are many political and personal answers to this question, but none that satisfy the viewer's need for the truth. Eva Braun never went on trial, and even if she did we would likely never know the truth. Like the images comprising Rosen's exhibit, which although all black and white are nevertheless unclear, the identity of Eva Braun inhabits a proverbial grey zone, elusive and unknown to the fragile pages of contemporary history.

Rosen does not attempt to build a strong emotional connection between the visitor and Braun, or Hitler. Positive emotive qualifiers such as love, happy, excitement, and pleasure are rarely, if ever, used. Similarly, negative emotive qualifiers such as fear, pain, pity, and suffering only make appearances in the death scene. There is a clear distancing from Adolf Hitler. His name only appears twice in the entire narrative: once in the subtitle of the exhibition and again at the beginning of the second scene, when his body enters the narrative. From then on Hitler is referred to simply as "lover," an endearing, non-descript noun that does nothing to convey the horrors arising from his decisions, or the shadows he has cast over the last century of our history.

Thus, in terms of creating a foundation of identity, Rosen's exhibit does not over simplify the identities he creates. His exhibit satisfies the dual positionality that Jill Bennett defines the traumatic sufferer as inhabiting: "to guarantee identity, on the one hand, and to deconstruct its foundation, on the other – trauma discourse, [sees the] subject as simultaneously 'evacuated and elevated'" (7). The identity of Braun is similarly positioned. Braun, while not technically a traumatic sufferer, is constructed and deconstructed by Rosen. She is evacuated in the sense that Rosen's narrative is imposed, and filled with evidence that goes beyond facts. On the other hand, as the centrepiece of the show, Braun is elevated far beyond her relatively minimal role in history. Just like the historical events of trauma, which are directly inaccessible to the traumatic sufferer, the identity of Braun becomes more complicated when we comprehend the limited access we have to her life and the highly constructed authoring of her consciousness in Rosen's exhibit. The question of authorship adds to the complexity of contact points in general and mimetic contact points in particular. In any exhibition, recognizing the limited information on hand and the constructed nature of what is provided is necessary in order to parse the intricacy and limited nature of contact points. Even metonymic contact points, which were once worn or physically connected to the body, have been re-authored through the process of curation. In Rosen's exhibit the relationship between origin, text, author, and context create a scenario where visitor must confront evacuated and elevated identities, thus recognizing the problematic relationship between curated knowledge and the importance of actively engaging with the material rather than passively consuming.

Constructing the narrative from imagination, and not from memory, is another factor that creates a critical distance necessary to ethically empathize. At first glance the second-person prose is disarming. It forces the viewer into a position that goes beyond the comforts of the imagination. However, the second-person perspective, coupled with the abstract art and the fantasy of the unrealized virtual reality scenario gives the exhibit surreal qualities and removes it from a strictly realist narrative. Bennett argues that art, unlike photography or

memoir, performs the shift away from colonization because of its non-realist tendencies. For art to be realist in the realm of trauma would directly conflict with the politics of testimony (here we can see the politics of testimony as being highly subjective and in the sphere of trauma, open to gaps and uncertainties). Bennett does not want the art of trauma to be viewed as "a faithful translation of testimony;" rather she wants this genre of art to "exploit its own unique capacities to contribute actively to these politics" (3). Viewed in this light, the art of trauma should be seen as contributing to this subjective, uncertain vortex. She writes, "what is important is that art itself challenges rather than reinforces the distinction between art and the reality of trauma and war" (Bennett, 4). Rosen's exhibit satisfies these imperatives. The abstract quality of the images, coupled with their small size, does not invite the museumgoer to visually place him/herself in the space of Hitler's bunker. Although the exhibit is part of the Holocaust genre and part of the genre of trauma and postmemory, it is not clearly representational. As it challenges the realities of Braun's life and death, *Live and Die* relies on a real event, but stretches it well beyond its *real* limitations.

On top of contending with the positionality of the aestheticized historical figure of Eva Braun, the museumgoer must contend with his/her own position as a product of the present when attempting to access and inhabit the past. In a similar vein of Landsberg's call to respect and negotiate difference (24), Bennett sees a necessary oscillation between being aware of one's self in the present and the striving to feel for the subject of the past; she traces the ways that "post-traumatic memory is felt in the here and now, both internally and externally, as it were. If art registers the shock of trauma (the flashback that one involuntarily revisits), it maintains this in tension with an experience of the present, an encounter with an 'outside'" (Bennett, 11). Rosen prompts this type of oscillation throughout *Live and Die.* When Hitler enters the scene in "The Arrival," the narrative carefully moves between Eva Braun and the viewer, and the radically diverse reactions one might have to his historical presence. Rosen writes, "when he opens the door you gasp at the sight of his small moustache. Because you are not only Eva it seems menacing, almost monstrous. But everything around the moustache is so congenial. He comes towards you with such warmth, his smile tired, his arms open to embrace you. Remember—you *are* Eva" (2). Here Braun's imagined memories are tempered by Rosen's acknowledgment of the visitor's likely response. There is a clear oscillation between Braun's reactions to Hitler and the viewer's likely response, of "congeniality" and "warmth" on one hand and "menacing" and "monstrous" on the other. Similarly, in Scene Six, "Tears," Rosen directly addresses his audience. When Braun faces the "black nozzle" of the gun, Rosen asks the reader to think about the side of themselves that "is not Eva." He asks: "How can death be simulated? And what of you is supposed to die in the name of such pretence? Would life really be the same once the Eva in you dies? What would life after death, life after life after death be like? And why the glum, the despair where the thrill of spectacle ought to be peaking to its uppermost acme?" (Rosen, 6).

With these questions, the viewer is encouraged not to take or consume what is in front of him/her. Rather, the exhibit calls for a transaction. Bennett argues: "trauma-related art is best understood as *transactive* rather than *communicative*. It often touches us, but it does not necessarily communicate the 'secret' of personal experience" (7). The spectacle Rosen alludes

to in his questions is not "dependent on its didactic message but on the creation of an intensity of affect that flows across and between bodies, and that refuses to settle within an ostensive subject" (Bennett, 14). Rosen's exhibit achieves a similar effect as the one Bennett describes Willie Doherty's *The Only Good One is a Dead One* as accomplishing. The visitor is not aligned with an inherently good character, or an inherently bad character. Just as we are meant to oscillate between the past and the present, we are also meant to oscillate between good and evil "so that we feel different possibilities, we see how a role might become character. The register of political analysis is not the act itself but the larger flows within which investments are made, and subjectivities are forged" (17). Looked at in this way, Rosen's exhibit resists simple consumption. The visitor is not looking at a well-defined character who has been tried under the moral codes of society or under the moral codes of Roee Rosen. Similar to the comparisons made in Donne's poem, the sin's of Eva Braun are judged no harsher than the sin's of the natural surroundings. Through these ambiguities the visitor is forced to attempt to understand his/her own "affective investments…at the way in which politics and morality operate via the coding of affective intensities and the production of identity grounded in affect" (Bennett, 18).

Testimonial Reading In the Museum

Looked at in the light of a politicized conception of empathy, Rosen's exhibit promotes and allows for an oscillating mode of empathic identification. The question arises as to what these types of contact point confrontations actually accomplishes, both within the museum and outside its walls. Ultimately it is up to the visitor to take what is given and put it to good use. Boler argues that empathy *may* prompt a person to act in "lived contexts" or those situations where he/she might be immediately helpful. However, she is "not convinced that empathy leads to anything close to justice, to any shift in existing power relations" (Boler, 255). Her remedy to this passivity is an active *testimonial reading*, wherein the reader/viewer is responsible for asking and answering how they themselves might be implicated in similar power relations/imbalances. Despite the fact that Boler discusses empathy and testimonial reading in regards to literature, she argues that a testimonial reading can undertaken across genres and mediums, especially with texts that are "historically situated in power relationships" (267). I propose that narrative exhibits, especially those that employ mimetic contact points, which again are representations that result from "a more drawn-out series of actions – such as measuring or photographing the body, then producing a reproduction of one or more parts" (Feldman, 255), are prime spaces for an embodied form of testimonial reading. These types of exhibits not only include complex narratives that can be read by the visitor, but they also produced experiences that are felt by the visitor's body. The important questions Boler believes we should ask ourselves in the context of a testimonial reading are: "what crisis of truth does this text speak to, and what mass of contradictions and struggles do I become as a result?" (267). A practice of testimonial reading pushes past the boundaries of empathy, asking the viewer not only to recognize difference, but to further understand power relations and contemplate personal implications in parallel scenarios.

The recognition of power relations is foremost in a testimonial reading. Boler argues that "as we hear about and witness horrors, what calls for recognition is not 'me' and the possibility of my misfortune, but a recognition of power relations that defines the interaction between reader and text and the conflicts represented within a text" (262). This recognition of power happens on three levels in Rosen's exhibit. Narratively, the viewer must confront the power relations between Eva Braun and Hitler. I have already shown how this is historically challenging in the absence of archival documentation, but it is nevertheless an important question to contemplate. Scene Three, "Control," directly addresses the issue of Hitler's power. While on the phone he is described as shouting commands, ordering the advancement of young soldiers "sure to die" (Rosen, 3). However, his words are "incomprehensible" and ultimately unimportant. Rosen writes that "clearly [his words] are secondary to his power, his might, his conviction and anger. The world outside the bunker, slavishly listening to your lover, is meekly shrinking. His power is perturbing, petrifying—and nothing is a better emblem of that power than the magisterial veins along his neck" (3). Not only does Hitler exert power over other's lives, which remain far outside the frame of Rosen's exhibit, but he also has the final power over Braun. Despite the fact that "you do not expect to die" (here again primarily pointing to the viewers position, but also imagining Braun's position), "you always trusted his power to decide on deadly matters—it has been infallible—as if by casting death around, assigning and sowing it so generously, he had created a bubble of health and immortality for you two" (6). This language of power and trust is perhaps uncomfortable for the viewer to wrap his/her head around, but it is this facet, amongst others, that allowed Hitler power; without the trust of so many people, Hitler would not have had the power to destroy so many. Further, it is these power relations between Braun and Hitler that complicate the identity of Braun in regards to her position as victim, bystander, or perpetrator. This complication speaks to the "crisis of truth," which we will ultimately never know. It is up to the viewer to decide what he/she becomes as a result.

The visitor must also confront the power relations between Eva Braun and Roee Rosen. On the one hand, Rosen, as shown earlier, has the utmost power over Braun, since he scripts her story without access to of concrete Truth about it. On the other hand, the viewer must also recognize the power Braun, or her legacy, has over Rosen in regards to the function of postmemory. We can see Rosen, the son of a Holocaust survivor, and his exhibit, through the frame of postmemory, a term used by Marianne Hirsch to designate the memories and subsequent representations of the descendants of Holocaust survivors. Like the other "posts" (post-modernism, post-colonialism, etc.), postmemory aligns itself "with the practice of citation and mediation," it has the tendency of "looking backward rather than ahead," and finally of "defining the present in relation to a troubled past rather than initiating new paradigms" (Hirsch, 106). However, unlike the other "posts," postmemory is not "a movement, method, or idea," and is not, therefore, a purposeful mode of knowledge or knowledge dissemination, but rather a *result* of traumatic recall that is a "structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge" (Hirsch, 106). Like traumatic knowledge, the representations produced by subsequent generations, such as Rosen's, are marked with the fissures and failures of remembrance that symptomatically define traumatic representations. Postmemory distinguishes itself from first hand memeories of trauma because it is not

"mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation" (107). Postmemories are not one's own, but this does not mean that they do not "overwhelm," "dominate," or "displace" the memories or consciousness of the second generation's own experience. Postmemory marks the inheritor in these ways, shaping them through their "exposure" to traumatic events "that still defy narrative reconstructions and exceed comprehension" (107). In this way, we can see the two-sided relations Rosen and Braun are engaged in. Whereas it is easy to see Rosen as trespassing into the sinful memories of another, it is just as possible to uncover the power Braun has over Rosen, actively inhabiting his thoughts and artistic creation resulting in a haunting exhibit.

Finally, the viewer must recognize his/her own power over the text, which is the power to look/walk away and forget. The viewer only has the tools to create change when he/she actively engages with this power relation. It is one thing to go to a gallery and "take in" or consume an exhibit, it is another thing all together to acknowledge power over the art and subsequently power over social and political difference. From this we can see that like the political model of empathy, the viewer must not only negotiate difference, but also negotiate his/her own relation to power and control over the experience under description.

Once the recognition of power relations is engaged, the viewer/visitor may then begin to recognize their own responsibility in similar scenarios. Again, this might be an uncomfortable undertaking; a testimonial reading recognizes self-implication, vulnerabilities, obstacles, ignorances, and responsibilities. A testimonial reading is not only required for one to empathize with the other, it permits recognition of "oneself as implicated in the social forces that create the climate of obstacles the other must confront" (Boler, 263). The key to an active testimonial reading hinges on the reader who:

> Must attend to herself as much as to the other – not in terms of 'fears of one's own vulnerabilities,' but rather in terms of the affective obstacles that prevent the reader's acute attention to the power relations guiding her response and judgements. For example, to experience a surge of irritation at the text allows the reader to examine potential analysis: does she dismiss the text or protagonist on some count, or examine her own safeguarded investment that desires to dismiss the text out of irritation? Might irritation, for example, indicate the reader's desire to avoid confronting the articulated pain? (Boler, 265)

The first two showings of Rosen's exhibit were, not unsurprisingly, contentious. Israel's Minister of Education went so far as to request the exhibit's closure (Meir, 1998), and when *Live and Die With Eva Braun* was included in the 2002 *Mirroring Evil* exhibit in New York's Jewish Museum, a scene from Rosen's text was censored (Nochlin, 167). These reactions are not surprising, primarily because the locations of these first exhibits are directly tied with identities - Israeli identity in 1997 and Jewish identity in 2002. But we must still question whether those who judged Rosen's exhibit and called the show "pure porn," "drivel," and "perverted"[6] revealed in themselves a symptom of their own avoidance, or their desire to not

confront something latent in themselves. We must question whether one person's or a group of people's desire to avoid particularly painful and uncomfortable memories infringes upon the possibility of the public's opportunity to engage with difficult but important subjects.

If the viewer experiences Rosen's exhibit testimonialy, he/she would explore just one of the many power relations that exemplifies the Holocaust. By placing ourselves in the shoes of Eva Braun, and if we are to take this task seriously without passively looking away, we might obtain some, albeit limited, understanding of how anyone, including ourselves, could love, believe in, or be controlled by a man such as Adolf Hitler. In Rosen's exhibit, the visitor is not prompted to do justice to the person depicted. No, Eva Braun is not the target of his virtual embodiment. This is the crux of the exhibit. We are invited into an otherwise uninhabitable space. We are asked to imagine ourselves as the lover of one of the twentieth-century's most vile perpetrators. We are not asked to protect her legacy, nor the legacies of the people her lover was responsible for killing. There is no justice in Rosen's exhibit to anyone other than, I would argue, ourselves. While there is evidence of easy identification there is also an imperative in the exhibit to recognize the vile, evil, and veiled parts of ourselves; looked another way, we are asked to contemplate when an action becomes sin before history can darken memory.

In so far as it forges a connection to the body, our bodies, Rosen's exhibit constructs a similar relationship to the one the contact point has to the colonial body. Ariella Azoulay astutely points out that "Rosen's exhibit posits the spectator as an attentive, speechless, nonsovereign subject" (65). Like the objects in Feldman's article, comprising shoes from the Holocaust and masks from colonial Africa, the visitor's body is placed in a similarly evacuated position. However, this evacuation can be seen as part of a project of empathic prosthetic memory work. In Landsberg's conception, "prosthetic memories are indeed 'personal' memories because they derive from engaged and experientially oriented encounters with technologies of memory. But because prosthetic memories are not natural, not the possession of a particular family or ethnic group, they evoke a more public past, a past that is not all privatized" (143). Rosen's invitation to inhabit another's thoughts and memories engages the museumgoer experientially – physically, consciously, and affectively. Rosen's exhibit facilitates a living connection, and through contact points, when engaged with seriously, formidable affective and embodied link are forged.

Rosen's exhibit is an ideal example of an embodied narrative that functions to faciliatate the mimetic contact point. Although his exhibit is allusive in its blurring of fact and fiction, personal and impersonal, familiar and unfamiliar, this obscurity makes the experience engaging, complex, and at times uncomfortable. It is this allusiveness that allows the viewer to be unsettled, to be placed in between knowing and not knowing, to be placed both inside the self and inside the other, and to be cognizant of negotiating difference. The viewer is asked to occupy a precarious position that, while organized around consumption, is probing and problematic. Despite the fact that "you are you" and can easily return to being you, the question lingers: "would life really be the same once the Eva in you dies?" (6). Our bodies can leave the exhibition, or we can leave the text behind, but will we ever be quite the same?

Whereas Feldman saw the conventional presentation in museums as limiting or dulling the will of museumgoers to engage with the embodied memories of the contact point, I argue that a testimonial reading can reengage visitors psychically and further serve to create memories that are attached to their own bodies. Ultimately, it is these links that are important; museumgoers can only take with them the memories attached to their own bodies, and can thus be better equipped to engage in empathic power relations and exchange systems both within and outside of the museum. The smells, feelings, sensations, and imaginings that Feldman sees as being "lost" can just as easily be gained in exhibits that invite the visitor to have an imaginative experience. The visitor must work against historical knowledge, political positionings, and preconceived biases in order to enter into this exchange. Bridging the contact point with empathic awareness and testimonial reading makes it a viable liaison between the past and present. When the visitor's mind and body are engaged in the exhibited experience, so too will the history and memory encapsulated in the contact point become activated.

Notes

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[1] In 2012 Rosen's show was exhibited under the name *Vile, Evil, Veil.* With only slight modifications from previous installations, the change in name is but another nod to the metaphorical and conscious shape-shifting that is performed in Rosen's exhibit.
[2] See Rosen's website for examples of images from this series, including "Number 65," here: http://roeerosen.com/tagged/Live-and-Die-as-Eva-Braun
[3] Numbers is parenthesis associated with Rosen's text correspond to scene number, not page number.
[4] The connection between knowledge and atrocity has been taken up by many theorists, and has been the impetus for exhibitions that expose the public to the effects and after-effects of genocide (Cohen 2001, Linenthal 2001, Landsberg 2004). However, recent works, such as Bennett's *Empathic Vision* and Lehrer, Milton, and Patterson's *Curating Difficult Knowledge* (2011), have begun looking at the affective dimensions of knowledge and the necessity of alternative modes of communication in regards to trauma and atrocity.
[5] For a nuanced biography of Eva Braun see: Heike B. Görtemaker. *Eva Braun: Lie with Hitler* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).
[6] For a sampling of negative reviews of *Live and Die* see Lucy Howard and C.K. Binswanger's "Nuzzling with the No. 1 Nazi: Eva's Perspective" and Ana Finel Honigman's "Not Good."

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Suggested Citation

Freier, Amy J. “Sin’s Black Memory: Contact Points and Empathic Understanding in Roee Rosen’s *Live and Die as Eva Braun*.” *Trespassing Journal: an online journal of trespassing art, science, and philosophy* 3 (Winter 2014). Web. ISSN: 2147-2734

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