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## Corpo/realities in times of educational crisis: Trauma, consumption and dialogue in *Au Revoir Les Enfants*

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### Abstract

There are numerous Holocaust documentaries, novels, memoirs, and movies depicting the endangered lives of Jewish children during World War II. As viewers and readers, flipping the pages or watching the images onscreen forces us to consider our place in relation to those individuals who have seen the unthinkable. We consume their stories, their testimonies – their vivid remembrances which transcend the place and space of fading-memories to become re-imagined, and lived-again through the painful acts of telling. We become witnesses to the stories told by these witnesses of true horrors (Felman & Laub, 1992). Louis Malle's (1987) film *Au Revoir Les Enfants* forces us, as viewers, to undertake this difficult task through the eyes of a nearly-silent protagonist – a Jewish boy named Jean Kippelstein, hidden in a private Catholic school in Vichy France by the school's headmaster, Father Jean, in 1944. The relations between Father Jean and his pupils are all complex and unravel over the course of the narrative, culminating in a final tragic scene with fatal consequences.

I contend that for filmic testimonies such as *Au Revoir Les Enfants*, the body of the endangered Jewish child is the operational and educational site of trauma. The narrative is fully able to “make the suffering body the small, focused universe of the tormented and a vehicle for rendering unimaginable experience tangible to readers” (Vickroy, 2002, p. 33) as it stands-in for an immeasurable collective experience. Describing acts of consumption signposted throughout the film, I assert that *Au Revoir Les Enfants* stands in as a social and bodily topography of education in times of crisis. The film works subtly to remind us that the trauma of the Holocaust is a collective as much as personal experience; it forces viewers to construct an ethical and critical consciousness about events otherwise washed away through time, dangerously finding redemption through history's fading memory.

Taking place in a school where bodies are literally made uniform by dressing alike, the body of the Jewish child stands out as the site of displacement, dysfunction, perhaps even dys-embodiment –embodiment that is not quite right, that is called into view and

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put into harm's way. Bodies in this film are writ large in the classroom and become the site/sight of education about the im/possibilities of universalizing the bodily experience. Treatments of the body become visceral narratives that tie together layers of national and personal trauma. Employing Leder's (1990) argument about the dis-appearing/dys-appearing body, I interrogate the filmic signposting the body as simultaneously consumer and consumed, excessive and grotesque, and ultimately, wholly transgressive.

However, I also suggest that films such as *Au Revoir Les Enfants* remind us about the possibility of opening up the educational dialogic (Buber, 1947/2002) on account of the body's powerful, central place. This is not to say that the transgressive body can be saved; rather, that the film forces a reflection about the possibilities of learning about alternate life experiences – including danger, death, and disability – through the bodily conditions inseparable from those who experience them. To that end, the relationships in the film illustrate both the possibilities and failures of the dialogic within education at its most vulnerable times and in its most endangered spaces.

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## 1. Introduction

Melancholic as it may be to ask, what does it mean to consume, if not enjoy, trauma? What does it mean to say, "I love that movie, *Au Revoir Les Enfants*" (the artefact under discussion in this article, which is about death and inhumanity experienced by children during the Holocaust)? In a time of pure simulacrum and hyper-representation, what does it mean to witness trauma and such inhumanity in and through a work of cinematic representation? Modestly, I aim to engage and dialogue with these questions. To bear witness, I am arguing, is a solemn act that requires vulnerability and openness on the one hand; and requires, on the other, a "work of mourning" (Douglas & Vogler, p. 48), where one is to ask: how do we go on living after witnessing trauma? If "[n]o one bears witness for the witness," as the French writer and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel put it (cited in Felman, 1992, p. 3), then "[t]o bear witness is to bear the solitude of a responsibility, and to bear the responsibility, precisely, of that solitude" (Felman, 1992, p. 3).

The number of documentaries, novels, memoirs and movies depicting this solitude of endangered lives of, especially, Jewish children during World War II is ever exponential. As texts that are bearing witness, Douglas and Volger (2003) argue, one remarkable feature that knots most of these texts is their ability to pull us-readers-and-viewers into their narrative, a narrative that is penetrated by an experience of bearing witness to the horrors of history. We are forced to consider our place beside those who have seen the unthinkable, who have been able to reach inside themselves to understand what they have witnessed. We consume their stories, their testimonies – their vivid remembrances which transcend the place and space of fading-memories to become re-imagined, and lived-again through the painful acts of telling. In the end, we become witnesses to the stories told by these witnesses of true horrors. By reading the memoirs and watching the films, we come to bear witness to the nightmare made tangible through difficult words on the page and the images onscreen.

Even in this age of iPods, tablets, and internet videos, as educators, we notice books such as Anne Frank's infamous and timeless memoir still circulating in elementary and junior high school hallways, carried in the hands of young students emerging from English classrooms, read in the corridors between lectures, and discussed at lunch tables. There is something which captures the imagination about the story of the individual in danger from cultural persecution which has an ethereal quality. In the case of *Au Revoir Les Enfants*, this quality is a way of allowing viewers to enter the horrific space of Holocaust memory and trauma. Felman and Laub (1992) get underneath the effects of reading (and in our case, viewing) by asking, "is the act of reading [viewing] literary [or cinematic] texts itself inherently related to the act of facing horror?" (p. 2, original emphasis). They explain that, while "the burden of the witness...is a radically unique, noninterchangeable, solitary burden..... the appointment to bear witness is, paradoxically enough, an appointment to transgress the confines of that isolated stance, to speak for and to others" (ibid., p. 3). The work of films, literature and poetry about the Holocaust, I argue, demands that readers and viewers today reach into the experience of the individual, to access a truth that is unbearable, and to bear witness to the

breaking of silences, to the transgressions of solitude, to listen astutely to the testimony of those who have witnessed history's horrors. To that end, Louis Malle's (1987) film *Au Revoir Les Enfants* asks us as viewers to undertake this difficult task through both the eyes of a nearly-silent protagonist – a Jewish boy named Jean Kippelstein, and his friend Julien Quentin – a Catholic schoolboy who witnesses Jean's life in hiding.

## 2. An aporetic representation: witnessing the witness

*Au Revoir Les Enfants* is set in a private school run by monks in a small town in France in 1944. At the beginning of a new semester, three children are enrolled by the headmaster, Father Jean, and the audience recognizes that they are Jewish – given new names and identities to hide them from the Nazis and Vichy Regime. One of the children, Jean Bonnet (whose real, Jewish name is Kippelstein) befriends a Catholic boy named Julien. Jean and Julien are not particularly popular, somewhat dreamy – fantasizing about girls, and reading stories of the *Arabian Nights* and *Three Musketeers*. Jean and Julien spend time playing, studying, and even getting lost one day during a game in the woods – an event which brings them closer together. Soon after, Julien discovers that Jean Bonnet is not his friend's actual name, and a few days later, when out for lunch with Julien's mother at a restaurant in town, the boys witness an anti-Semitic incident with a long-time patron of the restaurant who is confronted by police. The audience does not receive any more direct information about what Julien presumes or believes about Jean, but soon thereafter, the three Jewish boys, including Jean, are betrayed by a disgruntled, disabled ex-employee – Joseph the kitchen helper. In the final scene of the film, Julien watches helplessly as Jean, the other boys, and the headmaster, are taken away by the Gestapo to concentration camps.

Undoubtedly, this film like other Holocaust films, comes up against the same warning uttered by Adorno about writing poetry after Auschwitz – namely that a general state of aporia hovers over acts of representation, or as Martin (2006) asks, if the double layers of aporetic anxiety might ever be resolved through representation in ways which paradoxically “produce the knowledge of its own impossibility.” Hartelius (2011) contends that the rhetorical challenge in creating narratives which adequately represent the traumatic reside in the ability “to create an intelligible discourse out of the traumatic event” (p. 73) especially when “words seem to fall short” (p. 89). Indeed, trauma at the level of the Holocaust silences us as writers, and as viewers of films like *Au Revoir Les Enfants*. Yet Hartelius (2011) also reminds us that witnessing itself is a rhetorical creation, and so one might ask about the productive space of anxiety, of the aporia which confronts us as that which both requires and refuses representation, that simultaneously demands articulation and reminds us of its impossibility.

Bearing in mind the kind of aporia any kind of Holocaust representation creates, I am mindful of the argument made by LaCapra (2001) and Vickroy (2002) that the representational capacity of trauma fiction can be powerful. *Au Revoir Les Enfants* opens up a space where the onscreen story of Jewish children in Vichy France can be remembered, and where the potential silencing of the narrative about Jewish French children during World War II might be counteracted by employing fiction which acts as a truth-telling device. Felman and Laub (1992) explain that “[i]n literature as well as in psychoanalysis and conceivably in history as well, the witness might be... the one who (in fact) witnesses, but also, the one who begets, the truth, through the speech process of the testimony” (p. 15, original emphasis). To that end, *Au Revoir Les Enfants* works subtly to remind us that the trauma of the Holocaust is a collective as much as personal experience; it forces the viewer to construct an ethical and critical consciousness about events otherwise washed away through time, dangerously finding redemption through history's fading memory. Holocaust narratives are the sinews between layers of national and personal trauma.

For this film, I contend that the body of the endangered Jewish child is the operational and educational site of trauma. The irresolvable disharmony and friction between bodily experience and psychological trauma explodes outwards from the child to the Jewish community as a whole, and echoes as a crisis at the level of humanity. The bodily experience of the individual transplants itself into the social world in a way articulated by Stallybrass and White (1986):

...the body cannot be thought separately from the social formation, symbolic topography and the constitution of the subject. The body is neither a purely natural given nor is it merely a textual metaphor, it is a privileged operator for the transcoding of these other areas. (p. 192)

In other words, a film like *Au Revoir Les Enfants* is able to “make the suffering body the small, focused universe of the tormented and a vehicle for rendering unimaginable experience tangible to readers” (Vickroy, 2002, p. 33) as it stands-in for an immeasurable collective experience. Using acts of consumption signposted throughout the film, we consider *Au Revoir Les Enfants* to be a social and bodily topography of education in times of crisis. Taking place in a school where bodies are literally made uniform by dressing alike, somehow the body of the Jewish child stands out as the site of displacement, dysfunction, perhaps even dys-embodiment – embodiment that is not quite right, that is called into view and put into harm’s way. Bodies in this film are writ large in the classroom and become the site/sight of education about the im/possibilities of universalizing the bodily experience. Employing Leder’s (1990) argument about the dis-appearing/dys-appearing body, we interrogate the filmic signposting the body as simultaneously consumer and consumed, excessive and grotesque, and ultimately, wholly transgressive. Yet we also suggest that possibilities for opening up the educational dialogic exist (Buber, 1947/2002) on account of the body’s powerful, central place in the film. This is not to say that the transgressive body can be saved; rather, that the film forces a reflection about the possibilities of learning about alternate life experiences – including danger, death, and disability – through the bodily conditions inseparable from those who experience them.

### 3. The traumatized and transgressive body

Leder (1990) provides a starting point to think about the concept of embodiment and, specifically, how the body opens itself onto the world. Suggesting that our bodies engage the world directly, Leder explains that this “recessive” body allows us to actively interact with others – the body is put forth into society as the surface that touches and reaches the world directly. But he suggests simultaneously that our viscera, primarily the eye as the perceiving organ of the body, causes a phenomenological loss, a bodily disappearance. The eye is unavailable to our consciousness and our direction, and thus recedes from direct control. In both cases, the body disappears from our view. Our experience of our bodily organs is reductive, spatially ambiguous, and discontinuous across geographies and time. And Leder further suggests that we “do not perceive from these organs; hence they can hide beneath the body surface such that I do not perceive to them either” (p. 44). In other words, the body operates as an “it” more fully than it does a cognizant and aware “I.” As Heidegger suggests in his philosophy of *dasein*, we thus enter the world from the womb with unknown and ambiguous origins. Leder accuses the body of being foreign, and not merely a container for a Cartesian concept of consciousness. He asserts, “I cannot even claim my own cells as fully my own. In all probability, they evolved out of symbiotic relations between different prokaryotic cells, one living inside another. My body everywhere bears the imprint of Otherness” (p. 66).

As the body generally recedes when functioning adequately, Leder suggests we become fully aware of its capacity during times of dysfunction. Bodily inattention is disrupted and becomes problematic when we are confronted with pain, illness, disability, and death – and the social phenomena that might cause these disruptions. We are confronted with both hermeneutical and pragmatic conflicts: suffering asks us to search for reasons, meaning, and causality alongside the desire to seek relief – a cohesive way to act toward the body. This is what Leder calls *dys-appearance*, a state of being thrust into a state where the body fails to dis-appear and instead confronts us head-on. The Cartesian rational mind in its perpetual disembodied state is plucked out of its comfortable duality. As Kleinman (1988) explains, when the body is ill, “[w]e feel under siege: untrusting, resentful of uncertainty, lost. Life becomes a working out of sentiments that follow closely from this corporeal betrayal: confusion, shock, anger, jealousy, despair” (p. 44-45). When watching at *Au Revoir Les Enfants*, I am fully confronted with such bodily betrayals, and am faced with the ways in which the body is thrust out in the open for all to consume. The trauma of imminent death becomes a crisis of life, and as a viewer who inevitably share the ontology of human embodiment that Leder advocates, I feel the ongoing pain of those who simply cannot disappear. The universalizing experience of embodiment is turned upside down as we are torn from the way we experience our bodies (as absent) to the way traumatized and threatened bodies erupt onscreen – made imminently manifest, impossible to “disappear” despite all efforts. In particular, this film places two kinds of bodies onscreen who *dys-appear* in recurring fashion: the crippled body of Joseph, the kitchen helper, and the endangered Jewish body of Jean, an orphan posing as a French Catholic schoolboy to avoid certain death.

When watching *Au Revoir Les Enfants*, we as viewers feel danger for Jean Kippelstein throughout the film, arriving on the viewing “scene” with prior knowledge about World War II. The audience is aware of Father Jean’s secret of saving the Jewish boys right away, and we carry this knowledge throughout the film well before Julien discovers Jean’s real identity. As well, it is clear that the dissolution of the school’s structure and relationships is a microcosm of the larger war. The experience of war-time puts bodies in full view: as soldiers who are killed, the bodies of Jewish survivors who are hunted down and executed, and those who cannot participate in the war effort (the elderly, crippled, children). As the school and its internal conflicts escalate towards finalizing solutions, especially Father Jean’s expulsion of Joseph the kitchen-boy for trading the boys’ gifts of food on the black market, leaving him with nowhere to live (in contrast to the schoolboys who are only punished by losing their holidays), we are reminded of the fighting going on in France as a series of betrayals, such as the French Vichy soldiers attempting to rid their town of Jewish people, as seen in the restaurant where Julien and Jean are taken to dine and where a long-time Jewish patron of the restaurant is confronted and asked to leave. The Jewish body is writ large as excessive, indeed Jewish bodies are in excess, and their impossibility to dis-appear is imminent. The facets which make individuals Jewish – their bodies, their language, their habits, and ultimately their official papers and mandatory Star of David sewed on their clothing – become sites of dys-appearance. And these early scenes in the film remind us of the Final Solution, which ultimately consumes Jean in Auschwitz a few months later when he is discovered by the Gestapo.

Father Jean, the school’s headmaster, seems to understand the position of Jewish children, as we see in his sermon asking parents of the schoolchildren to avoid hoarding wealth and food and to share with everyone, and to rally together as one united force against sentiments that divide people based on social class and religion. But even at the chapel, some parents disagree, and leave the service. They come together to distinguish themselves from the Jewish body, cleansing themselves of a group that is both silent and absent at the meeting. Solidarity for the moral good of all is far from a possibility among parents, and as an extension of their parents’ views, the French schoolboys only rally together to mob their easiest victim, Joseph, whom they mock, beat, and push down. He is not Jewish, but is the crippled kitchen-helper, a perpetual outsider who will never attain legitimacy and who represents himself loudly and vocally about his feelings of expulsion and consumption, declaring after being surrounded and beaten, “I am not a dog!” Joseph, tender of pigs, dirt, and food scraps, reminds us of the “low other” in Bakhtin’s analysis of the carnivalesque. Far from the positive experience of freedom and wilful degradation (an inversion and joyful mockery of official feudal culture), Joseph is fully relegated to the margins without celebration. His limp and inability to join the war as a soldier or resistance fighter renders him perpetually in a state of dys-appearance. Joseph’s bodily excess – his disability – reminds us of Douglas’ (1970, 1980) writing on taboo and pollution. Douglas explains that ‘dirt’ symbolizes disorder, but there is no thing as dirt in absolute terms. It is merely immaterial, unwanted “stuff” that is out of place. Indeed Joseph is the lowest social figure in the film, and a recognition of his place as ‘dirt’ functions in the same way that Douglas explains – as that which pressures boundaries on account of always being in the wrong place, unwanted, and which demands re-ordering. If the categories of social class, gentile/Jewishness, religion, and schooling are all marked by boundaries, Joseph is the figure who moves between them – selling his wares to the “high” class of French Catholic students, while trading their goods on the black market. It is on account of being a “low-Other” (Stallybrass & White, 1986, p. 5) that Joseph is so essential to the film. High culture’s dependency upon the low opens up a

...mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear and desire in the construction of subjectivity: a psychological dependence upon precisely those Others which are being rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level. It is for this reason that what is *socially* peripheral is so frequently *symbolically* central... (Stallybrass & White, 1986, p. 5, emphasis in original)

Indeed, Joseph upsets the social order through his paradoxical mobility – he cannot move well physically, but he slips between social classes, low places and official circles, all the while having his body marking him as Other. Yet as Douglas (1980) contends, that which pollutes – in this case, the liminal body of the transgressive Other who moves between social and physical spaces – forces reflection about the relationship of “order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, life to death” (p. 6). Joseph gains legitimacy by being the natural and essential opposite of those in “high” places, by those he serves: at first, the French schoolboys for trading of their black market goods, and ultimately, the Gestapo for Joseph’s information about the boys being hidden at the school.

Jean Kippelstein, feeling the same initial fears as Joseph about being surrounded and consumed by the schoolboys, remains silent in the face of Joseph's treatment and his own mockery when he is first brought to the school. Jean might similarly be considered abject – the body out of place who pollutes the tidy school system, rendering it out of order. After all, Jean's parents cannot attend the chapel service and dinner hosted by the monks because they have already been consumed by war – they've been executed. Only Julien recognizes Jean's difference, his bodily dys-appearance, first quietly, and then by probing Jean by asking a few questions. Even through his naïve questioning, he begins to recognize the danger felt by the Other – asking him if he feels scared, to which Jean replies “all the time.” The question of his Jewishness never becomes a full conversation. Instead it is understood by Julien; he feels the danger surrounding Jean even though he doesn't understand it fully. Strangely, he “recognizes” the other boy's legitimacy, somehow recognizing the Other's bodily dys-appearance perhaps on account of his unawareness of his own dis-appearing, safe body. Julien lives vicariously through Jean's fears and feelings. This is most evident when the boys get lost during the bandana game while hiking and Julien asks, “are there wolves in these woods?” They get frightened together when a wild boar approaches them, and for a moment share the fear of being consumed by wild animals. A transgressive space opens up for a moment, where Julien enters the world of Jean's abjection, unaware of the larger danger faced by Jean symbolized in their momentary fears of being lost. Ironically, German soldiers pick them up, telling them not to worry because they're “Bavarians and [also] Catholics.” Later, when questioned by the other boys, Julien exaggerates his story like the adventure tales he reads in *The Three Musketeers*, saying that there were five hundred boars and the Germans fired shots at them – neither of which actually happened. Jean, feeling no need to exaggerate the story or his close encounter of being consumed by the real enemy, remains silent.

#### **4. Bodies in motion: signposting Buber's dialogic**

I might suggest here that Julien's absent body, the safe body of the French Catholic child who can dis-appear, enters the space of the low, the abject, the transgressive dys-appearing body during this time of crisis (the threat of execution upon Jean as he hides in the school.) How is this possible and why is it important? I posit an educational perspective, invoking Martin Buber's concept of the dialogic to understand movement within the space between the non-threatened dis-appearing body and the dys-appearing body in imminent danger so that I might explore the possibilities presented, and sometimes denied, by dialogue that is not uttered but rather written onto the body of students facing danger and persecution in classrooms, and in schools under duress. Students' utterances, as we have seen, are not always verbal. Their bodies become more than the sight of education – orderly, uniformed, in rows. Bodies become the very site where the horrors of the world are written into the microcosm of the classroom – as the child abandoned, bullied, orphaned. In this film, the horrors of war echo loudly into the learning space. What possibilities exist for students like Jean to be heard, to be seen. Moreover, when students' status as Other is known, writ large, and reinforced, how might the caretakers of the educational space – its teachers and headmasters – engage with the student most abject, most reviled?

In his address at the Heidelberg conference in August 1925, Martin Buber (1947/2002) asserted that “the relation in education is one of pure dialogue” (p. 116). By this, he was referring to the relation between teacher and student as one grounded in a “subterranean dialogic,” (ibid.) or an inclusive relationship. The definition of inclusion, Buber explains, is how one can come to know (an)other physically and spiritually, but not merely through empathy. Inclusion is an extension of the self rather than the desire to imagine oneself in another person's situation, to merely transpose the self into another set of conditions. Rather, it is how the self experiences a common event or moment with another person as an extension of the self (without losing a sense of self). This is to say that a “person, without forfeiting anything of the felt reality of his [sic] activity, at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other” (p.115). A relationship of inclusion is a dialogical relation and stands apart from monologue, where there is complete failure to open oneself up to the o/Other. Generally speaking, relationships between people are marked by power relationships (see Foucault, 1979), and these are monologic because discourses of power entrenched in the hierarchical order are largely immutable. By contrast, the dialogic opens up possibilities for learning by two people perceiving reality from distinct, yet simultaneous positions. This is “what

makes it possible to meet and know the other in his [sic] concrete uniqueness and not just as a content of one's experience" (xiii, Friedman in Buber, 1947/2002).

There are three forms of Buber's dialogue. The first is when each person in the relation becomes aware of the other's "legitimacy" (p. 117) and is able to acknowledge the other through "necessity and meaning" (ibid.). This is not merely a recognition of the other's position relatively speaking – as an alternate truth. Instead, it is a wholly encompassing recognition of the position of another as an extension of our own being, and helps to fulfill us through the act of recognition. Julien exists in a seemingly liminal space between his own unthreatened position and Jean's endangered one. While Jean has more depth of experience in the face of trauma than Julien, and teaches his friend about the world most often by remaining silent, Julien experiences the education of this teacher-figure, his new friend Jean. What is left unsaid creates a space of learning about the world. As audience, we learn a great deal about inclusion. The film itself is monologic by design. Its power over the audience as a "text" demands consumption. But the viewer experiences loss, recognition, and mutuality with the characters onscreen, especially Jean, with whom we not only sympathize and feel danger, but seemingly come to know. The dramatic quality of film-watching gives us the knowledge of what Jean already knows long before Julien is able to recognize the inevitable – that Jean will be captured and killed. The audience is thus like a pupil early-on in the teacher-student relationship; viewers can only passively acknowledge the truth about Jean's fate as the story unravels. As the film progresses, audience members co-evolve as pupils who learn about society, war, and the Final Solution through the eyes of its young victims.

Buber's second concept of dialogue introduces the reader to inclusion in education more fully. He explains that the teacher experiences a student's education first, and often the reverse does not happen for some time. However, the dialogic is fully achieved once the student experiences the teacher's learning, leading to a mutual recognition of growth and co-evolution as learners. We contend that the relationship that emerges between Jean and Julien is made possible through Julien's symbolic entry into the bodily space of Jean's dys-appearing body. This is demonstrated foremost in the film as acts of consumption that teach Julien about the world outside the school. I take up Stallybrass & White's (1986) contention about the symbolic importance of the body in narrative and history, proposing that the carnivalesque (excessive) body:

...mediates between a classical/classificatory body and its negotiations, its Others, what it excludes to create identity... In this process discourses about the body have a privileged role, for transcodings between different levels and sectors of social and psychic reality are effected through the intensifying grid of the body. (p. 26)

*Au Revoir Les Enfants* is full of hints and references about the place of the body as a symbolic structure which organizes the dialogic. This begins early in the film with the proclamations of innocence by an obese student named Boulanger (ironically, named the "baker") who faints during Father Jean's sermon about consuming the blood of Christ. His literal bodily excess is the symbolic opposite of the starvation and duress encountered by Jews, and his naïve questions and over-the-top antics render him grotesque and stupid in the face of real questions of bodily endangerment. In an ironic juxtaposition of excess, the pigs that fight for scraps are tended by Joseph, who becomes Judas figure, betraying Jean and the other Jewish schoolboys to the Gestapo at the end of the film. The pigs are a symbol of police authority as well as the food which Jean cannot eat because he is Jewish. But Joseph, who has power over these symbolically "low" animals, historically representing dirt and disorderly carnival culture (see Stallybrass & White), is a victim also. He learns about the realities of the war through the failed economics of trading food with the "enemy" – the boys of wealthy families who do not see the value of the goods they trade for stamps and cigarettes. Jean resists the food trading economy and the food itself, denying Julien's offer of pâté made of pork.

Yet Jean's desire for inclusion is also demonstrated through his silent attendance at the communion in the chapel, where he approaches Father Jean, kneeling to accept the host. Father Jean skips over him, denying him the act of consumption and inclusion at the moment he wants it most. Julien sees what happens, and Jean fails to achieve solidarity with the boys in this critical moment. It is notable that Father Jean, whose dis-appearing body is under his somatic control in the film (he chooses to place himself in danger by hiding the Jewish children), fails to share the body of Christ with Jean. Jean's dys-appearing body is again called-out, made visible in this moment of exclusion. Father Jean denies Jean at the only moment in the film where he wishes to consume something. The result of Father

Jean's interference in a moment where bodily unions (the symbolic body of Christ, the Jewish body, the French Catholic body) might enable Jean to dis-appear, if only for a moment during the service, is that Father Jean fails to establish a dialogic relationship with his pupil. He cannot bring himself to contradict his religious practices to become one with Jean, to enter the dangerous but hopeful liminal space between his own safe body and Jean's endangered one – indeed where he might understand bodily dys-appearance on a visceral level. He fails to be the teacher who truly knows what Jean is feeling and experiencing as an outsider. Father Jean is limited as a teacher, preserving Jean from persecution only on account of his solidarity with the resistance movement and desire to save a life, but not because he desires a true dialogic relationship with him. At the end of the film, we see the final act of consumption – of Jewish bodies – as the three children are hauled away by the Gestapo to their death in Auschwitz. Again, Boulanger, the overweight child and ultimate consumer, declares “what are they doing? We haven't done anything!” which signals both the naiveté of the children and the failure of relationships in the film to evolve to the level of mutuality between people. For the first time in the movie, Julien remains silent. He is not confused as he had been in the past. He experiences reciprocity with Jean as he waves to him when Jean turns around for a moment before being taken away.

The final form of the dialogic relationship that Buber describes is friendship, which evolves from the two-sided learning experience. Buber explains, “we call friendship the third form of the dialogical relation, which is based on a concrete and mutual experience of inclusion. It is the true inclusion of another by human souls” (p. 119). During the last scenes of the film, when pursued by the Gestapo and during the shutting down of the school, Julien finally achieves this level of dialogic relationship – friendship with Jean. It occurs through a profound loss of innocence by Julien. Even when the Gestapo asks the boys to pack up their belongings, Julien has not achieved this level, giving his book of the *Arabian Nights* to Jean naively. However, once Julien steps into the courtyard and is confronted by Joseph who tells him that he sold-out Father Jean and exposed him for hiding Jewish students in the school, Julien recognizes what is happening, and comprehends his own care and fears for his friend. He has learned the truth from both sides, and backs away from Joseph in horror – recognizing him as not merely an outsider on account of class and bodily difference, but as one who transcends classes without guilt in horrific fashion. Joseph, the outcast and cripple – the one character never included in the relationships of the school – tells Julien to “stop acting so pious,” reducing Julien's actions to the teachings of the church. Instead, Julien runs back into the building to find his friend, for the first time feeling the same desperation felt by Jean, and experiences true solidarity with him. Julien's Catholic body is called out as symbolically righteous. Yet his loss of innocence renders him far from naïve – enabling him to finally fully recognize Jean's bodily endangerment. It is only in this moment of crisis and recognition of Jean's inevitable death that the third dialogic level of genuine friendship emerges. The final lesson taught to Julien by his friend is though this act of consumption, where Jean is silently taken away to die, and waves good-bye without saying a word.

## 5. Conclusion

Martin Buber's three forms of dialogue allow us to learn through witnessing a film what the characters onscreen learn through experience. Only when Father Jean himself is about to be persecuted and sent to a work camp could he enter into the second form of the dialogic relation with Jean, by experiencing fully the feelings of imminent persecution, betrayal, and horror felt by his pupil. However, the conditions are set for him by the forces of war. Father Jean does not enter into this dialogic relation willingly. Yet, unfortunately, he experiences it as the result of his actions. The children at the end of the film remain naïve, saluting Father Jean in solidarity, innocence, and a failure of full understanding signalled by their words, “au revoir, mon père!” as he is taken away. Julien, remaining silent, having entered into a full dialogic relationship with Jean only moments before, is no longer innocent. He cannot resist what he knows about final solutions – for himself as witness, for Joseph who has transgressed the social order, for Father Jean who faces brutal punishment, and most profoundly, for his friend Jean who will surely die.

I now wish to return to the original question at the outset of this paper, asking “what does it mean to consume, if not enjoy, trauma?” What does it mean to walk away from the viewing experience a “witness to witnesses” of horror? If trauma occurs when action is of no avail, when transgressions will continue despite the will to stop them,



those who witness (as Julien witnesses the horrors facing Jean, and Jean witnesses Jewish extermination) and those who watch his inability to take meaningful action is frustrating and angering. Trauma is about being trapped. It is about confronting the difficulty of not just the events at hand (in this case the Holocaust) but the tension that lies between the event and the experience of remembering it. In other words, films like *Au Revoir Les Enfants* are educational foremost because they bring forth the necessary dialectic tension between a desire to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them loudly. I would contend that films such as this provide a complicated conduit for viewers into the space of witnessing. This is to say, audience members on the one hand, view a film for its entertainment potential, while being inserted into the dialectic of trauma. This is achieved by being forced into a state of witnessing the witness. Walking into the movie theatre, we might not have expected to view the sad trajectory of Jean's experience through Julien's eyes. Nevertheless we have been made unwilling and unwittingly witnesses to Julien's trauma: his incapacity to change what will happen to Jean at Auschwitz. Yet by understanding the status of the body in site of education, we are able to go beyond what is said in the filmic narrative, and by reading the bodily transgressions further, through the dialogic, we can begin to understand the silences in spaces of education – that which cannot be said, especially by those silenced by the horrors of history. As viewers of trauma, we are asked to read more deeply, underneath the verbal utterances, and beyond the grand narrative of history. However, I assert that we must locate the spaces in which the body is portrayed as as transgressive, and find, and make memorable, the moments signposted by bodily status in which dialogue did not take place as a kind of education which not taught explicitly. The film makes it necessary to uncover trauma in the movie-watching experience of suspended reality. Safely in the dark in the movie theatre, we must be cognizant of more than our own silence. Rather, the silences involved in bearing witness to Jean's fate, and in the viewing -- witnessing Julien as another kind of witness onscreen -- make a clear statement about the place of the corporeal in education, and the necessity to articulate the place of the individual body – that is, each child and his or her story. Bearing witness thus becomes an experience out of which we can mourn for bodily loss by violent ends, as often the body is the message, and stands in for that which cannot be safely be declared aloud.

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