



9-1-2008

The False Witness: Artistic Research on Stage

Orit Simhoni

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr>



Part of the [Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons](#), and the [Social Statistics Commons](#)

Recommended APA Citation

Simhoni, O. (2008). The False Witness: Artistic Research on Stage. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(3), 353-378. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1583>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Qualitative Report at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Qualitative Report by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.



THE QUALITATIVE REPORT
DISCOVER ONE OF OUR VIRTUAL
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH WORKSHOPS
WITH INDUSTRY EXPERTS.

JOIN US ONLINE. LIMITED SPOTS AVAILABLE. BOOK YOURS NOW!

TQR
THE QUALITATIVE REPORT
WHERE THE WORLD COMES TO LEARN
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The False Witness: Artistic Research on Stage

Abstract

Sharing research findings with others is a fundamental concern of researchers. Qualitative research results may be disseminated in conventional (e.g., scholarly text or presentation) or innovative (e.g., art, drama, or poetry) forms. Given that researchers should select the best form of presentation of their work, it is worthwhile to explore creative options. One such option is theatrical performance. The purpose of this study is to describe one playwright's experience in creating a research-based drama, *The False Witness*. While focusing on the process of research-based drama, this article is intended to inform researchers and artists about the potential of a research-based theatrical production to re-present social research material—and to tell a story in a way that can transform social consciousness.

Keywords

Holocaust, Anti-Semitism, Case Study, Autoethnographic Theater, and Emancipation

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

The False Witness: Artistic Research on Stage

Orit Simhoni

Silver Spring, Maryland

*Sharing research findings with others is a fundamental concern of researchers. Qualitative research results may be disseminated in conventional (e.g., scholarly text or presentation) or innovative (e.g., art, drama, or poetry) forms. Given that researchers should select the best form of presentation of their work, it is worthwhile to explore creative options. One such option is theatrical performance. The purpose of this study is to describe one playwright's experience in creating a research-based drama, *The False Witness*. While focusing on the process of research-based drama, this article is intended to inform researchers and artists about the potential of a research-based theatrical production to re-present social research material--and to tell a story in a way that can transform social consciousness. Key Words: Holocaust, Anti-Semitism, Case Study, Autoethnographic Theater, and Emancipation*

Introduction

Choosing how to disseminate research results is a critical component of any social research project. While some social scientists continue to present their work in conventional ways (e.g., dissertations, journal publications, and lectures), some researchers describe creative methods of re-presentation (Brearley, 2000; Chenail, 1995; Deacon, 2000), and dissemination in non-traditional forms, including dance, theater, music, poetry, and visual arts (Denzin, 2003; Gray et al., 2000; Mienczakowski, 1997; Sparkes, 2003).

As scientists develop the linkage of art and science by "...documenting human life in ways that are both artistic and scientific" (Qualitative Interest Group, 2005, Introductory section, ¶1), engineers, designers, and artists are using research methods to understand their patrons, to develop their products (Morgan, 1997; Routio, 2007; Sofres, 2003), and to produce images which reflect the meaning of the human experience. While the notion of "art in research and research in art" is a controversial topic among scholars (see e.g., Balkema & Slager, 2004; Collins, 1992; Eisner, 1981), art and science have been combined to create research-based art. Routio explains,

Research which is planned and carried out in the purpose of assisting the creation of art has sometimes been called scientific art, artistic research, and practice-based research. Research and artistic creation are often combined into one project and carried out by one person. Note that in these projects the final aim is to create art, and research assists it. (p. 133)

The combination of scientific research and art has the potential to produce a creation based on a more intense analysis than objective science alone. As Chenail (1992a) notes in his discussion on the integration of artistic and scientific ways of knowing, “For scientific qualitative researchers not to consider and explore the work of...artistic qualitative researchers, and vice versa, is a great loss for both groups...” (Introductory section, ¶3). Similarly, Wilson (1996) suggests, in order to improve the development of new technologies (e.g., image, sound, and video creations), traditional scientific analysis should be combined with the artistic traditions of cultural analysis, social commentary, iconoclasm, and innovation. Arguing for the integration of research and art, Wilson explains,

Valuable lines of inquiry die from lack of support because they are not within favor of particular scientific disciplines. New technologies with fascinating potential are abandoned because they are judged not marketable. Our culture must develop methods to avoid the premature snuffing of valuable lines of inquiry and development. I believe the arts can fill a critical role as an independent zone of research. (Section I, ¶4)

“The arts can capture the inner essence of a matter whereas history cannot” adds Piirto (2002, p. 435), and therefore, the intertwining of research and art is a practical way of fabricating a new work of art. In his study of research-based art, Routio (2007) points out that when a new work of art is created by the linkage of artistic and scientific traditions, it serves both the artistic and scientific communities. He describes several practical outcomes of this linkage: Scientific methods may provide artists with several benefits, including procedures for: (a) enumerating and analyzing sources of the artistic creation, (b) analyzing the goals of the work of art, (c) describing the composition of the content, theme, or motif of the work of art, (d) observing the process of creating the work of art, (e) presenting the results of the artistic study, (f) obtaining feedback from the public, critics, or colleagues in the field of art, and (g) testing the validity of theories in the field of descriptive aesthetics. Routio also suggests that artistic procedures are usable in scientific projects. His examples include: (a) presenting the research problem as a work of art, (b) defining a concept for a new product in the format of an artistic presentation (e.g., cartoon or pictorial presentation), and (c) compressing empirical data into a model.

Given that sharing data with others is a fundamental concern of scientific researchers (Gray et al., 2000; National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research, 1996; Vandergrift, n.d.), the transformation of research into an art form may effectively support the scholarly goal of making knowledge available to interested audiences.

Research-based art is relatively accessible to interested audiences and an effective transmitter of knowledge to consumers. Saldana (1998) notes, “Written reports can be slippery mediators of participants’ life experiences...” (p. 182). It follows that in practice, social scientists may choose to employ artistic methods to represent real human stories, and artists may employ real human stories in constructing a new work of art. In both cases, scientific scrutiny combines with creativity to carry a message with dramatic impact. One noteworthy example in this genre is Bell’s *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Performance of Racism* (1992). Drawing from historical events and his experiences

as a black law professor at Harvard University, civil rights activist Derrick Bell uses allegorical stories, "...a more helpful vehicle than legal precedent..." (p. ix), to illustrate the uselessness of depending on White Americans for racial justice. While Bell's stories are not historically accurate, they dramatically depict Bell's experience of racism, and his struggle to confront it, in America.

While allegories, poems, paintings, music, dance, and other research-based art forms are all potentially compelling, Gray et al. (2000) notes the particular advantages of researched-based theater. Connecting data to a theatrical performance seems preferable to finding the unread manuscripts of researchers on dusty library shelves, or in the occasional comments of academics. Research-based theater is also more realistic than the purely textual script, as a live theatrical performance can capture the lived experience; the real-life physical, emotional, and sensory experience of the original data-gathering situation. These advantages are well-illustrated in Anna Deavere Smith's one-woman play, *Fires in the Mirror* (Fortis & Wolfe, 1993), in which the playwright/actress uses interwoven monologues to capture the racial turmoil that exploded in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York, following the death of a young African American boy and the stabbing of a Hasidic rabbinical student.

Mienczakowski (1997) also notes the advantages of researched-based theater. Describing performances in which the characters are actual research informants portrayed by actors and actresses, he observes, "...the language, and therefore the immediacy and currency, of the performances is in the everyday words of informants and not in the codes of academic discourses which bind most research reports" (p. 159). Researchers and informants may also participate in scripting, editing, and acting. As audience members, they may also be involved in evaluating the performance.

Clearly, these performances are intended to portray real life experiences and express truths that would otherwise be undiscovered. But they are not the real thing; rather, they present the fictionalization of true events, and provide a means of constructing social change for informants or particular groups (e.g., health consumers and professionals, or educators). As Sparkes (2003) suggests, "...the fictionalization of educational experience offers researchers the opportunity to import fragments of data from various real events in order to speak to the heart of social consciousness" (p. 417). According to Denzin (2003), "As pedagogical practices, performances make sites of oppression visible" (p. 14).

Recognizing that "...there remains much to explore and define in this exciting new field of research-based theatre" (Gray et al., 2000, p. 138), this article describes a "back stage" (Chenail, 1995) view of a playwright, Robert M. Krakow, and his one-act research-based stage play, *The False Witness* (Krakow, 1992). It is a morality play which questions our right to assign the blame for the Holocaust¹ only to Adolf Hitler² and his Third Reich. This article details how Krakow researched *available materials*, existing data including personal documents, books, newspapers, and other articles, to construct a

¹ *Holocaust* refers specifically to the genocide of European Jews and other groups by the Nazis during World War II. The word *Holocaust* is also used to encompass the Nazi persecution of Jews that preceded the outbreak of the war.

² Adolf Hitler (April 20, 1889-April 30, 1945) was the leader of Germany from 1933 until his death by suicide. Author of *Mein Kampf*, he was leader of the National Socialist German Workers Party, better known as the Nazi Party.

theatrical performance that disturbs the conventional perspective of a major historical event, and prompts us to re-evaluate our understanding of its cause and effect. This article is based on my single case study³ of Krakow and his work, using unstructured in-depth interviews, discussions, and correspondence with Krakow between 2004 and 2008, as well as *The False Witness* script, theatrical reviews, and supporting materials.

Following the qualitative tradition of biography to present Krakow and his experience, I aim to provide readers with a close-up look at the development of *The False Witness*. The article includes a synopsis of the stage play, a biographical sketch of the playwright, and a detailed description of how the play was written. Specifically, I detail Krakow's artistic research (including query, data collection, analysis, and conclusion) and how this process was used to create an original dramatic work of art.

In keeping with qualitative traditions, I also share my research methods and perspectives with the reader. I outline how I managed to collect and analyze the data described in this article and provide my own interpretation of Krakow's construction of *The False Witness*. I then share my perspective of it as a member of the audience, and discuss its strengths and limitations as a *performance*, that is, as an event which can "...evoke and invoke shared emotional experience and understanding between performer and audience" (Denzin, 2003, p. 13). The article concludes with my own reflections as well as Krakow's commentary on this project.

About *The False Witness*

The fictitious trial of Adolf Hitler, *The False Witness*, challenges the conventional wisdom of blaming only Nazi Germany for the Holocaust. As the trial in the Eternal Court of Justice proceeds, the play seeks to lift the curtain on the subject of who is really culpable. The essential message of the play is dramatized in the following excerpt from *The False Witness*.

For these proceedings demonstrate beyond doubt that the death factories of the Nazi regime were conceived many centuries ago; that these assembly line murders were the ultimate embodiment of evil myths that were transmitted through the millennia; finding their perfection in the modern era of man.

As the courtroom scene unfolds, some of the greatest men in history, including Martin Luther, William Shakespeare, Richard Wagner, and Henry Ford, come to testify about Hitler's guilt. But the historical evidence will show that these men are Hitler's heroes, false witnesses, and point to *their* ultimate complicity in the Holocaust.

Characteristics of these men, as described by the playwright's descriptive notes, are outlined in Table 1. Krakow's notes highlight the anti-Semitic views of these characters, and provide the basis for character selection and development in the play.

³ "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (Yin, 1989, p. 23). In a single case study design, the study is conducted on a single unit of analysis.

Table 1

Playwright's Descriptions of Key Characters in the False Witness Cast

Character	Selected Notes
Henry Ford, Sr. 1862-1947	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pioneer in automotive engineering and assembly line production • Founded the Ford Motor Company in 1903 • Published <i>The International Jew</i>, which blamed the “world Jewish conspiracy” for many of the economic and social ills extant in America (1920-1927) • Financed Hitler's anti-Semitic movements in Munich • Antony Sutton notes in <i>Wall Street and The Rise of Hitler</i>: Ford's picture hung on the wall behind the desk in Hitler's private office and translated copies of <i>The International Jew</i> practically covered a large table in the antechamber
Martin Luther (1483-1546)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • German theologian and leader of the Reformation • Authored <i>The Jews and Their Lies</i> (1543), the infamous anti-Semitic tract used by the Nazis in their propaganda war against the Jews • The tract was specifically invoked by Julius Streicher, a defendant at the Nuremberg Trial (Proceedings Vol. 12, Day 116, Monday, 29 Apr 1946, AM session, p. 317) and official in the Nazi Party • At Nuremberg, Streicher reported, “Dr. Martin Luther would...sit in my place...if [<i>The Jews and Their Lies</i>]... had been taken into consideration by the Prosecution ... In the book <i>The Jews and Their Lies</i>, Dr. Luther writes that the Jews are a serpent's brood and one should down their synagogues and destroy them...”
Wm. Shakespeare (1564-1616)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English playwright and poet. • In his play, <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> (1596), the caricature of the Jew takes the form of Shylock, the Money Lender. Shylock reflects elements of the anti-Semitic myths that were pervasive in Elizabethan society. • <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> was performed more than fifty times by the Nazis.
R. Wagner (1813-1883)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • German composer and philosopher • Wagner's <i>Judaism in Music</i> became a touchstone for German nationalism. • Writings and operas depicted the Jew as a destroyer of Aryan Germany's racial purity. • Hitler adapted these concepts in fashioning the ideological foundation of the Nazi Party. • Hitler (cited in Schirer's <i>The Rise And Fall Of The Third Reich</i>): “Whoever wants to understand National Socialist Germany must know Wagner.”

As *The False Witness* stage curtains open, the audience is impaneled as the jury and the indictment against the defendant, Adolf Hitler, is read. As the first scene unfolds, the cast of characters appears before the jury.

Acting as counsel for the defense, Martin Luther enters his evidence, calls his witnesses, and begins to argue the case for his client's innocence. Essentially, Luther hopes to convince the jury that his client cannot be guilty of genocide because Hitler's mission of "judenrein" (to make the world clean of Jews) was in accordance with the wishes of mankind. Luther argues that in fact, some of the greatest personalities in the history of civilization shared Hitler's view of the Jews. To prove his point, Luther summons some of them, Henry Ford, Pope Pius XII, Franklin Roosevelt, William Shakespeare, and Richard Wagner, to testify as witnesses for the Defense. Luther himself also testifies as a witness.

One by one, the witnesses are called before the jury by Luther to support the defendant's claim: Hitler was an instrument of the Almighty to fulfill the real wishes of mankind. Luther's arguments are countered by the Prosecutor for the Spirit of Man, Joan of Arc.⁴ The prosecution argues that Hitler *is* guilty of crimes against humanity and that the witnesses for the defense are in fact accessories to genocide. Joan of Arc tries to convince the jury that Hitler and the witnesses must be found guilty in order for mankind to redeem itself from humanity's darkest era. After the curtain falls at the end of the play, the playwright comes on stage and leads the jury's (audience's) deliberation on the question of complicity for the genocidal atrocities of the Holocaust.

About the Playwright

A graduate of Georgetown University Law School, Krakow began his legal career as a trial lawyer. Having a strong background in criminal law studies, he soon developed an intense interest in the procedures and polemics used to influence juries. Krakow also worked as a computer consultant for other attorneys. He developed database management software for case management and served as a software administrator for multi-user systems utilized by law firms. Clearly, Krakow's background influenced his creative choices in writing *The False Witness*. He relied on his computer skills to manage and analyze voluminous quantities of historical data and on his legal experience to design the courtroom setting for the stage.

But for Krakow, the stage play is the culmination of his personal journey as a Jewish American growing up in the diasporas. Reflecting on *The False Witness*, Krakow acknowledges the critical catalyst for his work; painful memories of anti-Semitic experiences in his childhood. Krakow recalls,

⁴ Joan of Arc (1412-1431), French heroine and icon, was persecuted for her religious beliefs and burned at the stake for heresy. Like the Jews in the medieval period, Joan of Arc was accused of witchcraft. In 1920, she was canonized as a Saint in the Roman Catholic Church. In the play, Joan of Arc's personae contrasts that of the German Protestant, Martin Luther.

Driven to understand the conflict between my positive Jewish identity and the ideological forces, both historical and contemporary, which sought to destroy it, I began to study the Holocaust—the extermination of six million Jews during World War II. I began to question the modern perception of the causes of the Holocaust: that causation could be attributed to a maniacal genius (Hitler), an evil cult (Nazis), and a depraved country (Germany). I believed this notion was superficial and began the search for deeper causes that could explain this unprecedented historical phenomenon. (R. Krakow, personal communication, May 28, 2007).

Aiming for a greater understanding of the Holocaust, Krakow was motivated to discover the roots of Hitler’s anti-Semitism. Contemporaneously, Krakow envisioned how he would ultimately present his “discovery;”⁵ a theatrical presentation of the mythical trial of Adolf Hitler. In a personal interview on May 28, 2007, Krakow recalled how the notion of writing the play emerged as the vehicle by which he could present his message.

On December 1, 1989, while taking a walk, I was struck with the idea that I would write, in play form, the trial of Adolf. This underlying thought stream had been percolating for many years. This decisive moment represented the release of a creative process that had been welling up during a long period of reflection and rumination.

At that time, Krakow did not imagine that his original version of *The False Witness* would be published in 1992, and he would continue to work on his artistic project for 14 years.

Data Collection and Analysis: Opening a Window into the Mind of Adolph Hitler

Reflecting on the development of *The False Witness*, Krakow recalls the beginning of his project. Determined to meet his objective of understanding the root causes of Hitler’s anti-Semitism, and to write the play, Krakow purchased a copy of Hitler’s autobiography, the political and ideological manifesto, *Mein Kampf* (“My Battle”) (1925/1971), translated into English. Krakow typed the 688 page volume into a Wordperfect file. Krakow explained that the process of typing enabled him “to absorb the ideology of Adolf Hitler and his anti-Jewish polemic,” (R. Krakow, personal communication, May 28, 2007) -- and five months and 25,000 lines later, the process was complete.

Relying on his expertise in computer software, Krakow then designed a menu-driven software program⁶ that would enable him to rigorously examine what he refers to

⁵ In criminal law, “discovery” means the information and evidence related to the case. This includes the defendant’s statements, photographs, drawings, and property.

⁶ The program combined the Unix Operating System search utilities (Ritchie & Thompson, 1969) with Dbase Database Management Software System (DBMS) software from Ashton-Tate (Ratcliff, 1982). A special feature allowed Krakow to search for multiple derivatives of words and word combinations, and to store the data in the context of the paragraph for further analysis.

as “Hitler’s stream of consciousness on the ‘Jewish question,’ and the historical antecedents of the Nazi’s anti-Semitic ideology in *Mein Kampf*.” (R. Krakow, personal communication, May 28, 2007) Krakow recalls the painstaking process of using his “customized software for systematic linguistic analysis” that ultimately “revealed the mysteries of *Mein Kampf*.”

Methodically searching the *Mein Kampf* text for the word *Jew* or its derivatives (e.g., *Jewish*, *Judaic*, *Jews*, etc.), Krakow found there were 429 such occurrences. Initial search results, including an exemplary finding with the playwright’s commentary, are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2
<i>Query for Jew or its Derivatives</i>
<p>Search text for “<i>Jew</i>”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menu Option #1: Find <i>Jew</i> as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) a single word instance (e.g., <i>Jew</i>), or as (b) a derivative (e.g., <i>Jews</i>, <i>Jewish</i>, <i>Judaic</i>, <i>Jewification</i>) • Total Word Count for <i>Jew</i> and its derivatives: 429 • Exemplary Finding and Commentary: <p>In this period my eyes were opened to two menaces of which I had previously scarcely known the names, and whose terrible importance for the existence of the German people I certainly did not understand: Marxism and Jewry(1).</p> <p>Commentary: This is the first occurrence of the word <i>Jew</i> in <i>Mein Kampf</i>. Note that it is connected with the word Marxism. This was to be a fundamental theme in Hitler’s propaganda against the Jewish people. The period he is referring to is when he lived in Vienna before World War I.</p>

Krakow retrieved and filed the segments of the text that contained *Jew* and its derivatives and annotated each one. Through this process, Krakow discovered that (a) *Jew* and its derivatives were often found in association with other key words, including *Almighty*, *art*, *Aryan*, *blood*, *Christian*, *culture*, *degenerate*, *international*, *poison*, and *race*, and most importantly (b) that these text segments echoed anti-Semitic mythology; myths that have been manifest for over 2000 years. Some anti-Semitic myths which are reflected in *Mein Kampf* are displayed in Table 3.

Krakow coded and catalogued all of the text segments containing the word *Jew* and its derivatives, in context, “to preserve their meaning” (R. Krakow, personal communication, November 16, 2006) and collected statistics on word usage for quantitative analysis. Driven to understand the significance of the key words associated with the word *Jew*, Krakow continued to utilize his software program to search the *Mein Kampf* text for particular word patterns. As one search led to another, Krakow executed 20,000 searches.

Table 3 <i>Exemplary Anti-Semitic Myths Reflected in Mein Kampf</i>	
Myth	<i>Mein Kampf</i> Citation
Jews poison Christians.	He poisons the blood of others, but preserves his own.
Jews are masters of world capital.	Their function is only to break the people's national and patriotic backbone and make them ripe for the slave's yoke of international capital and its masters, the Jews.
Jews destroy art and culture.	Everywhere we encounter seeds which represent the beginnings of parasitic growths which must sooner or later be the ruin of our culture.
Jews' aim to dominate the world.	Germany was not an English interest, but primarily a Jewish one, just as today a destruction of Japan serves British state interests less than it does the widespread desires of the leaders of the projected Jewish world empire.

Krakow displayed the text segments in sets of key word categories in his “commentary file” for further analysis. The file includes 20 occurrences of text segments containing *Jew & International*; 18 of *Jew & Culture*; 15 of both *Jew & Poison* and *Jew & German*; 8 of *Jew & Christian*; and 2 of *Jew & degenerate*. Through this process, Krakow began to link particular key words to “Hitler’s heroes,” individuals who were

named in *Mein Kampf*, who shared Hitler’s anti-Jewish ideology, or who provided him with an ideological foundation. Examples of key words and their associations are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4		
<i>Key Words, Significance, and Associated “Heroes”</i>		
Key Words: <i>Jew &</i>	Significant Association	“Hitler’s Hero”
<i>International</i>	The notion of the Jew as an International Financier; Jewish conspiracy to control world finances	Ford
<i>Christian, Jesus, and Almighty</i>	The tradition of Medieval Christian Anti-Semitism	Luther
<i>Culture, Art, and Degenerate</i>	The notion of Jewish responsibility for the prostitution of the national culture; the myth of Jewish criminality haunt the Elizabethan Period and as such inform Shakespeare’s plays.	Shakespeare
<i>Jew& Aryan, Jew& blood, Jew& race, and Jew& poison</i>	The depiction of the Jew as a destroyer of Aryan racial purity	Wagner

Understanding that Hitler was greatly influenced by men whose work embraced centuries of anti-Semitic mythology, Krakow then “traveled to other sources” (R. Krakow, personal communication, November 16, 2006) to validate his work. He studied the heroes’ original works⁷ in depth and to triangulate his findings, Krakow studied secondary sources.⁸ Specifically focusing on how other men⁹ influenced Hitler, and the real legal implications related to complicity, Krakow reviewed the official text of the Nuremberg Trial.¹⁰

Finding legal, historical and scholarly confirmation for his work, Krakow explains, he sensed that he had established a “critical knowledge base” and understood “Hitler’s 20th Century propaganda campaign in the context of 2000 years of anti-Semitism.” (R. Krakow, personal communication, November 16, 2006) While acknowledging the complexity of the process, he believes that the labor was justified; through linguistic analysis and intense exploration of multiple resource materials, the playwright had “uncovered the major roots of Hitler’s anti-Semitism.” Krakow asserts, “Historical evidence pointed to Ford, Luther, Shakespeare, and Wagner as Hitler’s heroes-- and their ideological complicity in the Holocaust.”

To summarize, based on his childhood experiences of anti-Semitism, Krakow assumed that anti-Semitism was widespread and he was determined to understand its depth and breadth; far beyond the conventional view of the causes of the Holocaust. Seeking an enlarged worldview of anti-Semitism, Krakow combined scientific research methods with artistic study, and created *The False Witness*. Essentially, the play is a product of Krakow’s interpretation of his research data as well as his artistic intuition. While Krakow acknowledges the conventional wisdom (i.e., viewing the Holocaust solely as Hitler’s program to exterminate the Jews), stated and restated in histories, books, and displays in Holocaust Museums was utilized to form the context of the play, he created *The False Witness* to advance his alternative view.

Clearly, Krakow was well aware of other perspectives, such as the notions of Holocaust deniers who claim that the Holocaust is a hoax arising out of a deliberate Jewish conspiracy to advance the interest of Jews at the expense of others, but he did not intend *The False Witness* to cover the field of viewpoints. Rather, the play presents

⁷ Exemplary primary sources include:

- Wagner, R. (1995). *Judaism in music and other essays*
- Ford, H. (1931). *The Jewish question: A selection of the articles (1920-22) published in Mr. Henry Ford’s Paper the Dearborn Independent*.
- Luther, M. (1971). On the Jews and their lies. In M. Luther, *Luther’s Works: Vol. 47. The Christian in society*.
- Shakespeare, W. (1985). *The Merchant of Venice*.

⁸ Exemplary secondary sources include:

- Habicht, W. (1989). Shakespeare and theatre politics of the Third Reich. In H. Scolnicov & P. Holland (Eds.), *The play out of context: Transferring plays from culture to culture*.
- Schirer, W. (1959). *The rise and fall of the Third Reich*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Shapiro, J. (1996). *Shakespeare and the Jews*. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁹ Krakow focused on men because he found no real evidence of female influence on Hitler. R. Krakow (personal communication, July 31, 2007).

¹⁰ The Nuremberg Trials (1945-1949) were the trials of officials involved in World War II and the Holocaust. Held in the city of Nuremberg, Germany, the Nuremberg Trials are the first trials in history for crimes against the peace of the world.

Krakow's understanding: "Anti-Semitism is not a localized evil of Nazi Germany: Anti-Semitism exists and led to the Holocaust" (R. Krakow, personal communication, May 28, 2007). As Krakow's understanding of his findings deepened, he developed his characters, wrote, and rewrote, the stage play.

While Krakow recognizes that his research methods may have been influenced by his legal research experience, identifying and retrieving primary authority of law such as statutes and cases; searching secondary sources for background information such as a law review or legal encyclopedia about a legal subject; and searching non-legal sources for related or supporting information, he sees his study as a methodical search for a truthful depiction of anti-Semitism. Clearly, Krakow relied on scientific traditions to research the topic, and as described in this article, carefully developed *The False Witness* from the process of data collection and analysis. Examination of the materials utilized to create the stage play occurred in an inductive way; data collection and analysis were ongoing, and Krakow moved from source to source, building his knowledge from various books, articles, operas, plays, testimonies, and historical documents. Based on his systematic linguistic analysis of text, and collection of historical evidence, Krakow became confident that he had "opened a window into the mind of Adolph Hitler" (R. Krakow, personal communication, May 28, 2007).

Reviewed in retrospect, Krakow's confidence emerged as he developed trustworthiness in his research, Acting as a research detective, carefully searching for and considering evidence of anti-Semitism in *Mein Kampf*, Krakow utilized multiple data sources to understand Hitler's anti-Semitism (i.e., data triangulation), and utilized both content and linguistic analysis, as well as meticulous commentary notes (i.e., methods triangulation) in his study.

Krakow has also shared his data with others (e.g., stage play producers, directors, Holocaust educators and audiences) for analysis, and over time, their responses¹¹ have reinforced the credibility of the research.

In the next section of this article, I provide three excerpts of the play and discuss them through the lens of Krakow's data collection and analysis.

Interpretations on Stage: Framework for *The False Witness*

After years of research, Krakow reached a turning point in his artistic journey: He was able to articulate "three main principles," (R. Krakow, personal communication, May 28, 2007) or interpretations, which emerged from his study. Krakow recalls,

First: That *Mein Kampf* was, in reality, an historical roadmap stretching back through two millennia; that the gruesome ideologies and myths about the Jewish people that were documented in *Mein Kampf* were not the ravings of a lunatic (Hitler) but a final repository of the accumulated anti-Jewish mythology representing 2000 years of evolution and development.

¹¹ To view original commentaries regarding the playwright's historical research, see *The False Witness* letters of commendations. (Retrieved from <http://www.falsewitness.com/letters.htm>)

Second: That the anti-Jewish mythology referenced above had its origin in the art, literature, religion, culture, politics and ethos of Western civilization.

Third: That various historical personalities referred to in *Mein Kampf* (Luther, Shakespeare, Wagner, Ford) were transmitters of these anti-Jewish myths and were guideposts for Hitler in the development of his anti-Jewish polemic.

These three principles are embedded in the theatrical performance text--infused in the dialogue, and espoused by the witnesses. Exemplary excerpts of dialogue follow. For clarity, each excerpt is introduced, the actual dialogue is *italicized*, and its meaning is discussed.

Exemplary Excerpt 1

The setting for the entire play is the Eternal Court of Justice. As the play begins, the Chief Justice, a woman, is seated at the judicial bench. The Jury (audience) watches as the lights slowly come up on the courtroom with the Attorneys in their places. The Chief Justice reads the Bill of Indictment, charging Adolf Hitler for Crimes against Humanity. If convicted, the defendant will be sentenced to the Final Circle of Hell.

The trial begins. Joan of Arc rises to deliver her opening statement, but Martin Luther quickly interrupts her.

Joan: Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury, these crimes perpetrated by the defendant which we now seek to condemn and punish, were so malignant and so devastating that mankind cannot tolerate their being ignored, because it cannot survive their being repeated.¹²

What is at stake here is nothing less than the moral progress of the world: A Trial of Humanity's conscience. Prosecution will prove with meticulous detail, the vast criminality orchestrated by . . .

Luther: You're Honor, why burden the Court with these tiresome accusations contained in Prosecutions voluminous files. My client admits to everything. But we resent these actions being described as Crimes Against Humanity. Adolf Hitler performed a service for Humankind; a service that the world desired for a millennium.

Ch J: Dr. Luther, are you telling this court, that you admit to these crimes stated in the Bill of Indictment?

Luther: We admit to these actions which we argue were not criminal. And we ask this Court to assign the burden of proof to the Defense; for we will prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Adolf Hitler is innocent; that the

¹² Joan of Arc's lines are actually the opening statement of Mr. Justice Jackson, prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials. (Canot, R. E., 1983. *Justice at Nuremberg*, p. 105.)

Defendant was an instrument of the Divine Will for the greater good of mankind.

The opposing views of Joan and Luther are presented in this exemplar. Joan presents the contemporary world's perspective; Hitler is seen as a criminal. But Luther represents that Hitler has served mankind, as he has carried out what the world desired. The attorneys' opening statements presents Krakow's dilemma. Is Hitler a lunatic maniacal genius or a servant of an anti-Semitic civilization?

Exemplary Excerpt 2.

In the next excerpt, Luther continues to defend Hitler, and introduces the notion that Hitler's anti-Semitic policies were founded in the art, literature, religion, culture, politics, and ethos of Western civilization.

Ch J: This is highly unusual. Does Prosecution agree to these stipulations?

Joan: Yes, Your Honor.

Luther: (forcefully) Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury, we will bring before this Court the greatest personalities in the annals of recorded history to demonstrate that Adolf Hitler's policies have their foundation in the art, culture, religion and ethics of world civilization. Alas, the most profound artists in history believed as my client did. Christopher Marlowe, Charles Dickens, Johann Sebastian Bach. They knew that art was truth.

And truth will be served by my first witness; the greatest artistic genius the world has ever known. May it please the Court, Defense calls William Shakespeare.

Ch J: William Shakespeare to the stand.

Luther: Your Honor, let the Court take judicial notice of William Shakespeare's incomparable literary achievements.

However, there is one work in particular upon which Defense intends to focus its attention.

I wish to now mark and admit into evidence, Defense Exhibit 1, The Merchant of Venice. This play authored by the witness in the year 1596 characterizes the Jew precisely in the mold of the bloodthirsty, treacherous enemy of all humanity that my client confronted in Europe nearly three and one-half centuries later.

In this scene, Luther's carefully chosen words are meant to prepare the jury to hear the testimony of the first witness, William Shakespeare. Luther's talk about "*the*

most profound artists in history” evokes the jury’s trust, as the jurors themselves recognize these famous artists. Luther says the artists “*knew that art was truth,*” reminding the jury that truth is revealed through art.

Given that Hitler used art as a weapon (e.g., promoted the notion that Germans were divinely superior artists, architects, and sculptors, produced propaganda films to promote the extermination of Jews, and photographed their activities), and *The Merchant of Venice* was performed more than 50 times by the Nazis, Luther subtly poses another dilemma for the jury; will the jurors believe that Shakespeare’s art is truth? Or will the jury believe that Shakespeare’s play transmitted the very myths that guided Hitler’s anti-Semitic policies, thus making Shakespeare an accessory to the crime of genocide?

Exemplary Excerpt 3

In the third and final exemplar, the jurors face another dilemma as they listen to the testimony of another witness, Henry Ford. In this excerpt, Joan cross-examines Ford about his relationship with Hitler and the Nazis. Of particular note is Ford’s acceptance of the 1938 German *Grand Cross* medal for his achievement in mass production technology.

Joan: Mr. Ford, can you tell the Court if in fact you received the Grand Cross of the Supreme Order of the German Eagle in July, 1938, which is the highest decoration that could be given to a non-German citizen?

Ford: (defiantly) Yes, I received and accepted it with honor.

Joan: And the medal was accompanied by a congratulatory message from the defendant.

Mr. Ford, why was the medal awarded to you?

Ford: For my pioneering efforts in mass production factories.

Joan: Mr. Ford, these achievements in mass production technology, were they applicable to other industries?

Ford: Yes.

(As Joan goes to his table and takes the documents, noises of a factory are heard in the background)

Joan: I would like to place before you certain blueprints and ask you to describe them to the jury.

Ford: (putting on glasses) From what I can tell, these plans look like a transport depot. A compound of some kind . . .

Joan: A compound?

Ford: (examining the blueprints more intently) Yes, you see over here is a railway terminal where the livestock is unloaded . . .

(turning the blueprints to see them better) And the compound where they will be . . .

(recoiling in horror) Get this away from me! Nobody knew what kind of factories they were building.

Joan: Your Honor, I now wish to mark and admit into evidence, Prosecution's Exhibit D, the Third Reich's blueprints for the design and construction of a factory located in German occupied Poland; a factory in an abandoned railroad yard; a factory employing the latest technology in assembly line efficiency. Its name will go down in history as the most infamous factory ever built. Its name was Auschwitz.

In this chilling scene, the jury is faced with a horrific picture of Henry Ford, as Joan points out that Ford's mass production technology, typically associated with the automobile industry, inspired the blueprints for Auschwitz¹³. As Ford's relationship to the Third Reich is revealed, the jury is driven to consider Ford's role in the Holocaust. The question is raised; will the jury see Henry Ford as Hitler's accomplice in mass murder? Will the jury consider any or all of the witnesses' accessories to Crimes against Humanity? Ultimately, will the jury conclude that we are all on trial?

Summary

In this section, I described the three main "principles" (interpretations) which emerged from Krakow's study. As illustrated by three excerpts from the play, Krakow's interpretations are embedded in the text and embodied in the characters of the play. Thus, *The False Witness* is an illustration of research-based drama; an artistic re-presentation of Krakow's analysis, and the practical means the playwright chose to disseminate his research findings.

In the next section of this article, I describe why and how I studied *The False Witness*, and offer a critical analysis of *The False Witness* as a pedagogical performance.

In the Spotlight: Artistic Research and Meaning-making

In April 2004, I met Robert Krakow in a South Florida Jewish community activity. We talked, and our talk soon turned from the local Jewish community to Judaic studies and then, to *The False Witness*. While I had no particular interest in theatrical work, I was passionate about Jewish history and survival, as are many Jewish Americans who have been touched by Holocaust survivors, and was eager to hear Krakow's story.

¹³ A concentration camp established in Poland, Auschwitz has become the symbol of genocide all over the world. The majority of Jews who were deported to Auschwitz were murdered in gas chambers.

I was also intrigued by the use of art forms to display the results of qualitative research. Having completed my own qualitative dissertation study (Simhoni, 2003) under the guidance of Dr. Ronald J. Chenail, I had explored alternative approaches to representation of data. Although I ultimately chose a traditional written format to present my research, I was strongly influenced by Chenail's (1992a, 1992b) support of artful ways of research and representation, and appreciated the responsibility of providing a thorough description of the method-creation process. According to Chenail (1995),

...[I]t takes two studies to present one in qualitative research. One study is the "official" research project and the other study is the study about that study. In a well-done qualitative research study, in addition to seeing the results of the labor, the reader should have ample opportunities *to examine the particulars of the inquiry* [italics added]: What choices were made by the researcher in the construction of the study, what were the steps in the process of forming the research questions, selecting a site, generating and collecting the data, processing and analyzing the data, and selecting the data exemplars for the paper or presentation. (p. 1)

Therefore, I was particularly intrigued by Krakow's work, and began to ask questions about how *The False Witness* was conceived and constructed. As Krakow's narrative unfolded, I recognized the nature of his work. *The False Witness* was the product of Krakow's intense research curiosity and a theatrical re-presentation of his study. At the same time, I recognized that although he had a strong background in legal research, Krakow was unfamiliar with qualitative methodology and had neither an established pattern nor a research advisor to follow. So Krakow's story piqued my own research curiosity and motivated me to study his study, or "to examine the particulars of the inquiry" (Chenail, 1995). In sum, as a Jewish American, I saw an opportunity to learn more about the Holocaust (the "official" project, or the phenomenon under study), but as a researcher, I saw the opportunity to present the construction of the study (the research process, or backstory of *The False Witness*).

As we talked, Krakow recognized that the act of writing *The False Witness* helped him understand the Holocaust. He needed to tell his story and to document the process he used to create his play. Reflecting on our initial discussions, Krakow recalls,

Audiences frequently ask me, "How did you come up with the idea?" Well, from 1974-1989, I was investigating the subject of Jewish identity and its relationship to the Holocaust. I conceived of the idea of a trial of Hitler and began work on the play on December 1, 1989. How can I describe the process 15 years later? I know that I had questions about Jewish identity--but there is nothing unique about that. The journey was intensely personal. So, in response to this question from the audience, all I had to offer is the creation itself. This research project facilitated my ability to provide insightful answers to the audiences. (R. Krakow, personal communication, July 31, 2007)

Case Study Format

A short time after our initial discussion, I briefed Krakow on qualitative inquiry, invited him to be my case study and developed the idea of writing this article. I soon realized that to study Krakow's work, I needed a practical method for data collection and analysis. As Hunter, Lusardi, Zucker, Jacelon, and Chandler (2002) explain, the case study method "...yields a plethora of data, the richness of which may get lost in the traditional processes of coding, categorizing, and thematic identification" (p. 390).

In July 2004, after some preliminary interviews with Krakow, I left South Florida and accepted a position as an Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy in the Health Professions Division at Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia. Ironically for me, my move to Winchester actually elevated my interest in artistic research. Recognized for its Conservatory,¹⁴ Shenandoah University offers intense studies in music, theater, and dance, and therefore, an environment conducive to the study of research-based theater. So in an atmosphere which supported my study of Krakow and *The False Witness*, I formalized my investigation in my 2006 project application to the Human Subjects Review Board of Shenandoah University.

Along with the typical research protocol documents and application for exemption, my research application included an informed consent long form with the unusual statement: "I understand that any data or answers to questions will NOT remain confidential with regard to my identity." My investigation was approved on June 1, 2006.

Over time, Krakow and I developed an intense, interactive, functional format to facilitate my understanding of his work.

1. Krakow provided me with relevant materials, including several versions of the play, the link to the *The False Witness* webpage, playbills, and an overview of *Final Draft* ©, the computer software program he used to write his stage play.
2. I reviewed the materials, made notes and asked Krakow to answer my questions about them.
3. Krakow answered my questions via email, telephone, or personal interview. I cut and pasted email responses, transcriptions from recorded interviews, and notes into a single document.
4. I requested, received, and reviewed the citations Krakow used to create his play (e.g., Hitler, Shakespeare, Wagner, Ford, and Luther). To supplement my understanding of the characters in *The False Witness*, I utilized Internet libraries and other resources to read portions of original works and commentaries.
5. I requested, received, and reviewed Krakow's commentary files and notes.
6. I created lists, models, concept maps, and tables to help me visualize Krakow's experience and to outline Krakow's activities sequentially.
7. I drafted, and redrafted, the article.
8. All drafts were emailed to Krakow for member checking.
9. Krakow checked my work, and often added facts, insights, and reflections.
10. I continued to make notes, ask questions, and utilize Krakow's feedback, until finalizing the article.

¹⁴ For more information about the Shenandoah University Conservatory, see <http://www.su.edu/conservatory/scon/welcome/index.htm>

While this format was time-consuming and intense, it allowed for multiple opportunities to dialogue with Krakow. During this interactive process, Krakow shared his thoughts about the construction and meaning of *The False Witness*. *The False Witness* verdict: justice, emancipation, and empowerment

In a personal interview on May 28, 2007, reflecting on the process of writing the play, Krakow described the construction of *The False Witness*.

Well, I didn't know how to write a play: I had no advanced knowledge of the process. I picked up a book [about how to write a play and thought], I can't follow this! I can't be confined by this methodology. But the process of typing *Mein Kampf* converged with my years of questions and answers. So Hitler in *Mein Kampf* was speaking to *me*. It placed me in an inherently conflictual atmosphere, which is what drama is about. To be Jewish is to be in conflict...I accept it. Other Jews try to deal with it in compensatory ways. I accepted the challenge of the conflict.

It hearkens back to when I was growing up. Boys threatened me physically, and it came down to violence. In that sense, the play became autobiographical. It just happened to be a play. I happened to see my "enemies"-- the bad guys were these historical characters. Maybe Shakespeare was the bully who called me a dirty Jew when I was a kid. And we fought over it. And Wagner? The same: Another anti-Semitic bully that I had to confront when I was a child. I now recognize the play's autobiographical quality: I lived out the drama and wrote about it.

Listening to Krakow, I realized that unlike a factual historical presentation of anti-Semitism, or a traditional academic display of Holocaust research, *The False Witness* presents a personal story. Consistent with Denzin's (2003) references to autoethnographic theater and personal performance narratives (self-stories), it is the playwright's autobiographical work, his connection with characters from different times in history, and a way of projecting a living record of injustices experienced in a modern Jewish community. At the same time, I recognized that the autobiographical quality of Krakow's work limits his understanding, and presentation, of the subject: clearly, *The False Witness* represents the voice of a particular playwright and must be appreciated from the perspective of Krakow's own individual narrative. Krakow explains: "The question of identity, the threats to identity, became paramount in my mind, [and] the play became the ultimate expression of [my] streams of thought over many years." (R. Krakow, personal communication, July 31, 2007)

The False Witness, then, is *neither* a chronicle *nor* a history play: It is a research-based theatrical presentation, dramatic, evocative, and personal. It is the *mythical* trial of Hitler, and makes no claim to being an objective historical report. Most importantly, *The False Witness* is a vehicle for Krakow to involve audience members as participants in the interpretive process. At each performance, Krakow challenges the "jurors" to determine the question of complicity for the genocidal atrocities of the Holocaust, and promotes a new way of understanding the meaning of anti-Semitism.

Krakow further explained that as *The False Witness* challenges the conventional wisdom of who is really to blame for the Holocaust, it empowers and emancipates audiences.

People in the audience will say, “Oh, I never thought of it that way.” When you see [the victims’] hair, teeth and bones in the [Holocaust] Museum, where do you go? You continue to feel the suffering and victimization. Yes, [preserving] the memory is important, but--given the choice--do we want to be remembered as hair, teeth and bones? No! So, you say, “Show instead my picture.”

But the play can open the mind to the world of history, literature, and culture. One can see the cause and effect. If Hitler is the cause and the hair, teeth, and bones are the effect, it hurts. It is a prison. And where do you go with the pain? To ‘victimhood.’ But look at the deeper causes. Once I connected the dots with Shakespeare, Ford, Luther, and all, I got a deeper understanding: That leads to a greater freedom-- a place to go. It is not only emancipating but empowering. (R. Krakow, personal communication, July 31, 2007)

Krakow’s view of the play’s ability to empower audiences appears to be aligned with Bell’s (1992) contention.

[R]acism is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of this society. The challenge throughout has been to tell what I view as the truth about racism without causing disabling despair. For some of us who bear the burdens of racial subordination, any truth--no matter how dire--is uplifting. (p. ix)

As *The False Witness* provides not only a record of injustices experienced by the Jewish community, but presents the hope of replacing “victimhood” with dignity and respect, it appears to meet Denzin’s (2003) performative criteria: *The False Witness* challenges taken-for-granted meanings; promotes moral and ethical dialogue; offers utopian ideas; demonstrates kindness and caring; shows rather than tells; exhibits interpretive sufficiency, representational adequacy, and authentic adequacy; and presents political, functional, collective, and committed perspectives. At once, *The False Witness* is a dramatic performance and a public place to share experiences, participate in dialogue, and construct meaning.

Summary

Inasmuch as this single case study provided me with a new way of learning about and viewing the Holocaust, and an opportunity to understand and document Krakow’s artistic research, it prompted Krakow to reflect on his work and better articulate its meaning to audiences. Through this study, I also understood why it took such a long time to construct *The False Witness*: for the miracle of meaning-making to occur, “...it is

critical that incubation time be given and that creative skills to achieve illumination be provided” (Hunter et al., 2002, p. 397).

In the next and final section of this paper, I discuss the rationale for evaluating *The False Witness* as research-based art, and suggest the potential direction for this type of work, from my perspective backstage. I then conclude the paper with a critique of *The False Witness* from my perspective as a member of the audience.

Witnessing *The False Witness*: Backstage and in the Theater

Backstage

As a stage play, a theatrical performance with actors, scripts, and props, *The False Witness* stands on its own as a work of art, and therefore, criteria for evaluating its quality lie outside the domain of a purely scientific paradigm. Simply stated, artists do not need to explain their work (Piiro, 2002). Suggesting that research-based art be judged by its aesthetic universality rather than its depiction of objective reality, Bamford (n.d.) explains,

Criteria for judging art-based research are still developing. The axioms for validating trustworthiness and quality need to be opened to greater discourse. Validity in an art-based inquiry is not a matter of fulfilling a set of criteria - but rather traits that characterise the essence of what is trying to be achieved. (Abstract section, ¶ 1)

Krakow, however, invites the scrutiny of *The False Witness* as a representation of research data; it is “...qualitative research raised to the level of art and creativity” (R. Krakow, personal communication, May 28, 2007). In an interview on May 28, 2007, Krakow reflected on the significance of analyzing the construction of *The False Witness* through this case study and enthusiastically supported revealing the back-story (i.e., history behind the main story, including the history of its character development) to the public. Welcoming the opportunity to explain his perspective, Krakow recalled,

I didn't remember my feelings that had caused me to go to such extremes in order to validate or affirm my point of view on the conventional wisdom about the Holocaust--that is, there *is* a need to question the notions that anti-Semitism was a localized evil of Nazi Germany, that if it were not for Hitler, there would have been no Holocaust, and that Hitler and the Holocaust would never be decoupled. Now I see that I have had very deep feelings to explore the subject, to do that much research. Wouldn't it be something if Shakespeare had been asked to do a qualitative research project on the *Merchant of Venice*? What an experience that would have been! I know the back story...Shylock, the symbolism; if people had known the back-story and *then* watched the play--it would have been a frightening experience to know the depth of the anti-Semitism involved.

Nonetheless, it would have been acceptable at that time, and it would have been something special to the contemporary audience. And for history, it would have been spectacular to know what Shakespeare had in his mind...all these myths of the Elizabethan period! The way English departments teach Shakespeare would be different today. [Similarly, there would be an] impact on our understanding of all the witnesses in the play: Wagner, Ford, Luther, etc. *They* should have had qualitative researchers chronicling their processes: It would be extraordinary if people knew what they were thinking, their environments, the ironies, and historic contributions to the universal knowledge. Imagine asking Hitler about his anti-Jewish polemic: "Where did you get that idea?"

In my own view, explaining the back-story of *The False Witness* to the public promotes the evaluation of this play as research-based theater. This is important: First, in providing the awesome burden of delivering a verdict for or against mankind, *The False Witness* provides the opportunity to confront the tragic complexity of humanity, and the issue of Mankind's complicity in evil--and therefore, to transform social consciousness. But as the audience struggles with the question of complicity for the genocidal atrocities of the Holocaust, they may also struggle to sort out the theatrical presentation (i.e., the mythological trial of Hitler) from a realistic view of anti-Semitism. Viewed as the representation of careful research, the performance of *The False Witness* is *fictitious*, but its message prompts the *legitimate* construction of a new and meaningful understanding of the Holocaust.

Second, as the popular press (see e.g., Easley, Ankerberg, & Burroughs, 2006 regarding Brown's (2003) *The Da Vinci Code* and The Smoking Gun's (2006) discussion, *The Man Who Conned Oprah*) sheds light on the blurring of history and fiction in the arts, modern audiences may demand to understand the story behind the story. Providing the theatrical back-story to audiences may become a future direction, if not an industry standard, for plays and movies.

Third, evaluating *The False Witness* as research-based theater promotes the assessment of live theater as the best method to disseminate the results of research related to the genocidal atrocities of the Holocaust. Unlike the presentation of photographic exhibitions of concentration camps which may dishonor the victims, this live theater may be the best form of presentation of Krakow's research.

Finally, through the lens of autoethnography¹⁵ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) and Denzin's (2003) description of autoethnographic theater, *The False Witness* invites audience participation in the process of meaning-making and is particularly suitable for the presentation of the issues of freedom and social justice. Given that the Nazis used art as a weapon (e.g., they promoted the notion that Germans were divinely superior artists, architects, and sculptors, produced propaganda films to promote the extermination of Jews, and photographed their activities), it is critical to reveal the back-story of *The False*

¹⁵ Ellis and Bochner (2000) describe autoethnography as "an autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (p. 739); autoethnographers "ask their readers to feel the truth of their stories and to become coparticipants, engaging the storyline morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually" (p. 745).

Witness. Viewing this play as a research-based drama provides critics, audiences, and scholars with the material needed to scrutinize the play as the re-presentation of Krakow's research.

In the Theater

Over time, I studied Krakow and his play in depth. I interviewed the playwright, reviewed his notes, and checked his citations and resources. Positioned backstage, I questioned Krakow's assumptions, logic, choices, and conclusions. I asked Krakow to confirm or disconfirm my understanding of his work, review my notes, and validate my conclusions. I read the script, critiqued current reviews of the play, and studied the web page. But it was not until February 11, 2006, that I had the opportunity to *see* the play at the Olympic Heights High School Performing Arts Theater in Boca Raton, Florida.

As an audience member, I became the ultimate participant-observer. Having looked at the drama from the perspective of *research*, I now viewed *The False Witness* as a "theater-goer," and became aware of the play as a *performance*. Here was the data transformed into drama, in a three-dimensional theatrical world of tickets, playbills, auditorium seating, acoustics, scenery, timing, and the actors' interpretations of their lines. Suspending my backstage view, I slowly allowed myself to become engrossed in the performance and accept my role as a juror in the courtroom. My eyes were glued on the stage: Here was Adolf Hitler, on trial for crimes against humanity.

Surely, my own view of the Holocaust is now inextricably shaped by *The False Witness*. For me, watching *The False Witness* was haunting. Clearly, my study had not prepared me to be a juror in the Eternal Court of Justice, to confront the history of the Holocaust, and to face the depth and breadth of anti-Semitism. But perhaps my study had prepared me more than others in the audience. While some people in the audience felt that *The False Witness* provided a new way of looking at a complex, emotional, and personal subject, others left the theater feeling awkward and uncomfortable. For many in the audience, both Jews and Gentiles, it was easier to blame Hitler and the Third Reich for the Holocaust than to accept the notion of an anti-Semitic civilization.

According to Krakow, many other "jurors" have reacted similarly, and therein lies the play's success. As one reviewer (Phillips, 1996) wrote, "...if the audience went home troubled by this production, then the playwright, director and cast would have accomplished their task. In this respect they were a resounding success" (p. 15).

As I left the theater, I continued deliberation. I recalled the Maor exhibition of Holocaust pictures and text in *The Forbidden Library*, and Finkelstein's (1994) observations: The exhibition testifies to the failure of photographs, pictograms, and texts to "reconstruct the most traumatic event in Jewish history in many generations..." (p. 1). Finkelstein concludes,

Thus in the failure of the exhibition lies, paradoxically, its success. In this humbling experience we come to realize that what we may often take for the 'real thing'--a direct representation of the Holocaust--is just an image, one among many in a complex array of changing perspectives, and that no book or movie, or even the most conscientiously researched historical effort, can ever hope to represent more than just an image. Thus, with the

failure comes enlightenment and a sense of regained strength derived from the perception of the tragic complexity of our own humanity. (p. 4)

References

- Balkema, A. W., & Slager, H. (Eds.). (2004). *Artistic research*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Bamford, A. (n.d.). *Form: An alternative to validity in qualitative, arts-based research*. Institute for Interactive Multimedia and Learning Centre for Research in Education and the Arts. Retrieved from <http://www.aare.edu.au/00pap/bam00016.htm>
- Bell, D. A. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York: Basic Books.
- Brearley, L. (2000, October). Exploring the creative voice in an academic context. *The Qualitative Report*, 5(3/4). Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR5-3/brearley.html>
- Brown, D. (2003). *The Da Vinci code*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Canot, R. E. (1983). *Justice at Nuremberg*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers.
- Chenail, R. J. (1992a). A case for clinical qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 1(4). Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR1-4/clinqual.html>
- Chenail, R. J. (1992b). Qualitative research: Central tendencies and ranges. *The Qualitative Report*, 1(4). Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR1-4/tendencies.html>
- Chenail, R. J. (1995). Presenting qualitative data. *The Qualitative Report*, 2(3). Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR2-3/presenting.html>
- Collins, E. C. (1992). Qualitative research as art: Toward a holistic process. *Theory into Practice*, 31(2), 181-186.
- Deacon, S. A. (2000). Creativity within qualitative research on families: New ideas for old methods. *The Qualitative Report*, 4(3/4). Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR4-3/deacon.html>
- Denzin, N. K. (2003). *Performance ethnography: Critical pedagogy and the politics of culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Easley, M. J., Ankerberg, J., & Burroughs, D. (2006). *The Da Vinci code controversy*. Chicago: Moody.
- Eisner, E. W. (1981). On the differences between scientific and artistic approaches to qualitative research. *Educational Researcher*, 10(4), 5-9.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 733-768). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Finkelstein, H. (1994). *The forbidden library* [Brochure]. Be'er Sheva, Israel: Avraham Baron Art Gallery Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.
- Ford, H. (1948). The Jewish question: A selection of the articles (1920-22) published in Mr. Henry Ford's paper the "Dearborn independent." In G. F. Green (Ed.), *The international Jew* (pp. 187-199). Newport Beach, CA: Noontide Press.
- Fortis, C. (Producer), & Wolfe, G. C. (Director). (1993). *Fires in the mirror* [Motion Picture]. Arlington, VA: PBS Public Television Playhouse.

- Gray, R., Sinding, C., Ivooffski, V., Fitch, M., Hampson, A., & Greenberg, M. (2000). The use of research-based theatre in a project related to metastatic breast cancer. *Health Expectations*, 3, 137-144.
- Habicht, W. (1989). Shakespeare and theatre politics of the Third Reich. In H. Scolnicov & P. Holland (Eds.), *The play out of context: Transferring plays from culture to culture* (pp. 110-134). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hitler, A. (1971). *Mein kampf* (R. Manheim, Trans.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin. (Original work published 1925)
- Hunter, A., Lusardi, P., Zucker, D., Jacelon, C., & Chandler, G. (2002). The creative component in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 12, 388-398.
- Krakow, R. (1992). The false witness. *Hawaii Review*, 16(2), 32-46.
- Luther, M. (1971). On the Jews and their lies. In F. Sherman (Ed.), *Luther's works: The Christian in society* (Vol. 47, pp. 121-306). Philadelphia: Fortress Press. (Original work published 1543)
- Mienczakowski, J. (1997). Theatre of change. *Research in Drama Education*, 2(2), 159-172.
- Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research*. London: Sage.
- National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research. (1996). *A review of the literature on dissemination and knowledge utilization*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncddr.org/kt/products/reviews/du/>
- Phillips, H. (1996, June). The culmination of history's anti-semitism. [Review of the play, *The False Witness*]. *The Review: Washington's Original Arts-News Magazine*, 26(6). Retrieved from <http://www.falsewitness.com/review4.htm>
- Piirto, J. (2002). The question of quality and qualifications: Writing inferior poems as qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15, 431-445.
- Qualitative Interest Group, University of Georgia. (2005). *18th annual conference on interdisciplinary qualitative studies*. [Brochure]. Retrieved from <http://www.coe.uga.edu/quig/2005conference.html>
- Ratcliff, C. W. (1982). *Dbase II*. [Computer software]. Torrance, CA: Ashton-Tate.
- Ritchie, D., & Thompson, K. (1969). *UNIX* (Version 1.0) [Computer software]. Murray Hill, NJ: AT&T Bell Laboratories.
- Routio, P. (2007). *Arteology, the science of products and professions: Developing art with scientific methods*. Retrieved from <http://www2.uiah.fi/projects/metodi/133.htm>
- Saldana, J. (1998). Ethical issues in an ethnographic performance text: The "dramatic impact" of "juicy stuff." *Research in Drama Education*, 3(2), 181-196.
- Schirer, W. (1959). *The rise and fall of the Third Reich*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Shakespeare, W. (1985). *The merchant of Venice*. New York: Barron's Educational Series. (Original work published in 1596)
- Shapiro, J. (1996). *Shakespeare and the Jews*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Simhoni, O. (2003). *The welfare of elderly Florida wards in "nightmare" cases: A qualitative inquiry*. Dissertation Abstracts International, 2003/233. (UMI No. 3119370)
- Sofres, T. N. (2003). *Welcome to TNS the leading market research company*. Retrieved from <http://text.tns-global.com/index.htm>

- Sparkes, A. C. (2003). Transforming qualitative data into art forms. [Review essay]. *Qualitative Research*, 3(3), 415-420.
- The Smoking Gun. (2006, January). *The man who conned Oprah*. Retrieved from <http://www.thesmokinggun.com/archive/0104061jamesfrey1.html>
- Vandergrift, K. E. (n.d.). *Dissemination of research* (Project C.O.P.E.: Content, Organization, Preference, Evaluation). Retrieved from http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/gender_project/dissemination.htm
- Wagner, R. (1995). *Judaism in music and other essays* (W. A. Ellis, Trans.). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. (Original work published 1850, rev. 1869)
- Wilson, S. (1996). *Cultural importance of scientific research & technology development*. Retrieved from <http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~swilson/papers/artist.researcher.html>
- Yin, R. K. (1989). *Case study research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
-

Author Note

Copyright 2008: Orit Simhoni and Nova Southeastern University

Article Citation

- Simhoni, O. (2008). *The False Witness: Artistic research on stage*. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(3), 353-378. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-3/simhoni.pdf>
-