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MONOGRÁFICO 3

LITERATURE AND GENOCIDE LITERATURA Y GENOCIDIO

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Introduction

Introducción

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I.

Saul Bellow's *The Bellarosa Connection* (1989) tells the story of Harry Fonstein, a Jewish refugee who, like other thousands of Jews, could escape Mussolini's Italy and arrive in the United States through an underground operation organized by the Broadway producer Billy Rose. Four decades later—and after several failed attempts to meet Rose—Harry's wife Sorella manages to arrange an encounter with Harry's benefactor to thank him in person. At one point of the conversation between Sorella and Billy Rose, the impresario says: "Remember, forget—what's the difference to me" (53). These words, uttered by someone who "emerges in this novella as the representative of American entrepreneurial showmanship, but also of American indifference" (Aarons 2017: 63), reflect a disdain for the past which inevitably leads to the effacement of collective memory.

Someone who embodies the diametrically opposing approach is Simon Markovitch Dubnow (Семён Маркович Дубнов / דובנאו / שמעון מרקוביץ' דובנאו), a late 19th to mid-20th century Belorussian historian whose well-known phrase "Jews, write and record" – (און פֿרשרייבט) – summarizes his 'mission' very well. Dubnow's words make a special impression when one learns that they were uttered when he was about to be executed after he had gone through a painful illness. He was later buried in a mass grave in the Rumbula forest.¹

Dubnow's phrase "Jews, write and record," interpreted as his final urge to bear witness of what his fellow folks had suffered, has been at the heart of the testimonies of Jewish Holocaust survivors like those of Jean Améry, Aharon Appelfeld (אהרן אפלפלד), Edith Bruck, Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel and Simon Wiesenthal, among others.² Their

1 For further information, consult the entry "Simon Dubnow" by the Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team at <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ghettos/dubnow.html> [30 May 2018].

2 See, for instance, Dawidowicz (1986 [1975]: 129-149) for an extended study of Nazi extermination camps such as Auschwitz, Bełżec, Chełmno, Majdanek, Sobibór and Treblinka; consult also Hilberg (1985 [1961]: 220-259) for a detailed analysis of killing center operations; and Friedländer (2007: 501-510) for an analysis of an extermination camp like Auschwitz II-Birkenau, as well as (314-318) for an account of other extermination sites such as Chełmno.

contribution to what could be called a ‘never forget mission’ has been as invaluable as that of their non-Jewish fellow prisoners such as Charlotte Delbo,³ David Rousset, Jorge Semprún and Ernst Wiechert, among others.

One of those survivors who virtually devoted all his post-Auschwitz life—a four-decade time span—to writing about his concentrationary imprisonment was Primo Levi (1919-1987), the 100th anniversary of whose birth is celebrated this year. On the occasion of this anniversary, this volume entitled “Literature and Genocide” aims to pay a tribute not only to Primo Levi but also to those millions of people who were imprisoned in hundreds of concentration camps throughout Austria, France, Germany, Poland, the former USSR, and elsewhere. In many cases, their lives were annihilated at one point of their imprisonment. The survivors of the Nazi horror spent the rest of their lives trying to come to terms with themselves. This is the case with well-known figures such as Emily Bruck, Charlotte Delbo, Jorge Semprún and Elie Wiesel. Others failed in their attempt to piece their lives together, and eventually committed suicide: to give three widely known names, Jean Améry,⁴ Paul Celan and Primo Levi.⁵

All these survivors—and many others—dedicated their lives to writing about their inferno.⁶ One of those witnesses was Primo Levi. His testimony—initiated with the publication of *If this Is a Man/Survival in Auschwitz* (*Se questo è un uomo*, 1947/1958)—is, in one of his biographers’ words, “the life and the oeuvre of one of the great witnesses of our times” (translation mine) – “la vie et l’oeuvre d’un des grands témoins de notre temps” (Mesnard 2011: 11; not translated into English).

Philippe Mesnard recounts that once liberated from the Auschwitz camp, Levi arrived at Katowice. As soon as he met the Russian commander-in-chief, the Italian survivor told him that he and his friend agreed to testify: “it is of paramount importance to inform the whole world about camp violence. And since it is a question of witnessing in order to inform, Leonardo and Primo accept” – “qu’il est de première importance d’informer le monde

³ Delbo (1995: 233-355; 1971) is especially recommended.

⁴ In a chapter entitled “Torture” (“Tortur”), Jean Améry, who refers to torture as “the most horrible event a human being can retain within himself” (1980: 22) – “Die Tortur ist das fürchterlichste Ereignis, das ein Mensch in sich bewahren kann” (1977 [1966]: 53) – points out that a prisoner was more scared of dying (*Sterben*) than of death (*Tod*) itself.

⁵ “The Jewish Holocaust” (Jones 2006: 147-184) offers the non-specialist an excellent overview.

⁶ Dawidowicz’ “Appendix A: The Fate of the Jews in Hitler’s Europe: By Country” (1986 [1975]: 357-401) is highly recommended; and Hilberg’s “Appendix B: Statistical Recapitulation” (1985 [1961]: 338-339); see also Hilberg (157-259) for an extended explanation of how the Nazi machinery of mass murder operated at different levels, from the Jews’ arrival at the camps until their final extermination; and, finally, a chapter entitled “Nazi Antisemitism” in Prager & Telushkin (2016: 136-152).

entier sur la violence des camps. Et parce qu'il s'agit de témoigner pour informer, Leonardo et Primo acceptent" (106).

It did not take de Benedetti and Levi long to start working on a joint project that consisted in writing about the sanitary conditions in the Monowitz camp—a camp inside Auschwitz which held the infamous IG Farben Factory where Primo Levi had worked making synthetic rubber.⁷ This was a major event in Levi's life as a witness because this report turned out to be "[the] first piece of writing that bears the question of testimony in it" – "première écriture [qui] porte en soi la question de l'adresse testimoniale" (Mesnard 2011: 107). This essay—entitled *Auschwitz Report (Rapporto su Auschwitz)* and published in English in 2006—is defined not only as an "exemplary witness of Nazi concentration camps and of Jewish genocide" but also as "a shared experience" – respectively, "témoin exemplaire des camps de concentration nazi et du génocide des Juifs" and "une expérience partagée" (108).⁸

Having a "shared experience" is crucial because it is the only way to create a continuum between those who went through the concentrationary inferno and those who, not having a direct exposure to it, have wanted to know about how this tragedy occurred in recent European history.⁹ As regards the connection between third-generation writers and transmission, Victoria Aarons rightly claims that "'third-generation' suggests both an ongoing chain of necessarily complicated continuity in the transfer of memory from one generation to the next and a context for the affective disruptions of that continuity" (2016: xvi).

In Philippe Mesnard's explanation, "shared writing is a type of collective meditation between the text and the reality such text bears witness of" – "l'écriture commune est une forme de méditation collectif entre le texte et la réalité dont le texte atteste" (2011: 108). This kind of testimony is extremely valuable because it is not only an author's testimony but also the transmission of their testimony. At one point, Mesnard says that, according to Levi, "those who forget or those who do not bear testimony to their children will see their house come down, will see illness affect them, and their children run away from them" – "ce qui oublieraient ou ceux qui ne transmettraient pas à leurs enfants, verront leur

7 Friedländer (2007: 503-504) explains how Levi and his companions, who were arrested by the Fascist militia in December of 1943, ended up in the camps of Monowitz-Buna and Birkenau; for her part, Dawidowicz (1986 [1975]: 121) also offers a brief account of this issue.

8 See *Rapporto sulla organizzazione igienico-sanitaria del Campo di concentramento per Ebrei di Monowitz* (Levi 2016b, I: 1177-1194). This book is not included in *The Complete Works of Primo Levi* (2016a). It can be consulted in Levi & De Benedetti (2006).

9 In his *Trial and Error. The Autobiography* (1949), Chaim Weizman (חיים ויצמן), the prestigious chemist and first President of the State of Israel, alludes to "the bestiality of the extermination chambers" (1949, II, 357), in clear reference to concentration camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau.

maison s'écrouler, la maladie les atteindre, leurs enfants se détourner d'eux" (135). And as regards the importance of passing the message on to others, Victoria Aarons points out that "[s]uch garnered memories are openings for midrashic moments of continuity and extension, an invitation to *carry the weight of memory into the present*" (2012: 139; emphasis mine).

Writing, then, is a powerful psychological resource when it comes to passing one's testimony on to subsequent generations: "Life and writing are closely interrelated" – "Vie, écriture sont très liées" (Mesnard 2011: 143). The connection between writing and living a post-Holocaust life is taken up by the Spanish Buchenwald survivor Jorge Semprún, who chose French as the language through which he would give testimony. Semprún's approach is radically different to Levi's. For instance, in *Literature or Life* (1997) – *L'écriture ou la vie* (1994) – he includes a chapter entitled "The Day of Primo Levi's Death" (1997: 223-251) – "Le jour de la mort de Primo Levi" (1994: 289-323) – where he addresses the writing process of the former Auschwitz inmate, whose suicide took place in April of 1987. Semprún associates this tragic event with the same month—of 1945, however. This was the time when the Buchenwald camp was liberated by the Sixth Armored Division of the US Army. Semprún defines Levi's work(s) as the "appointment of memory and death" (1997: 225) – "rendez-vous de la mémoire et de la mort" (1994: 292). Also in this chapter, the Spanish Buchenwald ex-prisoner, who ponders his own writing process, defines it as "the strategy of forgetting" (1997: 230) – "la stratégie de l'oubli" (1994: 297). What he means is that he needed to forget in order to be able to live; the alternative to this—he thinks—was conducive to Levi's tragic end: remembering to die. Semprún concludes his line of reasoning saying that he did not read any Holocaust-related testimony until 1963, when he read Levi's *The Truce* (*La tregua*, 1963). In his own explanation, he had avoided this kind of documents as a "strategy of survival" (1997: 237) – "stratégie de la survie" (1994: 305). In *Kaddish for a Child Not Born* (*Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért*, 1990), the novelist of Hungarian extraction Imre Kertész establishes a devastating interrelation between memory, writing and death by saying that "the pen is my spade" (1997: 24) – "a golyóstoll az én ásóm" (1990: 51-52).

Jorge Semprún and Elie Wiesel approach the issue of writing vs. life in *Se taire est impossible* (*To Remain Silent Is Impossible*, 1995; not translated into English¹⁰), published on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps in

10 There is a German edition of this work entitled *Schweigen ist unmöglich* (1997).

Germany and in Poland. Semprún and Wiesel met in the French radio programme “Entretien” – “Interview” – to talk about their concentrationary experience.¹¹

At one point of their dialogue, Wiesel tells his friend that he believes Levi committed suicide “because he was a writer” (translation mine) – “parce qu’il était écrivain” (1995: 17). Both Wiesel, whose well-known *Night (Nuit)* was published thirteen years after his liberation from Auschwitz, and Semprún, whose Holocaust-based novel *The Long Voyage (Le grand voyage)* came out eighteen years after his being released from Buchenwald, had to forget in order to be able to remember through writing. Semprún claims, “the more I write, the more I remember” – “plus j’écris, plus la mémoire me revient” (1995: 18) – and “the more I write, the more present memory is, but the more anguish comes back, too, needless to say” – “plus j’écris, plus la mémoire est là, mais plus l’angoisse revient aussi, bien entendu” (19). The Spanish survivor had reflected on the interrelation between writing and memory in his 1964 *The Long Voyage* – originally published as *Le grand voyage* one year before: “Now is not the time for me to tell about this voyage; I have to wait a while, I have to forget this voyage, then later perhaps I’ll be able to tell about it” (1964: 129) – “Ce n’est pas encore maintenant que je pourrai raconter ce voyage, il faut attendre encore, il faut vraiment oublier ce voyage, après, peut-être, pourrai-je le raconter” (1963: 153).

Another former Holocaust prisoner who also refers to memory as a dangerous resource is Aharon Appelfeld: “Memory becomes our enemy. We worked on it in every moment in order to weaken it, to distract it, to numb it as you do with pain” (translation mine) – “La mémoire devint notre ennemi. C’est à chaque instant qu’on travailla à l’émousser, à la détourner, à l’engourdir comme on le fait avec la douleur” (Mesnard 2011: 131). In a well-known interview included in Philip Roth’s *Shop Talk: A Writer and His Colleagues and Their Work* (2001), Appelfeld explains to Roth why, unlike a survivor writer like Primo Levi, he fictionalizes his own experiences. He claims that “[t]o write things as they happened means to enslave oneself to memory, which is only a minor element in the creative process” (27). This could help us better understand why he said in a New Yorker interview published on January 5th, 2018—i.e. the day after he passed away, “I always felt that fiction was the way to the deepest truths”¹² (Gourevitch 2018). (It is probably for the

11 The term “concentrationary universe” was adopted after the publication of *L’univers concentrationnaire* (1947) by the French journalist and writer David Rousset. This is a seminal book translated into English by Ramon Guthrie as *The Other Kingdom* (1947). In 1951 the book, translated by Yvonne Moyse and Roger Senhouse, was entitled *A World Apart*.

12 Bernard Malamud’s biographer Philip Davis explains that the way to “do justice to Malamud” is to study his fiction because “[i]t was fiction that provided the best context for human understanding” (2007: x; emphasis in original). In my view, this also applies to Appelfeld.

reason given above—to forget in order to remember later—that, as explained in *To Remain Silent Is Impossible*, many survivor-writers like Jean Améry, Paul Celan and Primo Levi, “unable” to forget, ended up committing suicide.)

It seems then that bearing witness—which can be summed up in the first part of Billy Rose’s “Remember, forget”—inevitably forces the survivor-witness to sail between the Scylla of remembering and the Charybdis of forgetting.¹³ One of these survivor-witnesses is the French partisan Charlotte Delbo, who explores the theme of memory and testimony at the end of her first volume *None of Us Will Return* (*Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, 1970) included in *Auschwitz and After* (*Auschwitz et après*): “Why did I keep my memory? Why this injustice?” (1995: 111) – “Pourquoi ai-je gardé la mémoire? Pourquoi cette injustice?” (1970a: 177, 178, 179). However, in the second volume of her trilogy—*A Useless Knowledge* (*Une connaissance inutile*, 1970)—Delbo, who underscores the importance of remembering, is scared of losing her memory during her post-Auschwitz life. According to her, “[t]o lose one’s memory is to lose oneself, to no longer be oneself” (1995: 188) – “[p]erdre la mémoire, c’est se perdre soi-même, c’est n’être plus soi” (1970b: 121). In four verses, she insists on the relevance of writing about the Nazi horror: “I came back from the dead / and believed / this gave me the right / to speak to others” (1995: 228) – “Je suis revenue d’entre les morts / et j’ai cru / que cela me donnait le droit / de parler aux autres” (1970b: 184).

There are others like Ernst Wiechert, however, who from the very beginning had a keen interest in remembering everything—and “record[ing]” it in a Dubnowian fashion. In his classic *Forest of the Dead* (*Der Totenwald. Ein Bericht*, 1946), this Catholic writer and Buchenwald survivor introduces an inmate called Johannes who considers himself a witness (“Zeugnis”) who “did not want to overlook or to forget a single detail” (1947: 62) – “wollte nichts übersehen und nichts vergessen” (1977 [1946]: 64). Remembering everything and not overlooking anything is, without a doubt, an extremely painful, lifelong task that not every single survivor could accomplish successfully. One of those who succeeded in bearing witness—although this was a most complicated thing to do—was Edith Bruck.

Edith Bruck is an Auschwitz ex-prisoner of Hungarian extraction who, like Semprún, gave up her mother tongue when bearing testimony. In her case, she writes in Italian as in *Mrs. Auschwitz. The Gift of Speech* (*Signora Auschwitz. Il dono della parola*, 2014 [1999]; not

13 When Victoria Aarons analyzes third-generation narratives, she explains that they “create sites of the imagination, imaginative spaces within which are balanced the antinomies of proximity and distance symptomatic of the ambivalence between forgetting/relinquishing, on the one hand, and remembering/retaining and finally transmitting memory, on the other” (Aarons 2016: xviii).

translated into English¹⁴). Almost at the end of her narrative, Bruck explains that she sees a psychiatrist who asks her, among other questions, whether she is working. She replies: “I am writing a book about the weight of testimony and about the cage of my experience, about the burden and the sense of guilt it provokes in me” (translation mine) – “sto scrivendo un libro sul peso della testimonianza e della gabbia del mio vissuto, della fatica e del senso di colpa che mi procura” (Bruck 2014 [1999]: 87). And in connection with testimony, she openly says to the psychiatrist that she has felt for years that it was a must-do task: “my testimony was an irreplaceable good thing, speaking my mind about Auschwitz” – “era un bene insostituibile la mia testimonianza, il mio parlare di Auschwitz” (16).

Like Edith Bruck, Elie Wiesel talks about the painful task of passing down the experience of the Nazi horror. At the beginning of the preface to the new edition of his classic *Night* (*Nuit*), he says that “[i]f in my lifetime I was to write only one book, this would be the one” (Wiesel 2006 [1958]: vii) – “Si de ma vie je n’avais eu à écrire qu’un seul livre, ce serait celui-ci” (Wiesel 2007 [1958]: 9). A few paragraphs below, he claims that since History will be judged one day, “I knew that I must bear witness” (viii) – “je devais témoigner pour ses victimes” (11). In this sense, like other survivors, he alludes to the difficulty of verbalizing the Nazi inferno: “But how was one to rehabilitate and transform words betrayed and perverted by the enemy?” (ix) – “Trahie, corrompue, pervertie par l’ennemi, comment pouvait-on réhabiliter et humaniser la parole?” (12).

Rehabilitating speech is a major challenge which becomes not only Wiesel’s priority but also that of many other survivor-writers. He considers himself a person who “has a moral obligation to try to prevent the enemy from enjoying one last victory by allowing his crimes to be erased from human memory” (2006 [1958]: viii) – “moralement et humainement obligé d’empêcher l’ennemi de remporter une victoire posthume, sa dernière, en effaçant ses crimes de la mémoire des hommes” (2007 [1958]: 10).

Primo Levi and Edith Bruck, to give just two examples, are committed to the idea of struggling against forgetting. Apart from their writing, they embarked on a three-decade-plus project consisting in visiting primary and high schools to talk about their concentrationary life. By the mid-1970s, however, Levi had begun to feel that students had lost their interest in this issue. After this period, he started to write fictional stories about the Holocaust. This is what he said about his new approach to writing: “One can make things up as long as the values of the world depicted are not betrayed” (translation mine)

14 A French edition of this work – *Signora Auschwitz: Le don de la parole (Entre histoire et mémoire)* – was published in 2015.

– “On peut inventer à condition de ne pas trahir les valeurs du monde dont on parle” (Mesnard 2011: 397) – because “one also runs the risk of betrayal if transmission is done in a clumsy manner” – “transmettre maladroitement comporte également le risque d’une trahison” (397). (I wonder what Levi would have thought of the way a number of third-generation writers such as Shalom Auslander bear witness.)

Like Levi, Emily Bruck also delivered Holocaust-oriented talks in high schools for a number of years. She firmly believes that new generations should be the ‘target audience’ of their message. Like the Italian survivor, she insists on the importance of the survivor’s testimony: “My own direct testimony would be a lesson for them that no school could offer” (translation mine) – “La diretta testimonianza del mio vissuto sarebbe stata per loro una lezione che nessuna scuola poteva dare!” (Bruck 2014 [1999]: 17). However, also like Levi, she had realized by the early 1980s that the Holocaust was not a ‘hot topic’ any longer. For this reason, in spite of the endless invitations she continued to receive for years, her ever-increasing disappointment with how frivolously her message was received eventually led her to discontinue her school visits.

Levi’s and Bruck’s focus on transmission—as in the case of other survivors—is solidly grounded in two ideas: on the one hand, if people ignore their past, history will repeat itself; on the other, forgetting is also conducive to another danger: negationism.¹⁵ As is well known, negationism began to be more visible in the mid and late 1970s. Hence, the ‘never forget’ mission should carry on.¹⁶

II.

As in the case of the Holocaust, it would be unthinkable to exclude Gulag-based literature from a monograph about literature and genocide such as the present issue. The GULAG (ГУЛАГ)—also written “Gulag”—referring to the most devastating extermination weapon used by communism, is an acronym “meaning *Glavnoe upravlenie Lagerei* [Главное управление лагерей], or Main Camp Administration” (Applebaum 2003: 3). It “has also come to signify not only the administration of the concentration camps but also the system of Soviet slave labour itself, in all its forms and varieties: labour camps, punishment

15 For an account of this issue, consult, for instance, Dawidowicz (1986 [1975]: xxiii-xxiv) and Volkman (1982: 81-92). Lipstadt (1993), a book-length analysis of Holocaust negationism, is especially recommended.

16 Hilberg (1985 [1961]: 263-305) offers an in-depth study of the “nature of the process”—“perpetrators” (263-293) and “the victims” (293-305); in “Explaining the Holocaust: Does Social Psychology Exonerate the Perpetrators?” Miller, Buddie and Kretschmar (in Newman & Erber 2002: 301-324) explore the impact that social-psychological explanations may have on those people who read them; for an approach to “revisionism” as a step prior to “negationism,” see Tertsch’s “Revisionism, Or the Worst Symptom” – “El revisionismo o el peor síntoma” (1993: 103-108; originally written, and only published, in Spanish).

campes, criminal and political camps, women's camps, children's camps, transit camps" (3). Anne Applebaum concludes that

Even more broadly, 'Gulag' has come to mean the Soviet repressive system itself, the set of procedures that prisoners once called the 'meat-grinder': the arrests, the interrogations, the transport in unheated cattle cars, the forced labour, the destruction of families, the years spent in exile, the early and unnecessary deaths. (3)

The birth of the Gulag camps dates back from 1918 (Solzhenitsyn 2007: 196; 1975, II: 17) – (1987, III: 17). As explained in "The Fingers of Aurora" ("Персты Авроры"), the term "concentration camp" (2007: 197; 1975, II: 17) – "концлагерь" (1987, III: 17-18) – was first included in a telegramme written by Lenin, dated August, 1918. Or as pointed out by Joseph Pearce, one of Solzhenitsyn's biographers, "the camps originated and the Archipelago was born from this particular instruction of July 23, 1918" (2011: 2). This makes reference to legislation passed by the Bolshevik government "which stipulated that 'those deprived of freedom who are capable of labour must be recruited for physical work on a compulsory basis'" (2). (It should not be ignored that Hitler's concentration camps – *Konzentrationslager* – started to be conceived in March of 1933, and were modeled on the Gulag labor camps. The Nazis also talked about the British concentration camps in South Africa during the Boer War.)

When addressing the issue of communism, Jorge Semprún, a Buchenwald survivor and a former member of the Spanish Communist Party—The "Partido Comunista de España" better known in Spain by its acronym PCE—describes it as "the murderous illusion of the Communist adventure" (1997: 258) – "l'illusion meurtrière de l'aventure communiste" (1994: 332) – conducive to the "bloodiest failure, the most unfathomable and abject social injustice of History" (258) – "plus sanglant échec, à l'injustice sociale la plus abjecte et opaque de l'Histoire" (332).¹⁷ We should add that lying is a natural weapon especially used by dictators to stay in power for as long as they can. Jean-François Revel analyzes this theme in "On Simple Lies" – "Du mensonge simple" – included in *The Flight from Truth: The Reign of Deceit in the Age of Information* (1991) – *La Connaissance inutile* (1988). As the author claims, lies in a scientific community are soon found out. However, in a totalitarian regime like that of the USSR, it is no wonder that Lysenkoism—Lysenko's biological theory (1935-1964)—was successful for decades. In Revel's explanation, it was

imposed on the entire Soviet Union by its totalitarian regime. But Lysenko never enjoyed the slightest credit in international scientific circles. Lysenko, who rejected

17 For an in-depth study of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, consult Escobedo (2016, III); and for an extended analysis of communism, see "Leftist Antisemitism" in Prager & Telushkin (2016: 122-135).

the chromosome theory, who denied the existence of genes, and who stigmatized in grotesque terms the “Fascist and Trotskyist-Bukharinist deviation of genetics,” owed the local hegemony of his crazy biology less to his cleverness as an imposter than to the political volition of Stalin and Khrushchev (1991: 20).¹⁸

In line with the rest of his *Flight from Truth*, one of Revel’s main theses here is that for thirty years the vast majority of the Russian population, unable to have access to scientific information outside the former USSR, was forced to live the dream of someone like Stalin (Сталин), a visionary supported by a totalitarian state.¹⁹

Another critic of communism is the historian Richard Pipes, who explains in his 2001 book-length study that millions of people were deported to Soviet labor camps, and how these camps became actual extermination centers like those used by the Nazis.

The kulaks—the term covered better-off peasants as well as those who actively resisted collectivization—had all their belongings confiscated and were deported either to hard-labor camps or, along with their families, into Siberian exile. According to official records, in 1930 and 1931, 1,903,392 people suffered one or the other, of these punishments. (Pipes 2001: 60)²⁰

For her part, Anne Applebaum (2003: 268) refers to the so-called ‘Great Terror’ (1937-1938),²¹ the years when the major mass arrests took place. From a quantitative point of view, this period is only comparable to that of 1948-1949.²²

Nineteen thirty-seven was a watershed year in the history of the Gulag administration system because

it was in this year that the Soviet camps temporarily transformed themselves from indifferently managed prisons in which people died by accident, into genuinely deadly camps where prisoners were deliberately worked to death, or actually murdered, in far larger numbers than they had been in the past. (Applebaum 2003: 104)

18 “qui fut imposée par un État totalitaire à tout un pays comme doctrine officielle. Mais le lyssenkisme ne jouit jamais du moindre crédit dans les milieux scientifiques internationaux. Lyssenko, qui repoussait la théorie chromosomique, niait l’existence des gènes et flétrissait en termes bouffons la «déviation fasciste et trostkiste-boukhariniste de la génétique», dut l’hégémonie locale de sa biologie délirante moins à son habilité comme imposteur qu’à la volonté politique de Staline et de Khrouchtchev” (Revel 1988: 32-33).

19 See, for instance, “On Simple Lies” (Revel 1991: 19-29) – “Du mensonge simple” (Revel 1988: 31-44) – for a more detailed analysis of the role of lies in totalitarian systems such as communism and nazism; for a brief account of communism as a failed system, see Tertsch (1993), especially “The Big Scam” – “La gran estafa” (29-33) – and “Intellectuals and Hell” – “Los intelectuales y el infierno” (35-40); see also Tertsch’s “Bad Neighbors” – “Malos vecinos” (53-58) – for an explanation about Poland under the Nazi and Communist yoke.

20 For an extended account of how prisoners were transported to Gulag prisons in freight cars, much the same as victims of the Nazis, see Applebaum’s “Transport, Arrival, Selection” (2003: 158-178); for an explanation about mass deportations from Poland and the Baltic states, among others, consult also Applebaum (2012: 99-102).

21 Pearce (2011: 30-31) also addresses this period.

22 In “Appendix: How Many” (2003: 515-522), Applebaum offers detailed estimates about the number of the arrested, imprisoned and exiled during the Gulag years.

Unlike Nazi camps, Soviet camps continued to grow throughout the 1940s and early 1950s. They began to be dismantled in 1956, three years after Stalin's death. Stalin believed that labor camps were a key element in the USSR's economic development.²³ His successors, however, acknowledged that not only was Stalin's view wrong but also that the hundreds of camps scattered throughout the former USSR had actually contributed to the eventual impoverishment of the Soviet economy. The dissolution or closure of these camps—converted into prisons in the 1970s and 1980s—began to be a reality in 1987 under the Presidency of Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev (Миха́йл Серге́евич Горбачёв), whose grandparents had been Gulag prisoners. The closure of the vast majority of camps took place with the collapse of the Soviet Union in December of 1991.²⁴ However, there are still labor camps in Russia.

As Gorbachev's government, which played a significant role in the attempt to tell the truth about the sinister decades of Gulag-based dictatorship, triggered the glasnost / perestroika (Гласность / перестройка) policy, archives began to be opened in order to discover what had actually happened and

Memorial was founded by a group of young historians, some of whom had been collecting oral histories of camp survivors for many years. Among them was Arseny [Borisovich] Roginsky [Арсéний (Бор́исович) Ро́гинский], founder of the journal Pamyat ([Па́мять] Memory), which first began to appear in samizdat [самиздат], and then in emigration, as early as the 1970s. (Applebaum 2003: 497)

Although historians like Applebaum had not gone through the Gulag, they started to bear witness to truth as soon as they could. Their contribution to the disclosure of what had occurred in those prisons for decades has been crucial.

If central to the discovery of Gulag-oriented truth has been the role played by historians like Anne Applebaum and Richard Pipes, among others, the inferno-like experience gone through in Soviet extermination camps²⁵ and described in countless memoirs, novels, tales and poems has also been essential, as in the case of the Holocaust. Alexander Isayevich

23 "Stalin's terror" in Jones (2006: 124-146) offers the non-specialist reader an excellent overview of these years.

24 See Applebaum (2012: 351) for an explanation of the "*Homo Sovieticus*"—an ironic phrase used in reference to those who would never oppose communism. The "*homo sovieticus*" became a key actor in the survival of communism throughout Europe for decades; for a more extended account of the *homo sovieticus* vs. *homo religiosus* in Solzhenitsyn, consult also Ericson (1993: 25-34).

25 Toker explains that "the Kolyma forced labor camps turned into camps of slow (and frequently accelerated) extermination" (2000: 145).

Solzhenitsyn – Алексáндр Исáевич Солжени́цын – is at the core of Gulag writers.²⁶ The impact—and influence—of his writing is difficult to overrate, as can be deduced from the opening lines of Edward E. Ericson’s introduction to the abridged version of *The Gulag Archipelago* (Архипела́г ГУЛА́Г, 1973):

For a few decades the word Holocaust has served us well as a shorthand term for modern man’s inhumanity to man. In recent years a second such shorthand term has entered our vocabulary thinking: Gulag. This term comes to us not from a host of witnesses but from one lone man: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, whose very name has become a household word around the world. (Ericson 2007: xi)²⁷

And when Ericson talks about one of Solzhenitsyn’s greatest contributions, he explicitly says that it “has [undoubtedly] been to write this history of the concentration camps of the Soviet Union” (xii). More specifically, the reason why Solzhenitsyn chose the name Archipelago to describe the Soviet concentrations camp system is explained in Anne Applebaum’s 2003 book-length study about the Gulag: “Solovetsky, the first Soviet camp to be planned and built with any expectation of permanence, developed on a genuine archipelago, spreading outwards island by island, taking over the old churches and buildings of an ancient monastic community as it grew” (41).²⁸

If, as explained in the previous section, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Primo Levi’s birth in 2019 this volume intends to pay a tribute to Holocaust ex-prisoners like him, we should not disregard that the year 2018, at the beginning of which I started to prepare the present special issue, marked the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I, one of the most devastating 20th century massacres—and therefore in the history of humankind. The very same year marked the 100th anniversary of Solzhenitsyn’s birth, and the 10th anniversary of his death. 2018 was also the 110th anniversary of the birth of Georgy Demidov (Геóргий Демíдов), another Gulag survivor-writer, whose little analyzed works are examined by Leona Toker in one of the essays of the present issue.

26 See Toker (2000: 28-72) for a study of the 70-year-plus literary corpus of the memoir literature about the Gulag. Apart from well-known literary figures such as Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn and Varlam Tikhonovich Shalamov (Варлам Тихонович Шаламов), other first-rate memoirists are also analyzed: among others, Margarete Buber-Neumann, Alexander Dolgun, Evgenia Solomonovna Ginzburg (Евгения Соломоновна Гинзбург), Gustav Herling-Hrudzinski (Gustaw Herling-Grudziński), Elinor Lipper, Julius Borisovich Margolin (Юлий Борисович Марголин), Ekaterina Olitskaya (Екатерина Олицкая), Dimitry Panin (Дмитрий Пáнин) and Joseph Scholmer.

27 See also Ericson (1993: 11).

28 For further information about the Solovetsky concentration camp—the first Soviet camp of an endless series—see especially Solzhenitsyn’s “Part II – Perpetual Motion”: “The Ships of the Archipelago,” “The Ports of the Archipelago,” “The Slave Caravans” and “From Island to Island” (2007: 149-174; 1975, I: 489-615) – “ЧАСТЬ ВТОРАЯ – ВЕЧНОЕ ДВИЖЕНИЕ”: “Корабли Архипелага,” “Порты Архипелага,” “Караваны невольников,” “С острова на остров” (1987, I: 469-579); consult also Applebaum (2003: 40-58); and Toker (2000: 14-17).

Therefore, it seems an appropriate time to pay homage to the memory of Gulag ex-prisoners through a commemorative publication like this monograph.

It is true that Gulag writers like Solzhenitsyn wrote numerous works of Gulag fiction. However, as he explains in the “Author’s Note” included in the English abridged version of *The Gulag Archipelago*:

In this book there are no fictitious persons, nor fictitious events. People and places are named with their own names. If they are identified by initials instead of names, it is for personal considerations. If they are not named at all, it is only because human memory has failed to preserve their names. But it all took place just as it is here described. (Ericson 2007: xvii)

For this reason, the book’s subtitle is *An Experiment in Literary Investigation – Опыт художественного исследования*. *Gulag Archipelago* is “not a novel; it is a work of historical reconstruction” (Ericson 2007: xii). It is recommended reading to “[t]hose who wish to understand the underlying causes of the collapse of Soviet Communism” (Ericson 1993: 11). Solzhenitsyn was fully aware of his role as a witness to the extent of considering himself “the chronicler of the archipelago” (2007: 451)²⁹ – “летописцем Архипелага” (1987, VII: 469). According to Leona Toker, “the first major ethical aim of *The Gulag Archipelago* is to speak for the silent victims” (2000: 106). Joseph Pearce explains that, while imprisoned, Solzhenitsyn memorized, like many other camp inmates, as much as he could of what he had composed because putting it in writing was an extremely dangerous thing to do. Solzhenitsyn’s biographer says that “[b]y the time he was released, he had consigned twelve thousand lines of his own work to memory” (2011: 133). The prisoners’ superlative endeavor—epitomized in Solzhenitsyn’s work—leads us back to the major theme of this issue: history, memory and transmission.

In effect, as in the case of Holocaust writing, history, memory and transmission are at the core of Gulag writing.³⁰ Towards the end of his monumental *Gulag Archipelago*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn refers to the impact his first book *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich – Один день Ивана Денисовича* (1962) – had inside and outside the former Soviet Union. In

29 Jiménez Losantos (2018: 514-515) includes a number of extracts on how Solzhenitsyn saw Spain in 1976, immediately after Franco’s death; Jiménez Losantos (515-517) also gives an account of what a number of Spanish writers and intellectuals such as Juan Benet, Camilo José Cela and Francisco Umbral, among others, said about the Literature Nobel Prize laureate (1970); Stanley G. Payne (2017: 250) explicitly notes that approximately four months after Franco’s death, Solzhenitsyn visited Spain and claimed that, except from a political viewpoint, he saw a quite free country; Pearce (2011: 246-247) also gives an account of what Solzhenitsyn said about mid-70s Spain and what international newspapers like *Le Monde* wrote about him.

30 Applebaum establishes a most appropriate comparison between Auschwitz and the Kolyma gold mine-based camp: “In the same way that Auschwitz has become, in popular memory, the camp which symbolizes all other Nazi camps, so too has the word ‘Kolyma’ come to signify the greatest hardships of the Gulag” (2003: 96).

particular, when he talks about how a book like *One Day* was received by other “zeks” – “зэк,” an abbreviation of “zaklyuchennyi” (“заключённый”) is the Russian word for “prisoner” – Solzhenitsyn explains that “[f]or them, for today’s zeks, my book is no book, my truth is no truth unless there is a continuation, unless I go on to speak of them, too. Truth must be told—and things must change!” (2007: 453; 1975, III: 478).³¹ Almost at the end of his Solzhenitsyn biography, Joseph Pearce points out that “[i]n October 2010, it was announced that *The Gulag Archipelago* would become required reading for all Russian high school students. In a meeting with Solzhenitsyn’s widow, Putin [Путин] described *The Gulag Archipelago* as ‘essential reading’” (2011: 378)—in order to know the truth, I would add.³²

The interrelation between testimony and truth has been addressed by Leona Toker, who unambiguously says that “the teleological explanations for the need of Gulag memoirs and other testimony to atrocities do not suffice” because “[t]he history of the rise and fall of the Soviet regime and its culture suggests... that the ancient principle of valuing the truth for its own sake cannot be sacrificed with impunity” (2000: 248; ellipsis mine).³³ At the outset of her *Return from the Archipelago*, she refers to the fact that “[f]amiliarity with survivor memoirs partly reduces or compensates for these insults to the memory of the dead” (5). As explained above, Solzhenitsyn is a major Gulag memoirist. Another key figure is Varlam Tikhonovich Shalamov (Варла́м Ти́хонович Шала́мов), whose approach to memoir writing is, however, different from Solzhenitsyn’s. This is mainly due to the fact that his writing is far less dependent on fiction than Shalamov’s, who has been aptly described as “a subtly philosophical artist whose short stories erase the borderlines between historical testimony and an imaginative construction of the past and provide an example par excellence of narratives as bifunctional objects” (Toker 2000: 9). Like Primo Levi and

31 In connection with *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Applebaum refers to Gorbachev’s policies of glasnost (‘openness’) and perestroika (‘restructuring’). She explains that early in Gorbachev’s role as Soviet leader—but as late as January of 1987 in the history of the USSR—“the Soviet public had the chance to read Osip Mandelstam (Осип Мандельштам) and Joseph Brodsky (И́осиф Бро́дский), Anna Akhmatova’s (Анна Ахматова) *Requiem* (Реквием), Boris Pasternak’s (Борис Пастернак) *Doctor Zhivago* (Доктор Живаго), even Vladimir Nabokov’s (Владимир Набоков) *Lolita*. After a struggle, *Novyi Mir* (Но́вый Ми́р), now under new editorship, began publishing instalments of Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago*. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* would soon sell millions of copies, and authors whose works had previously circulated only in samizdat [underground self-publication], if at all, sold hundreds of thousand of copies of their Gulag memoirs too” (2003: 496).

32 Interestingly, Ericson points out that “[t]he primary intended audience of his literature is future generations of Russians” (1993: 5).

33 Consult, for example, Pearce (2011: 167-182) for an account of how Solzhenitsyn had to hide from KGB agents works like *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, *In the First Circle* (В крýге нёрвом) and *The Gulag Archipelago*.

Edith Bruck, among others, Shalamov, whose “life was devoted to remembering and writing” (147), devoted the last decades of his existence to bearing witness. In his case, that time span ranges from his release from Kolyma in the early 1950s until he passed away in 1982. During those three decades his health worsened to the extent that, after leaving the infamous gold mines, “[t]he body of a Kolyma survivor bore witness of its own: blindness, deafness, frostbitten skin, Ménière disease, chronic congestion, and apparently also minor strokes, angina pectoris, Parkinson’s disease, and incipient dementia” (149).³⁴ Holocaust and Gulag survivors bore testimony of their inferno-like experience for decades. However, unlike what happens with the Shoah (שואה), in the case of the Gulag extermination camps, “very few people in contemporary Russia feel the past to be a burden, or an obligation, at all. The past is a bad dream to be forgotten, or a whispered rumour to be ignored” (Applebaum 2003: 512). And she concludes that “if we forget the Gulag, sooner or later we will find it hard to understand our own history too” (513). As George (Jorge) Santayana put it more than a century ago, “[t]hose who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (2011: 172).

III.

The present special issue includes four essays: first, Cheryl Chaffin’s “Auschwitz as University: Primo Levi’s Poetry and Fiction Post-Deportation and Return” focuses, on the one hand, on what knowledge the Italian survivor took from the camps that he developed over the four remaining decades of his life; and, on the other, how those insights manifested in his writing. Specifically, her study addresses relationships in Levi’s work and his knowledge and observation of intimacy and conflict in—and after—the war.

Aimee Pozorski’s “Figuration and the Child in the Age of Genocide” explores the ways in which the paradoxical figure of an unborn child depicts the social, political, and private horrors of genocide. By proposing that we are connected via that which we cannot understand, this essay examines the “Child Not Born” in Imre Kertész’s *Kaddish for a Child Not Born* (*Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért*, 1990), Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and Anna Winger’s *This Must be Be the Place* (2008).

Gustavo Sánchez Canales’s “An Approach to 21st Century Literary Representations of the Holocaust” looks at two novels by two third-generation writers who approach the Holocaust in a different manner: First, he will examine Holocaust-related imagery in Michael Chabon’s *The Final Solution* (2004), a novella which addresses the sequels of the

34 For a detailed explanation of the Kolyma mines, see Shalamov’s tales and Applebaum (2003: 96-102). Applebaum specifically addresses how the Kolyma region held the homonymous camp, its origins, development and expansion.

concentration camp horror through the traumatic experience of a 9-year-old survivor. The other novel is Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002), a story narrated from two points of view—one comic, one serious—which seems to be Foer's way to show whether these two views are reconcilable or not.

Finally, Leona Toker's "Literary Reflections of Elitocide: Georgy Demidov and Precursors" is devoted to literary representations of the killing of the educated or of the leadership of an ethnic group. Many of these reflections can be recognized as such only after the phenomenon itself has crystallized in collective memory. Literary treatments of the issue of elitocide included in this essay are works by Fedor Dostoevsky (*The Devils* [Бесы], 1871–1872), H. G. Wells (*The Time Machine*, 1895), and Vladimir Nabokov (*Bend Sinister*, 1947). The main example, however, is the theme of the destruction of the most talented in the Gulag stories by Georgy Demidov, a labor camp survivor whose works have been little studied.

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Auschwitz as University: Primo Levi's Poetry and Fiction Post-Deportation and Return

Auschwitz como universidad: La poesía y la ficción posdeportación y el regreso de Primo Levi

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I have to observe that really my deepest and most lasting loves are the least explicable.¹

Resumen

Primo Levi señaló que su experiencia de un año de duración, desde su deportación en febrero de 1944 hasta su liberación de Auschwitz en enero de 1945, fue el motivo principal de su necesidad de escribir. Levi llegó a decir que su experiencia en el campo de trabajo había sido una especie de universidad para él. Más allá de sus narrativas autobiográficas sobre los campos, principalmente en *Si esto es un hombre* (*Se questo è un uomo*) y *La tregua*, Levi escribió dos novelas, varios cuentos, poemas y ensayos. Estos trabajos demuestran el alcance de lo que el escritor exploró mientras ponía por escrito su relación con el mundo y con la naturaleza humana tras su liberación de Auschwitz. En este artículo, tengo en cuenta qué conocimiento extrajo Levi de los campos, algo que desarrolló durante las cuatro décadas restantes de su vida, al igual que cómo esas apreciaciones se reflejaron en su escritura. En concreto, este análisis se centra en las relaciones en la obra de Levi –entre la gente y en la respuesta de uno mismo frente al mundo– y su conocimiento y observación relativa a la intimidad y al conflicto durante y después de la guerra.

¹ From Primo Levi's 1981 book, *The Search for Roots*. Cited in Levi (2016a: xlix). Originally in "Prefazione" included in *La ricerca delle radici*: "Devo anzi constatare che proprio i miei amori più profondi e durevoli sono i meno giustificati" (Levi, 2016, II: 8).

Palabras clave: Auschwitz; literatura sobre el Holocausto; Primo Levi; poesía; novela; escritura y trauma.

Abstract

Primo Levi noted that his year-long experience, from deportation in February 1944 to release from Auschwitz in January 1945, was at the root of his need to write. He even went as far as saying that his experience in the labor camp had been a sort of university for him. Beyond his autobiographical writing on the camps, notably in *If This Is a Man* (*Se questo è un uomo*) and *The Truce* (*La tregua*), he wrote two novels, a number of short stories, poems, and essays. These works attest to the range the writer explored as he worked on paper his relationship with the world and with human nature after liberation from Auschwitz. In this paper, I consider what knowledge he took from the camps that he developed over the four remaining decades of his life, and how those insights manifested in his writing. This analysis focuses specifically on relationships in Levi's work—between people and in the self's response to the world—and his knowledge and observation of intimacy and conflict in and after war.

Keywords: Auschwitz; Holocaust literature; Primo Levi; poetry; novel; writing and trauma.

1. INTRODUCTION

Primo Levi began to write with urgency after his release from Auschwitz and the labor camp Buna-Monowitz where he worked as a chemist during the last months of the Second World War. He confessed in an interview that his year-long experience, from deportation in February 1944 to release from Auschwitz in January 1945, was at the root of his need to write. He even went as far as saying that his experience in the labor camp had been a sort of university for him. In his 1976 "A Self-Interview" he shares, "[a] friend of mine, who was deported to the women's camp of Ravensbrück, says that the camp was her university. I think I can say the same thing, that is, by living and then writing about and pondering those events, I have learned many things about man and about the world." (Belpoliti and Gordon 2001: 201).¹ However, he continues that only five percent of Italian deportees

¹ According to Italian historian Renzo De Felice in *The Jews in Fascist Italy* (2015: 460-461), the total number of Jewish deportees from Italy to concentration camps in Eastern and Central Europe between 1943 and 1945 was 7,495. Approximately 610 deportees returned from the camps. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum researchers have suggested that the number of deportees may range from nine to ten thousand.

returned to Italy. That he survived and returned unharmed was due chiefly to “good luck” (206) as he expresses it; yet, the sum total of this particular past—which includes deportation, time in the camps, and repatriation—he reports made him “richer and surer” (206). Levi’s view of his experience, how he decided to frame this traumatic period in his life for himself and his reading public, and how this framework structured and influenced his writing career of over forty years after Auschwitz, allows contemporary readers and scholars to understand the body of his work as a response to and an outgrowth of a highly traumatic and formative life experience.

Such a response contributed to a lifetime of writing, primarily, as Levi admits that had he not “lived the Auschwitz experience” he would not likely have written. And, again, in 1979 in an interview with Giuseppe Grassano he offers a sketch of his eclectic work life, referring to himself as a centaur: a liceo student of the humanities, a chemist, and ex-deportee. “Auschwitz was a second university” (qtd. in Belpoliti 2016: 131). (Finally, he layers onto these three diverse and early experiences that of being a writer, which he tells us “comes on top of and is a summation of all the other three and that in its turn could be the source of some other thing” (2016: 131). That *other thing* as he explains it is a trace of the desire to tell stories and to theorize how things get narrated.² Such a desire as he described it was “a narrative impulse that was pathological” (129). Levi expressed these thoughts and ideas just as he was newly retired from his work as a technical and managing director at SIVA, an industrial paint factory. He had managed to write during his professional career at SIVA. Yet, retirement brought him fully into his life as a writer.

His poems, stories, and novels testify to Levi’s accumulating knowledge as a contemplative human being. In some of Levi’s poems, an emotional self speaks. He explores what it means to return, to make a home, to carry loss, to know many lifetimes—human, animal, mineral, to return to origins. In fiction, he renders the vulnerabilities of love, meeting another in strong connection, if only for a moment. That transitory but weighty moment explodes with desire, with the thousand things beings carry within and that illumine a self and those it encounters. What we say matters, but what we don’t say—the way we look, hear, touch, and struggle in relationship to one another and, privately, quietly, within ourselves, constitutes a universe, one that becomes that university. Levi appreciates life and he knows that relationship is rare, precarious, and temporal. Opportunities open and close. Dream and desire impose themselves on forms. Memories interrupt the present. Physicality (as matter) and circumstances dictate outcomes.

² At that time in relationship to composition of a first novel, *The Wrench* (*La chiave a stelle*, 1978).

At Auschwitz he acquired knowledge and insight, forged under conditions of extreme adversity, which would change him over time. This hellish university reflects through his body of writing over four post-war decades. Its places of learning—the disease-ridden barracks, mud pits, and chemical labs at IG Farben—forged Levi’s consciousness as he later faced the events of Jewish genocide and displacement. Just graduated from University of Turin and prepared to work as a chemist, a Jewish man whose family had lived for several centuries in Italy by way of southern France and, earlier, Spain, Levi had experienced a strange internationalism through the process of deportation, internment, and repatriation. His exposure to people from Eastern Europe and Russia, from the Balkans, and from all over Western Europe radically enlarged his consciousness. In the camps, as one of those abducted under a politics of violence, Levi witnessed intimately the means of instituting a universal Aryan Germany. He was also exposed to a diversity of languages, myriad ways of thinking, acting, and responding, primarily as they were presented under duress and within the trauma of deportation and the physical, mental demands of the camp.

In the immediate post-war period, he encountered people from throughout Europe—Poland, Greece, France, and from Russia, both those who were interned and those free.³ This journey would constitute the most dynamic period of Levi’s life. It was on his return home that he witnessed the disarray of post-war Europe and people’s ignorance of the labor and concentration camps and the atrocities that had occurred there. These crimes had been concealed from people’s daily purview and would come to be known, in large part, as the Nazi-perpetrated genocide of the Jewish people, and increasingly through the remainder of the twentieth century, and now into the early twenty-first, in shared social discourse as the Holocaust or the Shoah (שואה).⁴ The first two books—*If This Is a Man* and

³ Robert Gordon notes the Holocaust “can never be wholly contained at the ‘national’ level” and that “it is and always was a porous, plurilinguistic, transnational phenomenon, evinced by the migratory reach of pivotal cultural events,” and, I would argue, by the migratory reach of the current historical archive of this period. See *The Holocaust in Italian Culture: 1944-2010*.

⁴ The murder of individuals occurred in labor, concentration, and extermination camps, as well as through pogroms, organized and covert mass executions, prisoner of war camps, jailing and deportation of political activists and partisans, and other forms of internment, torture, deportation, street execution, and abduction. However, the Holocaust refers specifically to the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. *Holocaust* (ὁλόκαυστος) is a word of Greek origin meaning “sacrifice by fire.” Genocide is defined by the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: “The definition of genocide requires that the perpetrator have a specific state of mind: the ‘intent to destroy’ a group In the absence of explicit evidence, intent can be inferred from facts and circumstances that take into account the general context of the crime, such as: preparation of other culpable acts systematically and exclusively directed against the same group;

*The Truce*⁵—relate the extended narrative of this material and Levi's cognitive and emotional response to his deportation and camp experiences. Engaging Levi's prodigious body of published work that extends from 1946 to 1987, as he wrote just up until his death in April 1987, the reader recognizes that the university—the schooling, the experiential place of deep and often destructive knowledge, transformed from horror into order, inquiry, and, yes, poetry—is a radically unconventional and life-changing university, not only for the writer but for his readers.

2. POETRY'S UNNATURAL NATURE

In his relationship to each genre, Levi reveals his relationship to various events and his need to understand experiences and social phenomenon. Poetry, a form he felt impulsive, even “unnatural” to human beings, answered to a primal need for sound and image. Poems emerged spontaneously. He confessed that some subjects and particular moments demanded poetry.

Levi wrote “After R. M. Rilke” (“Da R. M. Rilke”) in January 1946, a year and two days after his release from Auschwitz. The lines begin with this pattern, as if a lament, a prayer, and an ode all at once: “Lord, it is time. . . .the time. . .Or to go...the time...Or we'll live...We'll spend the hours...Or writing letters...And we'll pace...Restless⁶ (Levi 2016a, III: 1893; ellipsis mine). The lines end-stop with: house, alone, time (l'ore), far away, solitude, down the avenues, while the leaves fall – vino, casa, casa, soli, soli, l'ore, lontano, solitudine, indietro, foglie. It is the passing of time. It is *the* time, the exact moment which seems to call, to have a life after the war. The wine ferments (già fermenta il vino). The time has come to settle (Il tempo è giunto). To have a house (di avere una casa). Or, to be for a time without one (O rimanere a lungo senza casa). This is not a time of action. If without a home, we will remain homeless. If one is alone, she will remain so. The house is denied, we will spend time with books (sopra i libri consumeremo le ore), writing letters from our solitude (scrivere... [ellipsis mine] lunghe lettere dalla solitudine). We will pace up and

scale of atrocities committed; weapons employed; the extent of bodily injury; and/or the repetition of destructive and discriminatory acts. See *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*.

⁵ *Se questo è un uomo* was first published with a print run of 2,500 copies by De Silva in 1947 and republished by Einaudi, with Levi's with additions and edits, in 1958. *La Tregua (The Truce)* was published in 1963.

⁶ “Signore, è tempo... Il tempo... o rimanere a lungo senza casa... il tempo...Oppure rimarremo... consumeremo le ore... Od a scrivere lettere... Ed andremo... Inquieti” (Levi 2016b, II: 689). The lines vary in comparing an English translation (from *The Complete Works, III, Collected Poems* translated by Jonathan Galassi) of the poem to Levi's original in Italian. In English translation the lines end with: now, house, time, alone, books, far away, solitude, avenues, and fall. In Italian the lines end with: wine, house, along, hours, far, solitude, up and down, and leaves.

down avenues (andremo pei viali avanti e indietro), restless while leaves fall ([i]nquieti, mentre cadono le foglie), while time goes on. Instead, we make as if time does not pass, so we are not too alone. Or, we choose aloneness, a life of the mind, populated with books and writing and letters and solitude and distance and walks and restlessness. Levi's poem is a post-war response to Rilke's original, which reads:

"Day in Autumn"

*After the summer's yield, Lord, it is time
to let your shadow lengthen on the sundials
and in the pastures let the rough winds fly.
As for the final fruits, coax them to roundness.
Direct on them two days of warmer light
to hale them golden toward their term, and harry
the last few drops of sweetness through the wine.*

*Whoever's homeless now, will build no shelter;
who lives alone will live indefinitely so,
waking up to read a little, draft long letters,
and, along the city's avenues,
fitfully wander, when the wild leaves loosen.⁷*

Levi returned to the flat where he was born in October 1945 from nearly two years of deportation and internment in Poland. He was bearded, swollen, and barely recognizable. His mother and sister had returned to the flat from hiding in the mountains of Aosta Valley. They greeted him with joy and relief. As his biographer, Ian Thomson relates, he sat at the kitchen table, silent, eating a bowl of soup (2002: 219). Visitors came and went. The house filled with his presence slowly, slowly, and into this space, also came his new wife, Lucia,⁸ and his daughter, Lisa, born nearly three years after the Rilke poem was made. Yet, the solitary life coexisted with the time of the house. The poem reminds readers that presences crowd our lives, if we are lucky, if there is a house to which to return or a new one to be found.

One could not assume the existence of a house at that newly post-war moment in Europe. "After R. M. Rilke" tells us a time has come not to be alone—the way war wants to force that aloneness on us, wants to separate us, and we refuse that separation in returning to our work and to our houses. The way war will make us turn to ourselves in the quiet pages

⁷ Trans. Mary Kinzie, *Poetry Foundation*. "Herr: es ist Zeit. Der Sommer war sehr gross. / Leg deinen Schatten auf die Sonnenuhren, / und auf den Fluren lass die Winde los. / Befiehl den letzten Früchten voll zu sein; / gib ihnen noch zwei südlichere Tage, / dränge sie zur Vollendung hin und jage / die letzte Süsse in den schweren Wein. / Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr. / Wer jetzt allein ist, wird es lange bleiben, / wird wachen, lesen, lange Briefe schreiben / und wird in den Alleen hin und her / unruhig wandern, wenn die Blätter treiben (Rilke 2018: 101-102).

⁸ Consult Mesnard (2011: 140-141) for a brief account of this re-encounter.

of books and in writing, to memories of those whom we have met and who live far away. The solitary life calls and one wants to return to the shelter of the self, yet one cannot stay there for long. The movement of walking, restless, alone in the familiar avenues of the brain, of one's city. After Rilke: a day in autumn, a day toward the maturity of life—could that maturity be an ending when all things arrive, a great crashing ending that signals the rest of life to begin, a day or two short of harvest when the poet asks the warm sun to nourish? If one has not established readiness, now is not the time. This is a fullness. Whatever state of readiness or unpreparedness one experiences now is the one; there will be no change.

Levi is returning. His poem is answer, query, pondering. This is a poem of return, of what it means to re-enter and the labor of that process. It is also a remembering of that still moment that he was taken from his country, the seconds of rupture. The poem transmits the feeling of grief carried as loss in the body. It is a strange harvest in his twenty-sixth year, the first winter in Turin full of the memory of Polish cold and mud, his initial moments in speechless return from the camps and the landscapes of war. Perhaps it is the last lines that best describe the poet's interior world. This world will remain with him into his later days. He has been exiled. He has been torn from home and returned as a survivor. There is an aloneness to that survival. Now he finds himself a restless avenue walker.

Levi's poetry allows us to read him differently than his prose. The poems are secretions, if we take them to be as he refers to the poetic impulse in the introduction to his one of two collections of poems, *At an Uncertain Hour* (*Ad Ora Incerta*, 1984). There he tells us that many individuals feel and then yield to the need to express themselves poetically and, so, secrete poetic matter. The word *choice* (*scelta*) recalls a description in his first autobiographical account *If This Is a Man*. In the third paragraph of "Our Nights" ("Le nostre notti"), Levi creates with his language an image of the captive man, newly arrived into Auschwitz, digging himself in, carving a signature of space in the barracks at the far corners of his cramped bunk. Man secretes a shell to protect and build around himself a tenuous barrier of defense. With his habit of adaptation, he strives to shelter himself from the harsh environment.

Now, in Levi's response to poetry-making man secretes poetic matter. Poetry has become a necessary biological function. Poetic expression then is a form irrefutably intrinsic to and arisen of human character and experience. It is not necessarily an aesthetic pleasure as Levi's describes it. "I am a man. And, I, too, at irregular intervals, 'at uncertain hour,' have given in to this urge: it seems to be written into our genetic heritage" (Levi 2016a, III: 1877) – "Uomo sono. Anch'io, ad intervalli irregolari, 'ad ora incerta'" (Levi 2016b, II; not

included in this edition). The poetic is an impulse of a certain form of expression—we might say one conscious of itself as a particular form and syntax. This is a form highly disciplined in its lines, aware of the rhetorical effects of language, into which narrative is poured. As James Longenbach suggests, the demands of sound and story compete. In poetry, the human being displays a desire to be known and to remain forever occluded (Longenbach 2004: 7). Just as poet and reader resist poetry, so, too, does poetry resist. Each line, each word, is a sort of disjunction, an accident imposing itself on what we take to be real narrative experience, or our earnestness to describe a feeling. “Every sentence is a kind of experiment. We begin a sentence not knowing where or how it will end. We release it to the world unable to predict the response it will, fairly or unfairly, elicit” (34). At any moment in the composition or reading process a sentence may surprise and startle us. In that moment, a miniature awakening occurs. Any moment—at random—could be an epiphanic one. To return to Levi’s seeming discomfort with poetry as a form of human expression, it is no wonder he does not relish it. The human being succumbs to poetry, as it is “written into our genetic heritage” (Levi 2016a, III: 1877) – “iscritta nel nostro patrimonio genetico” (Levi 2016b, II; not included in this edition). Poetry draws us into our ancestral and instinctual nature. Levi confessed that at certain moments poetry seemed more appropriate than prose for conveying an idea or image. Poems come in the form of “individual stimuli” that assume poetic form, a form that Levi in his preference for rationality considered almost unnatural, a force that might have been suppressed through civilizational tendencies, but nevertheless refused suppression.

The categorization of forms into those natural and unnatural, rational and irrational: what is the purpose of this judgment? Certainly, the poems were a space of vulnerability and emotion for this writer. Thus, they were irrational and seemingly bothersome. Poems (as love) deliver us to places of unknowing. The inclination to write a poem, determined by the appearance of thought and the topic at-hand, was a demand Levi answered. He admitted that his poems were not necessarily “excellent,” and implied that they secreted themselves. Perhaps he was emotionally exposed in his poems. In prose, he could shelter within long lines, full pages crowded with text, complex workings of plot, and the fullness of characters and their histories. Longenbach provocatively suggests, “Poems show us how it feels to like trouble” (2004: 91). The language of poetry does not resist anxiety.

In 1980 Levi writes “Autobiography” (“Autobiografia”), a poem in which he assumes as many forms as life has taken on the planet: a blind organism of the sea—a fish—dinosaur—toad—a four-legged—insect and reptile—beast of burden—girl—mathematician and scientist. The poem begins with time, the speaker “old like the world”

(Levi 2016a, III: 1935) – “vecchio come il mondo” (Levi 2016b, II: 719) – who speaks of dark origins, and ends with a request for those ancient, wise men to not deride the poet as his old body “is engraved with strange signs” (1936) – “è inciso di strani segni” (719). The poem reads as a story. The speaker has known many forms; he is old and seemingly wise. He wears the mark, the strange sign of the camps on his left arm. Yet, he fears derision and wards it off within the lines of the poem. He contains and speaks from all forms. Accordingly, he will not be limited to one—even if a form (genre, embodiment, lifetime) fails, even if he does not make excellent lines (Levi 2016a, III: 1877; not included in Levi 2016b, II). Marco Belpoliti in *Primo Levi di fronte e di profilo* writes that Levi initially wrote poems to express certain particularly emotional aspects of his Auschwitz experience. Later he composed poems in considering story subjects. When asked in an interview in 1981 about the value of poetry, Levi responded that he came infrequently to poetry. It was not his natural state to make poetry, but every so often this curious infection, like an illness, a rash, erupted (2016: 1588). The idea is to try to obey the “unnatural” instinct.

3. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE READER

In interviews, books, and essays Levi commented that the writer must write for his intended audience. The writer does not write for himself, to please himself. In “About Obscure Writing” (“Dello scrivere oscuro”) he asserts his view against writing from the heart, saying that such writing is not necessarily more worthy or noble than writing from reason. He criticizes the language of the heart as “capricious, adulterated, and as unstable as fashion” (2016a, III, 2062-3) – “capriccioso, adulterato e instabile” (2016b, II, 840) – subject to the whims of fashion, and frequently indecipherable. Thus, language of the heart is unreliable. Rather, the writer’s duty is to write for readers, to make himself understood. Such duty to the reader will anchor the writer and force him to remember himself a man, not a superman. This exposition from *Other People’s Trades* (*L’altrui mestiere*, 1969-1985) on the writer’s task feels firmly rooted in the early experiences of the camp. Levi understood the consequences that resulted of abusing the word, of torturing language, into ideas of racial purity and superiority. He understood that to alienate others was to be entirely alone. To be without audience for the writer then is to not be a writer. To have no listeners is to not exist. Levi’s original work was to make himself understood, to utter his story in a time and place when few would listen.

The success of the initial work, as for most writers, but for Levi with particular acuteness, depended on the willingness of readers to engage his account.⁹ Levi also felt that poetic obscurity had been willfully committed by some writers in order to exclude others. He cites Ezra Pound as a case in point, claiming, “his poetic obscurity had the same roots as his supermanism, which led him first to fascism and subsequently to self-marginalization: both grew out of his contempt for the reader” (Levi 2016a, III: 2064).¹⁰ I would argue that Levi had no such contempt for the reader, but rather felt from his first writings that the existence of his work depended on the reader’s good will, the reader’s willingness to engage his writing in such a way that it might change and awaken consciousness. This is not mere sentimentality on this critic’s part; rather, Levi intended his reader to willfully attend to the content of his writings. This intention appears not only in the poem “Shemà”¹¹ where he demands readers’ immediate attention and curses them if they fail to heed his words (much as Dante in his tour through hell was cursed by the condemned if he failed to heed their sorrowful tales) with which later editions of *the book* begin, but pervades his poetry and prose.¹² His writings concern what is flawed (imperfect), temporary, fleeting, and vulnerable in our human condition. They refuse to omit complexity, always striving for the subtleties of misunderstanding coupled with passion (also a theme in Dante’s *Inferno* and through literature of the twentieth century as it emerged of wars interrupted by periods of uncertain peace). Such misunderstanding and passion may dwell just under the surface of any encounter. To want to be more, to fear not being enough, to be alive to every distinct moment, to have failed, and to find failure as a perfect vulnerability that returns us to our humanness in a recognition and reconciliation with what is real. Such concerns form a basis of his written work.

Levi in these passages, making connections to literature and to the trials of writers both predecessors and contemporaries, suggests that the indecipherability that characterized the work of poets Georg Trakl and Paul Celan was related to the wreckage of their times. That wreckage for Trakl, an Austrian, was the demise of the Habsburg Empire in the wake

⁹ This acuity for Levi resided in Italy’s lack of knowledge of the camps. Levi felt an intense need to educate Italians about the genocide that occurred in Poland, 900 miles from his native soil. See Levi’s *The Periodic Table* about his knowledge of Jewish genocide in the early years of the war, which Robert Gordon recounts came from “Swiss newspapers, clandestine allied radio, the British white paper on German atrocities, Italian soldiers returning from Russia, Croatia, and Greece, who had seen Jews killed and deported; and Jewish refugees from Croatia and Poland” (2012: 43-44).

¹⁰ “sono convinto... del suo supernomismo, che lo ha condotto prima al fascismo e poi all’autoemarginazione: l’una e l’altro germinavano dal suo disprezzo per il lettore” (Levi 2016b, II: 841).

¹¹ This poem title makes reference to the most sacred prayer in Judaism “Shemá, Israel” (Deut 6: 4) – שמע ישראל (דברים 6: 4).

¹² See “Writing As Prosthesis” in Chaffin (2018: 37-49).

of the First World War, and for Celan, a Jew born into a German-speaking family in Romania, the wreckage incurred came of the Second World War. Both of his parents perished in the camps and the writer survived force labor. Levi writes compassionately about the work of these writers, as he navigates the formation of his own complex and layered writer's voice. He writes in comprehension that the poetics of these men reflected the darkness and obscurity of their times. Both men, he notes, ended their lives in suicide—Trakl in a cocaine overdose and Celan in a drowning in the Seine at the age of forty-nine. In describing Celan's *Death Flight* (*Todesfuge*, 1945) he writes that

it is not a communication, it is not a language, or at most it's a dark and truncated language, the language, in fact, of someone about to die and alone, as we are all alone at the point of death. But because we are not alone when we are alive, we should not write as if we were. We have a responsibility, as long as we are alive: we must answer for what we write, word by word, and ensure that every word hits its target. (Levi 2015a, III, 2065)¹³

The words aim for the reader; one writes to and for others; writing is a moral act.

"In the Beginning" ("Nel principio"), a poem of genesis and arisen of the Torah's originating *Book of Genesis* (בראשית), reminds readers that all life forms share a common origin.¹⁴ The poem draws us back to what matters, what is most foundational and primal. The lines remind us that we are one and the same, that our survival contains all things. Thus, in death, worlds disappear—whole histories of love and suns. It contains the elemental experiences absent in *Genesis* and touches upon love as much as it reminds us of heavens—the cosmos—and earth. Levi twines life and ruination, love and the writing, active hand that creates and now turns us to beginnings.

*Everything was born from that one spasm:
The same abyss that embraces us and taunts us,
The same time that gives us life and ruins us,
Everything each of us has thought,
The eyes of every woman we have loved,
Suns by the thousand, too,
And this hand that writes* (Levi 2016a, III, 1913-1914).¹⁵

¹³ "non è una comunicazione, non è un linguaggio, o al più è un linguaggio buio e monco, qual è appunto quello di colui che sta per morire, ed è solo, come tutti lo saremo in punto di morte. Ma poiché noi vivi non siamo soli, non dobbiamo scrivere come se fossimo soli. Abbiamo una responsabilità, finché viviamo: dobbiamo rispondere di quanto scriviamo, parola per parola, e far sì che ogni parola vada a segno" (Levi 2016b, II: 842).

¹⁴ Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" – (בראשית את השמים ואת הארץ) – (בראשית).

¹⁵ "Da quell'unico spasimo tutto è nato: / Lo stesso abisso che ci avvolge e ci sfida, / Lo stesso tempo che ci partorisce e travolge, / Ogni cosa che ognuno ha pensato, / Gli occhi di ogni donna che abbiamo amato, / E mille e mille soli, e questa / Mano che scrive" (Levi 2016b, II: 704).

Such a poem is an equalizer, a song of consolation to fellow beings, and the sameness we contain and that flows among and between all manifestations of life. In return to Italy, Levi also returns to origins: his Jewish roots and traditions, Pie(d)montese dialect inflected with Yiddish, to those shared things that constitute our humanness, to the now infused with the past.¹⁶ We are born of an abyss—a word that recalls his description of his descent into Auschwitz (in allegory of Dante’s descent into the inferno; recalling, too, Nietzsche’s cautionary note of looking too long and hard into the abyss and, thus, we risk being devoured by it). We have loved and are nourished; all origins arrive into the poet, whose hand so near to us, clearly visible as he writes, as if a hand of God bringing being into form, is here, now. The poet, that god, creator of most unnatural and instinctual forms.

4. THE DEMANDS AND JOYS OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD

In a second novel, written in 1981, *If Not Now, When?* (*Se non ora, quando?*)¹⁷ Levi’s writing issues a sensuality based in an understanding of the human character and condition. His voice is a steady presence that values the human being and understands how complicated is our shared human condition. The narrator explores, at crucial points in the novel, with intimacy and love the relational world and how the joys and demands of the physical world imprint our relations. There are particular moments in the novel in which the writer has created a space suffused with knowledge and curiosity. The narrator conveys a meditated voice under which lies a boundless passion for life coupled with pragmatism in response to physical and situational limits.

Several passages in the novel allow the reader to decipher a sensual, even passionate current that references relations among human beings and their environment. This current establishes a quiet but pervasive theme of difficult intimacy through the narrative. Mendel is a watchmender. He has been without a place to stay or anchor himself since leaving the Red Army in July 1942. (He won’t say he “deserted” [“disertato”]). The Germans killed Jews, one of whom was his wife, and some Christians, in his Russian village, Strelka. He encounters Leonid, a fellow “straggler,” a soldier who had escaped the Lager. Eventually, the men settle in with a group of partisans. He observes Gedaleh, the leader of the partisan group, and slowly feels an uneasy comfort as he releases into a sort of nomadic home with an eclectic band of men and a few women.

¹⁶ Consult Levi’s “Argon” in *The Periodic Table* (2016a, II: 755-769) – *Il sistema periodico* (2016b, I: 861-874); see also Mesnard (2011: 103-243); and Belpoliti (2016: 262).

¹⁷ Late in 1981, Levi began research for *If Not Now, When?* He spent a year in research prior to composition. In April 1982 Einaudi published the second novel, which won the Viareggio Prize in June, and the Campiello Prize in September of that year. See Levi (2016a, I; 2016b, I).

[H]e dealt with the newcomers with brisk efficiency. Name, patronymic, corps for the soldiers, age, profession, registration of identity papers (though few of them had any); then to bed, they'd take care of everything else in the morning. That's right, to bed: inside each barracks there was a stove and a board covered with clean straw, and the air was warm and dry, even though the floor was almost two meters below ground level. Mendel fell asleep in a whirl of tangled impressions: he felt exhausted, out of place, and yet protected, less of a father and more of a child, safer and less free, at home and in a barrack; but sleep came immediately, like a merciful blow to the head. (Levi 2016a, II: 1632)¹⁸

In the above passage, the reader may recall the chapter “Our Nights” in *If This Is a Man*. Levi observes that the prisoners settle into the barracks, making a home of their cramped and filthy spaces. “Man... secretes a shell” (Levi 2016a, I: 53) – “La facoltà umana... di discernere” (Levi 2016b, I: 179) – he recounts in scientific (almost Kafkaesque) language, “the trauma of the transplantation is over (54) – “il trauma del travasamento è superato” (179). The adaptation of Mendel into the partisan group arrives after a long period of dangerous displacement and forced nomadism—the murder of his wife and community, his flight from his village. The subsequent passage also echoes certain moments in the Lager in its reference to delousing. However, the description that follows provides a contrast to the Lager, offering a sensate experience as expressed in Levi’s poetic prose.

What followed was a delousing, or rather an invitation to perform a conscientious personal self-examination, and distribution of linen, rough and not new, but clean. Last of all, an enormous kasha, filling and hot, eaten communally, with real spoons on real aluminum plates, followed by plenty of sweet tea. It promised to be a beautiful day, with singularly mild weather for that season: where the snow was exposed to the sun, it showed signs of melting, which caused some uneasiness. (Levi 2016a, II: 1633)¹⁹

This is not a moment that would have occurred at Auschwitz. There is here invitation, nourishment, real things, and abundant sweetness. There is warm light and a sort of restlessness that arises in this openness, but also a relief and a moment of restoration. The novel continues to work at cross-currents. The most sensual scene lies at the center of the

¹⁸ “Nome, patronimico, corpo di appartenenza per i militari, età, professione, registrazione dei documenti (ma pochi fra loro avevano documenti); poi a letto, il resto all’indomani mattina. A letto, sí: all’interno di ogni baracca c’era una stufa e un tavolato coperto di paglia pulita, e l’aria era asciutta e calda, benché il pavimento fosse a quasi due metri sotto il livello del suolo. Mendel si addormentò in una girandola di impressioni confuse: si sentiva esausto, dislocate e insieme protetto, meno padre e più figlio, più sicuro e meno libero, a casa e in caserma; ma venne subito il sonno, come una caritatevole mazzata sul capo” (Levi 2016b, II: 485).

¹⁹ “Seguí la spidocchiatura, o meglio un invito ad un autocontrollo coscienzioso, e la distribuzione di biancheria, ruvida e non nuova ma pulita. Infine, una portentosa *kaša* sostanziosa e calda, consumata in comune con very cucchiari in vari piatti d’alluminio, e seguita da un tè abbondante e dolce. Si annunciava una giornata tranquilla, con un’aria singolarmente mite per quella stagione: nelle zone esposte al sole la neve accennava a sciogliersi, il che destò una certa inquietudine” (Levi 2016b, II: 485).

book, in a chapter entitled “June-July 1944,” but it is not compassionate or gentle. It is a fraught, rough sensuality, a struggle for power reflective of the harsh environment in which the two partisans—Mendel and Line—exist.

*Mendel undressed and immediately Line clung to him as if to wrestle. Crushed beneath the weight of the male body, Line writhed, a tenacious and resilient adversary, to arouse him and challenge him. It was a language, and even in the red blur of desire, Mendel understood it: I want you but I resist you; I resist you because I want you; I, slim, lie beneath you but am not yours; I am the woman of no one, and by resisting I bind you to me. Mendel felt she was armed though naked, armed like the first time had had glimpsed her. . . . (ellipsis mine) Nobody's and everybody's. . . (ellipsis mine) Mendel perceived this and felt stabbed, as at the last moment he tore himself from her. The effort was so lacerating that Mendel sobbed aloud, in the dark silence of the mill. (Levi 2015a, II, 1712)*²⁰

Here is a language of desire where there will be no ownership. Resistance is born of desire. Separation is born of desire. The reader returns here to the first relationship. To beginnings. Line is an Eve, stubborn, resistant to the wishes of others, insistent in her independence. Mendel is an Adam. He is bound to the woman in her resistance of orders, her will to belong to no one. Line's armament is a psychic one in her ability to need no one, to give when and what she wants to everyone. Mendel suffers a wound in his encounter with her. The wound is a cut, a hole, a tear, a rip. It is as if he undergoes an amputation. The fight creates a wound in Mendel. He is stabbed, nearly murdered. Lacerated. He bleeds but it is a quiet bleeding, internal, suppressed, dangerous. It will dog and haunt him as the partisans move through forests and plains. He will not recover.

The separation of Line from Mendel is also born from a certain demoralization—one tied up with suffering, despair, pleasure, rage, incomprehension, discord, doubt, fear, shame, and confusion. Ultimately, Line leaves Mendel, becoming sexually involved with another partisan. Mendel suffers; he is offended, maliciously content, and hypocritically indignant. His internal monologue in third person, mediated through authorial awareness, reflects myriad complicated and tangled feelings in the midst of lost love and the rage it provokes.

He felt as if he'd escaped a storm at sea as if he'd washed alone on a deserted and unknown land. Not ready, not prepared, empty; tranquil and unwound, the way an unwound watch is tranquil. Tranquil and not happy, a tranquil unhappiness. Swollen with memories. . . . (Ellipsis mine) Crowded with memories. . . . (Ellipsis mine) Perhaps

²⁰ “Mendel si spogliò, e subito Line gli si avvinghiò addosso come per una lotta. Schiacciata sotto il peso del corpo mascolino, Line si torceva, avversario tenace e resiliente, per eccitarlo e sfidarlo. Era un linguaggio, e pur nella nebbia rossa del desiderio Mendel lo intendeva: ti voglio ma ti resisto. Ti resisto perché ti voglio. Io esile ti giaccio sotto ma non sono tua. Io non sono la donna di nessuno, e resistendo ti lego a me. Mendel la sentiva armata anche nuda, armata come la prima volta che l'aveva intravista.... Di nessuno e di tutti... Mendel lo percepì e ne fu trafitto, mentre all'ultimo istante si strappava da lei. Lo sforzo fu così lacerante che Mendel singhiozzò forte, nel silenzio buio del mulino” (Levi 2016b, II: 552).

memory is like a pail; if you try to put more fruit into it than can fit, the fruit gets crushed. (Levi 2016a, II: 1785)²¹

Mendel is swollen with memories, as if memory were a drug, an infusion in the veins, an overdose, an addiction, a disease, a starvation, a poison.

The prerogative of any writer is to begin and end where and how he chooses. He finds a point of time, a decisive event, feeling, or thought at which he enters and story begins. The reader is invited or commanded into the narrative's world. The writer chooses when to leave the reader. The ending is a trail the reader may follow. The ending draws the reader closer, creates desire in her to read more by this writer. The ending might be an invitation to stay in the writer's universe, to enter the authorial university through extended communion with a writer's body of work.

5. THE SPACE OF DREAMS

At the end of Levi's novel about partisans in Eastern Europe and in some of his short stories, there is a moment of human connection. Readers are left with the lingering effects of one character upon another. Here are three concluding passages where the characters connect and then disconnect. First, from *If Not Now, When?*

Sitting next to Line, Mendel looked at her knees sticking out from beneath her skirt. It was the first time he'd seen them: never before, except with the vision in his fingertips, trembling with desire, in the darkness of their pallets, a different one every night, or through the opaque cloth of her trousers. Don't give in. Don't give in to her. Don't start all over again, be sensible, resist. You wouldn't live beside her for a lifetime, she isn't a woman for a lifetime, and you're not even thirty yet. When you're thirty, life can begin again. Like a book, when you've finished the first volume. Start over from where? From here, from today, from this Milanese dawn rising behind the frosted glass . . . No, I wouldn't live a lifetime with Line, but I can't leave her and I don't want to leave her. I'll with me forever, inside me, even if we're separated, the way I was separated from Rivke. (Levi 2015a, II: 1854-1855)²²

²¹ "Si sentiva come sfuggito a un mare in tempesta, e approdato solo su una terra deserta e sconosciuta. Non pronto, non preparato, vuoto; tranquillo e scarico, come è tranquillo un orologio scarico. Tranquillo e non felice, tranquillamente infelice. Gonfio di memorie... Gremito di memorie... Forse la memoria è come un secchio; se ci vuoi mettere più frutti di quanti ce ne stiano; frutti si schiacciano" (Levi 2016b, II: 611-612).

²² "Seduto accanto a Line, Mendel guardava le sue ginocchia che sporgevano dalla gonna. Era la prima volta che le vedeva: mai prima, se non con le dita veggenti, tremule dal desiderio, nell'oscurità dei loro giacigli ogni notte diversi, o attraverso il panno opaco dei pantaloni. Non cedere. Non cederle. Non ricominciare, sii savior, resisti. Non vivresti una vita accanto a lei, non è una donna per la vita, e tu non hai ancora trent'anni. A trent'anni la vita può ricominciare. Come un libro, quando hai finito il primo volume. Ricominciare da dove? Da qui, da oggi, da quest'alba Milanese che sorge dietro i vetri smerigliati: da stamattina. Questo è un buon luogo per cominciare a vivere.... (ellipsis mine) No, non vivrei una vita insieme con Line, ma non posso lasciarla e non voglio lasciarla. Me la porterò dentro sempre, anche se saremo divisi, come sono stato diviso da Rivke" (Levi 2016b, II: 670).

She is temporal, fleeting. She will leave, she will end. Seek a new beginning, Mendel tells himself, begin here at this ending. Death separated Mendel from his wife Rivke. Divergent purposes and needs separate him from Line. Impossible connections are weighted as a bucket of ripe fruit; yet, dwelling in memory and its affects in the place of what is now, of a future, may crush Mendel.

These hauntings continue into the future. In a passage from "Protection" ("Protezione") included in *Flaw of Form* (*Vizio di Forma*, 1971), characters living on a future planet Earth must wear armor to protect themselves from supposedly deadly meteor showers. Two characters, Roberto and Marta who ten years earlier have had an affair, say goodbye to one another at the end of evening with their spouses.

Roberto took off his iron glove to shake Marta's bare hand, and Marta felt a brief but intense pleasure that filled her with a gray sadness, intense but not painful. This sadness stayed with her for a long time, kept her company inside her armor, and helped her to live for many days. (Levi 2015a, I: 585)²³

The sadness also stayed with Levi. He realized one could reach out and touch another's armor, which is never truly immutable and will always be permeated with sadness. The sadness becomes a replacement for loss, the tangible proof for the moments of connection and possibility that once were.

In a story entitled "Brief Dream" ("Breve sogno") included in *Lilith and Other Stories* (*Lilith e altri racconti*, 1975-1981), two characters meet on a train. Riccardo, an Italian man from Turin, works in an advertising agency but dreams of being a writer and of Dante's *Inferno*. A nameless young woman, who turns out to be a foreigner, probably English, joins his solitary train compartment. He examines her while she sleeps, and between sleeping and waking they exchange lines in Italian verse from Dante. Later, they wake again and have a short conversation. She is studying Italian literature and will stay with an aunt in Salerno. Riccardo wants to tell her his little life story, but there is no time. She leaves the compartment to comb her hair and wash her face. He schemes how he might spend a day with her, see her again.

When the train stopped in the station at Naples, he turned and found himself confronting the girl's gaze. It was a firm and gentle gaze, but with an edge of expectation: she seemed to read him clearly, as if in a book. Riccardo asked "Why don't you get out at Naples with me?" The girl shook her head no. He stared at her, smiled, and she, she too, had the air of racking her brains, of searching for a response

²³ "Roberto si sfilò il guanto ferrato per stringere la mano nuda di Marta, e Marta provò un piacere intenso e breve che la riempì di una tristezza grigia, luminosa, non dolorosa: questa tristezza le rimase addosso a lungo, le tenne compagnia dentro la sua corazza, e l'aiuto a vivere per parecchi giorni" (Levi 2016b, I: 664-665).

that she couldn't grasp. She bit one finger, in a childish way; then, waving it solemnly, pronounced, "Quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno." [All worldly pleasure is a brief dream": Petrarch, Sonnet 1.] "It's pronounced son-yo," said Riccardo, and headed into the corridor to get off the train. (Levi 2015a, II: 1545)²⁴

The would-be writer's final (narrative) act is to correct the elusive girl's pronunciation, his desire lingering from a distance that waxes before it wanes. Riccardo's corrective attempt straddles universes of painful passion and purifying logic, as he says goodbye and moves away from the brief, almost dreamlike encounter, into quotidian life again.

Evident in these three passages is a finality that marks the end of relationship, alternately remote, present, deep, and fleeting between characters. There is a moment of intense nearness, of desire and longing for another. It is a tiny sustained moment in which the character feels wholly his or her love for and want of the other's company, mind, presence, body, and companionship. This moment is interrupted by the surrounding reality, a reality out of which the tiny moment is carved, as a guest house (to use Rumi's term) of solace, desire, and beauty. Levi knows, as he expresses it through his characters, the depth and profundity of this moment. It is narrow and deep like a cavern, so much so that it implants itself in the body's memory, a jewel encrusted in the side of a mountainous wall. Then, daily life rushes in again, to overwhelm this tiny precious rare moment of connection. The realities of history assert themselves and the urge of time moves us to the next thing, to the life already here.

Levi understands that we do not forget one another. There are certain encounters and people who come with us through life, even after they have left us. Thus, the writer haunted. One writes, in part, because one is aware of these moments, sensitive to them, sensitive to life in allowing these moments to linger in consciousness over time. Yes, there is an element of suppression as we go on through life. We leave people behind, they leave us, circumstances occur, structures much grander than us are put in place and there is no way except in watching another surreptitiously (as Riccardo does the foreign/distant/unknown woman on the train), observation, dream, memory, a touch, writing to have again another's literal presence. When and if two people do, in fact, come

²⁴ "Quando il treno fu fermo nella stazione di Napoli, si voltò, e si trovò davanti lo sguardo della ragazza. Era uno sguardo fermo e gentile, ma con una connotazione d'attesa: sembrava che lei gli leggesse dentro in chiaro, come in un libro. Riccardo le chiese: – Perché non scende a Napoli con me? – La ragazza fece di no con il capo. Lo guardava fisso, sorrideva, ed anche lei aveva l'aria di almanaccare, di andare inseguendo una risposta che non si lasciava acchiappare. Si rosciava un ditto, in atteggiamento infantile; poi, agitandolo solennemente, scandì: – Quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno. – Si pronuncia 'sogno', – disse Riccardo, e si avviò nel corridoio per discendere dal vagone" (Levi 2016b, II: 412).

together again, it will be a brief moment, a look, a touch that signals only their continuing desire of one another.

The space of incompleteness is the space of dreams. From incompleteness comes all writing. The writer assumes the tale from where it left off. Or, he cuts the tale in the midst of its fruition. Or, he takes a small bit of what could have been more but is not because the flow of life prohibits the development of a particular scenario. It is that imagined situation that compels, so often, the writer to the page, wherein a world of its own might develop. It is the situation that actually does occur, filled with the imaginings of what might occur—the intimations, the mere suggestions—that becomes the space of sensuality. It is the situation that also becomes a potential space of grief, of beginnings that might have evolved, if only war, murder, lacerating violence had not severed one from what one loved.

6. FLAWED FORM AND THE COLLAPSE OF LIFE

In 1971 Einaudi published a second collection of short stories, *Flaw of Form* (*Vizio di forma*) under Levi's name rather than the pseudonym Damiano Malabaila under which he had published a previous collection of stories, *Unnatural Histories* (*Racconti fantascientifici*). In 1987, presenting a new edition to his editor, he suggested the stories an "apocalyptic, pessimistic, and defeatist vision" (Levi 2016a, xlv) – "una visione apocalittica, rinunciataria, disfattista" (Levi 2016b, I: 655) – of the world, as they are linked to a "time that was much sadder than the present" (xlv) – "un tempo più triste dell'attuale" (655). In the 1970s and 1980s Europe experienced a sustained period of economic growth. In the same year of his death, Levi introduced his reissued stories within the climate of economic prosperity and consumerism. The end of the Cold War approached as Central and Eastern Europe broke free of Russian dominance. In the early 1990s, Italy experienced a political crisis that disrupted the political parties that had been in power since just after the Second World War. However much an optimist Levi wanted to be, and despite his pessimism, these stories resonant with strong, fragile, and temporal beauty, with the aberration of the human condition. We are vulnerable to the creation of mistakes, we are zealous, unforgiving, competitive. We do not understand our own creations, which often escape our control and damage us beyond repair.

In this collection of short stories, *Flaw of Form*, an alliterative and poetic, if not gently pessimistic, title symbolizing the entwining of created beauty and inherent error, "With the Best Intentions" ("A fin di bene") details the relationship between two engineers, colleagues and initially enemies, who try to understand and addresses the flaws in a network of telephone connections across Italy and Europe. Through the escalation of the

viruses and the corresponding malfunctions in the system, the engineers mend their split. Together they work to cure the illness. At first the system is good, trying its best to link people with like numbers, searching for commonality in logarithms, and then it is bad, when one of the engineers, Masoero, tells it is misbehaving and threatens punishment. The system acts up with a final ring all over Europe and then collapses and quits. The story begins with this line: “Any who needs to punish himself finds the opportunity everywhere” (Levi 2016a, I: 643) – “Chi ha bisogno di punirsi trova occasioni dappertutto” (Levi 2016b, I: 735) –and ends with a scene in which Masoero determines to make a deal with the system, “We have the right, no? We were the first to understand it. Let’s talk to it and tell it that if [it] doesn’t stop this nonsense it will be punished” (652) – “ne abbiamo il diritto, no? Siamo stati noi I primi a comprenderla. Le parliamo, e le diciamo che se non la smette sarà punita” (743). His counterpart Rostagno says to him, “Do you think. . . (ellipsis in original) it feels pain?” – “Pensi che... possa provare dolore?” To which Masoero replies, “I don’t know anything. I think that essentially it simulates average human behavior, and, if so, it will imitate man also by showing itself responsive to threats” (652) – “Non penso niente: penso che sia sostanzialmente una simulatrice del comportamento umano medio, e se è così, imiterà l’uomo anche nel mostrarsi sensibile alle minacce” (743). In punishing the machine, a reflection of human desires and plans, Masoero punishes himself.²⁵

It is with this intention that Masoero approaches the system and tells it to behave as it was designed, or they—its originators—will attack it. The system does not respond. It pulses and then is quiet. When threatened with punishment, it collapses. It has burned out all internal and external cables. Might the machine, designed by men, have a mind of its own, looking with good will to make relationships, to forge linkages by its own logic?

7. CONCLUSION

The writer is never alone. He writes in response to history, to other lives, to books and the writers that continue to live on in them. He writes because he has loved and lost and suffered, and so have others. He is, finally, responsible to all other beings by virtue of his own being-ness. This responsibility to others is what makes writing ethical. Levi placed

²⁵ The name could signify in Italian, “A mason, I was,” recalling Lorenzo Perrone, the Italian bricklayer and conscripted laborer at Auschwitz to whom Levi attributes saving his life—physically and spiritually—in the final months of his internment at Auschwitz. Lorenzo died of complications due to tuberculosis and alcohol consumption in 1952. In 1998, he was recognized by Yad Vashem (יד ושם) as one of the Righteous Among Nations. The name also suggests the secret Masonic societies whose members through European history were often persecuted by various regimes, religious and ideological.

the reader at the highest level, much higher than the writer. The writer is beholden to the reader. Or else, he has no one. He has an audience in absentia. He has an imagined but not real audience.

The reader was so crucial to Levi because he lived through Auschwitz. In the camps, he felt utterly alone—he details these moments with clarity and pathos in his first autobiographical account, *If This Is a Man*. The forces that had driven people to the camps sought to impose isolation and aloneness as a methodology of death. Levi sought company. He recognized that his separation from others would kill him. He looked at others, even in his hunger, his injury, his exhaustion and his experience of filth and degradation. He looked and noticed—small details, like the man who gave away his fork to a friend before the selections. He found others a barometer of his own humanness. Other people made him remember and know what it is to be human. He made arguments that one can only be human as he experiences himself in relationship to others. As a writer, Levi wanted to be alone. He enjoyed and needed solitude as does almost every writer. Writing is a time of withdrawal. It is an inner universe into which the writer momentarily retracts. But, he knew that writing was not a permanent state. He had to enter the world again; and, in that world he was responsible to others, not only responsible to others but he *needed* others. Without others we have no writing. Without relationship we are not human.

For Levi, writing was a marvelous vehicle for survival, both in his head at Auschwitz and for later, for those many years he would continue to live once returned—certainly a different man, a marked man, heavy and weighted with his personal past and a collective history that he had to impart to others—to Turin, to Italy. Now, he was home. It began to be that the only door open to re-enter home was story at the most essential level. Even before writing: spoken story and an audience. The dream of the barracks delivered into the trains of Turin and Milan. The talk-story of a man stunned by deportation and the environment of extreme violence and mechanized murder. The story of a man changed by the things he had seen and known and of which he had heard. But, too, the story of a man who had encountered many others from all over Europe, who had a larger sense of being Jewish than when he had forcefully departed Italy. A man whose every word would be informed by the dark knowledge that had come of his experience through the war, as a Jew, as a deportee, a prisoner, and, finally, as one who had made the return journey.

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Figuration and the Child in the Age of Genocide

La cuestión de la figuración y del hijo en la edad del genocidio

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*Why, when we reach out to grasp the future of the planet, do we find ourselves instead clutching the child? In this age of extinction, the first answer is so obvious it is almost parody: children are the very stuff of survival—*Rebekah Sheldon (2016: vii)

How did they explain any of what had happened here to children, she wondered
—Anna Winger (2008: 127)

Resumen

En este artículo, que se centra en la novela de Imre Kertész *Kaddish por el hijo no nacido* (*Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért*, 1990), se estudian las formas en las que la paradójica figura del hijo no nacido refleja los horrores sociales, políticos y personales del genocidio. A través del análisis de dos textos sobre el 11-S que también abordan los efectos de la Segunda Guerra Mundial –*Tan fuerte tan cerca* (*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, 2005) de Jonathan Safran Foer y *This Must Be the Place* (2008; sin traducir al español) de Anna Winger – “Hijo no nacido” propone la idea de que estamos conectados a través de lo que no podemos entender: la imagen catacrética de un hijo no nacido ejemplifica la pérdida de un futuro en el cual uno normalmente esperaría encontrar esperanza y una nueva vida.

Palabras clave: Hijo; figura; genocidio; Kaddish; literatura.

Abstract

With a special focus on Imre Kertész's 1990 novel, *Kaddish for a Child Not Born* (*Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért*), this essay considers the ways in which the paradoxical figure of an unborn child depicts the social, political, and private horrors of genocide. Tracing this figure through two post 9/11 texts that also grapple with the effects of WWII—Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and Anna

Winger's *This Must Be the Place* (2008)—“Figuration and the Child in the Age of Genocide” proposes that we are connected via that which we cannot understand: the catachrestic image of a child not born exemplifying the loss of a future where we would ordinarily expect to find hope and new life.

Keywords: Child; Figure; Genocide; Kaddish; Literature.

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

A lot has changed in the twenty years since I started writing about the figure of infanticide in twentieth century literature—a problem of reference, I suggested, under the haunting scepter of traumatic history. In graduate school, I argued the unbearable weight of the history of genocide affected our ability to use language itself, as exemplified by failed attempts at representing the death of a child in literatures depicting slavery, the Armenian Genocide, and the Holocaust, to name a few. Imre Kertész, the Hungarian author, is perhaps the most radical in this tradition, attempting to depict not the death of an infant, but rather the impossibility of giving life, as conveyed through his vexed figure of the child unborn.

One of the changes that took place since I began this work in 1998 was a self-conscious shift in the representation of trauma in Anglo-American fiction following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the fall of the Twin Towers. Such novels as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and Anna Winger's *This Must Be the Place* (2008) attempt to represent the effects of 9/11 on the one hand, while also, on the other hand, looking back to previous twentieth-century traumas such as the bombings of Dresden and Berlin, the Holocaust, and Vietnam in order to put this twenty-first century trauma into context. These latter novels also grapple with the complex status of the child figure in literatures of trauma—picking up where Kertész left off: by employing the figure of the child unborn in order to highlight a sense of futility, even while appearing to offer a reparative ending not usually seen in post-Holocaust literatures. When Winger's protagonist, significantly named Hope, wonders: “How did they explain any of what had happened here to children” (127), we already understand the difficulty of referring to the death of a child, not only in the sense that Hope is wondering how to offer a cogent explanation in the present, but also in the formulation of the phrase itself: “to the children” is a dangling modifier that at once refers to the children in the present time learning about

the traumatic past, and simultaneously to the children of the past—to what happened to *them* that would cause their death through genocide.

This essay seeks to trace the genealogy of the figure of the child, particularly the infant, first as it is formulated as a figure of infanticide and, later, as a figure of a child unborn, and reads both as exemplary cases of “the problem of reference” in the age of genocide. I draw on the theoretical lens of trauma in order to explain what I mean by this problem, especially the relationship between reference and the failed figure of the child in twentieth- and twenty-first century literatures of genocide. This, for me, is where psychoanalytic theory most helpfully meets deconstruction: at the juncture of trauma theory, where we learn that it is the very moments when language fails effectively to communicate that we, paradoxically, see traces of an event’s horror nevertheless being communicated. Further, trauma theory articulates the haunting quality of the loss of a child, illustrating how the return of modern infanticide in literary representations, even at the end of the last century, functions actually as an inevitable return of repressed history that has been too difficult fully to acknowledge.

As I hope to show, through Foer, Winger, and, most recently, literary and cultural theorist Rebekah Sheldon, we have reached a representational age of ambivalence, when twenty-first century texts featuring a child seem to seek healing, closure, and a sense of the future, and yet, these are the very texts that cannot even summon the birth of a child—what Sheldon refers to as “the very stuff of survival”: new life after the human catastrophe in this “age of extinction” (2008: vii).

In both radical cases of representation—from the figure of infanticide to the figure of the child unborn—we see literature’s ability to make a claim on us, to require us to bear witness to the lost lives of children in genocides, whether historical or contemporary ones caused in part by the consequences of our collective histories. According to Sheldon, the figurative face of a child “thus brings out the affective dimensions of hermeneutic indeterminacy. The task of managing innocence—contaminated by questioning, forbidding examination—generates a quest that can only spoil what it seeks to verify” (2008: 9-10). For Sheldon, in other words, the affective or emotional aspects of language, heightened in the face of a vulnerable child, lead not to understanding but to “indeterminacy,” a failure in its own right, to determine precisely what is in front of us.

Although she does not reference them directly, Sheldon seems to be referring back to the work of Jean-François Lyotard and, after him, Christopher Fynsk, who theorized the *infans*—the infant figure—as that which falls outside of language itself. In *Infant Figures* (2000), a study of both the limits and the advent of language, Fynsk suggests that “the

death of the *infans*, at the level we are trying to think it, cannot be brought to any representation or figuration—it is an unfigurable figure” (72). One way of understanding genocide as a legacy of traumatic modernity, then, is through the rhetorical figure of the *infans*—in Fynsk’s lexicon, one “without speech”—as doubly signifying the unspeakable act of killing a child as well as the sudden foreclosure of futurity in modern narrative forms (2000: 3).

I will argue here that the language of post-9/11 American literature and the language of post-Holocaust history both suggest the difficulty of passing on or inheriting the tradition of infanticide that is, itself, troubled and incomplete. This is what it means to suggest that this figure is indeterminate in Sheldon’s sense: This literary tradition of figuring infanticide as the foreclosure of the future in no way suggests that the past was unproblematic, or that this is a new fall from grace. Instead, it perversely helps us see that we have already fallen, and reminds us of the genocidal projects hidden behind many official histories. My own project is a gesture not toward completing our understanding of the figure of the child, but rather to troubling it further, showcasing the voiceless voice of infanticide and the child unborn in the context of the traumatic history from which it has come.

The figure of infanticide’s perpetual return in contemporary texts, I propose, suggests that the boundaries of modernist American literature should be expanded beyond the standard date of 1945. After all, the relentlessness of such figures signals that post-war literature and its relationship to the genocides in the first half of the century are still very much with us. Further, given its close thematic proximity with genocide, the unexpected death, murder, or outright refusal of a child in canonical and non-canonical literature of the twentieth century requires critical and collective attention that has been met largely with silence. The double instance of silence—both the silence in the criticism, as well as the inaudible cry of infants in modernist texts—perhaps reveals something about modern culture that has become too easy to overlook: an unconscious awareness of, indeed worry about, infanticide underwriting U.S. slavery, the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, the events of 9/11, and too many other instances to list here.

2. THE STORY OF A BUNDLE

*He stretched out his hand for the bundle [...] And I gave him the bundle [...]
And that’s the last time I held the bundle [...] Silence. —
Harold Pinter (1996: 80-1; ellipsis mine)*

This essay begins with the story of a baby and a bundle—a story unique to modernist literary forms in its perplexing fusion of the historical figure of a dead baby with the literary figure of a bundle. The story of the bundle exposes the inextricability of literature and infanticide, and is one of the many cases to illustrate how literary language—the figure, in particular—depicts the vexed position of the infant in the age of genocide.

This bundle's story is fundamentally about the unlikely literary afterlife of the Holocaust testimony of Bessie K. and her husband Jakob, which if unlikely I nevertheless take to be exemplary in its emphasis on figuration and infanticide. On May 20, 1983, Bessie K. and Jakob provided videotaped testimony detailing their story of survival and loss to Yale University's Fortunoff Archive for Holocaust Testimonies. Bessie K.'s testimony would eventually become documented through artistic media, raising important questions about the aesthetics of witness, particularly: How can both literature and survivors' testimony complicate or facilitate an understanding of traumatic history? How can artists possibly render this history—particularly when detailing the life and death of a child?

Bessie K. presents her story solely via memory and a video camera, illustrating, perhaps, how videotestimony has become an entirely new genre of representation because of its unmediated quality. The interview with Bessie K. proceeds like many others, beginning with a discussion of the liberation of the death camps, then going back to a description of life before Nazi occupation, the effects of the war on families, and life in the ghettos. After over two hours of testimony, Bessie introduces, but never names, her infant in the interview. She repeatedly and emphatically refers to him as "the baby," as in, "And then I had the baby boy. I didn't have food for the baby." She goes on to describe how her baby survived hunger, but then, for a few short moments, describes what happens to him when 3,000 people were taken on buses from their ghetto to a concentration camp in Estonia:

The baby, I took the baby, bundled up—because we always were ready, when they gave orders we took possessions, and I took the baby with me . . . so I had the baby and I took and I wrapped the coat around the baby, and I put [him] on the left side . . . but the baby was short of breath, started to choke, choke and started to cry. I wasn't prepared for it. To look back numb, or something happened to me. I wasn't there. "What do you have there?" [the SS officer] asked in German. No, I didn't know what to do. He stretched out his arms. I should hand him over the bundle and I handed over the bundle. And this is the last time I had the bundle with me. (HVT-205, Fortunoff Video Archive for Video Testimony)

In this testimony, Bessie's baby's cries are stifled, inflected with choking and shortness of breath. But the most noteworthy moment occurs when the image of the baby transforms linguistically into a bundle: the moment the officer asks Bessie what she is hiding as he stretches out his arms. In Bessie's telling, memory and time become confused, and her

repetition of “the bundle” three times in the last line, although a literal fact, (she did hand over a bundle) also proves that this is indeed more than a literal telling of her experience. In other words, Bessie has at her disposal only literary language (the dehumanizing figure of the “bundle” to stand in for the human baby) to describe the unimaginable reality of history. The baby, for her, loses life the moment the officer unexpectedly holds out his arms to take him: “I should hand him over the bundle, and I handed over the bundle. And this was the last time I had the bundle with me” (HVT-205, Fortunoff Video Archive for Video Testimony). No longer a living infant, nor a lifeless blanket, Bessie’s “bundle” remains, linguistically, trapped between life and death. As such, through an otherwise calm and straightforward telling, this single figure emerges from history to emphasize the most disturbing experience of Bessie’s survival.

Bessie’s striking reference to “bundle” at first conjures associations with such phrases as *to be bound in the bundle of life* (*tserurah bitsror ha-chaim*, צרורה בצרור החיים; 1 Sam 25:29)—a Hebraism derived from the Bible meaning “to be foreordained to continued life”—as well as *to drop one’s bundle*, meaning “to give up hope, surrender, resist or compete no further” (OED). In the first sense, while using an inanimate object (“bundle”) to depict her infant, Bessie appears to acknowledge the life that she is forced to hand over to the guard to be killed. In the second sense, Bessie betrays that, in the moment of handing over “the bundle,” she loses something—perhaps in addition to her baby, she surrenders to the incessant and murderous demands of the S.S. In this moment, Bessie reveals through her testimony that the life of her child continues as an unconscious trace despite, or perhaps because of, her own surrender. As Bessie tells the interviewer later, “To me, I was dead. I died. I didn’t want to admit to myself this happened to me . . . I was born on the train and I died on the train. I wasn’t even alive.” (Ellipsis in original)

Now, as in 1983, this “bundle” preoccupies both critical and artistic discourses. An exemplum of videotestimony—a new way of negotiating memory and technology—Bessie K. for Hartman emphasizes the importance of witnessing these stories for their “double claim”: “I was there” and also “I am here” (1983: 91), ultimately testifying to her own survival. In fact, Bessie K. has survived in more ways than one. Not only did she live to tell her story, but also her story has pervaded our cultural consciousness, speaking through such unexpected texts as Harold Pinter’s play *Ashes to Ashes* (1996). *Ashes to Ashes*—its title already asserting a commitment to detailing the effects of the Nazi genocide—liberally borrows from Bessie’s testimony to provide powerful dialogue for the final scene staged between two lovers. Pinter, however, and several of his best critics seem not to know where this dialogue originated. Only Hartman suggests—in his 2000 “Memory.com”

article—that Pinter may have seen the Bessie K. testimony discussed in two influential books about Holocaust testimony by Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies* (1991: 49-50) and *Admitting the Holocaust* (1995; 143-44).

The Pinter scene in question is set in present-day London between two characters (Devlin and Rebecca), when Rebecca tries to describe her relationship with a former lover whom she depicted earlier as resembling an S.S. guard. As if suddenly transported back in history over fifty years—a time during which she did not live—Rebecca transforms into a Holocaust survivor, trying to explain what it is like to be separated from her infant during selection:

<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>They were taking the babies away</i>
<i>Echo</i>	<i>the babies away</i>
<i>Pause.</i>	
<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>I took my baby and wrapped it in my shawl</i>
<i>Echo</i>	<i>my shawl</i>
<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>And I made it into a bundle</i>
<i>Echo</i>	<i>a bundle</i>
<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>And I held it under my left arm</i>
<i>Echo</i>	<i>my left arm</i>
<i>Pause.</i>	
<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>And I went through with my baby</i>
<i>Echo</i>	<i>my baby</i>
<i>Pause.</i>	
<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>But the baby cried out</i>
<i>Echo</i>	<i>cried out</i>
<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>And the man called me back</i>
<i>Echo</i>	<i>called me back</i>
<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>And he said what do you have there</i>
<i>Echo</i>	<i>have there</i>
<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>He stretched out his hand for the bundle</i>
<i>Echo</i>	<i>for the bundle</i>
<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>And I gave him the bundle</i>
<i>Echo</i>	<i>the bundle</i>
<i>Rebecca</i>	<i>And that's the last time I held the bundle</i>
<i>Echo</i>	<i>the bundle</i>

Silence (Pinter 1996: 77-81).

This text, like Bessie K.'s testimony, figures the baby as a bundle at the moment the infant is handed over for death. But here, surprisingly, the literary turn seems artistic—an aesthetic device to tell the subjective truth. In fact, this very turn appears as a red herring in nearly all of the Pinter criticism to date. Even Pinter, in an interview, said that he wanted *Ashes* to represent a woman who is “simply haunted by the world she’s been into, by all the atrocities that have happened . . . that’s the whole point of the play. I have

myself been haunted by these images for years” (Aragay 1995/1996: 10; ellipsis mine). In another interview, he says that the inspiration for the play came from Gitta Sireny’s biography of Albert Speer, a man responsible for slave labor factories in Nazi Germany; for Pinter, “reading the book . . . triggered lots of other associations. I’ve always been haunted by the image of Nazis picking up babies on bayonet-spikes and throwing them out of windows. All cruelty is monstrous but that seems particularly vile since a little baby is as near to innocence as you can get” (qtd. in Gillen 1997: 91, Scolnicov 2001: 15; ellipsis mine).

The innocence of the child—in this case, the historical referent—“elides itself” Hartman explains, as “the very resonance of the event both broadens it and makes it vanish” (2000) into the unknowing crevices of literature. The resonance of Bessie K.’s testimony lies in the transformation of her innocent baby to a bundle—a disturbing eruption of literary language into history, allowing for a mother’s psychic survival as well as an articulation of silence: reduced to an inanimate bundle, Bessie’s baby has no life, no voice with which to cry. Hanna Scolnicov has recently claimed:

Pinter’s sketched Holocaust images are perhaps attributable to specific texts. I do not know if he has read the writings of . . . Charlotte Delbo. Even if Delbo was not his direct source, there are any number of other, similar testimonies from the concentration camps that could have influenced Pinter’s writing. (2001: 22; ellipsis mine)

Perhaps. But Bessie K.’s “He stretched out his arms. I should hand him over the bundle and I handed over the bundle” (1983) echoes here nearly word for word, witnessing to the Holocaust in a contemporary play ostensibly more committed to aesthetics than to an accurate representation of history.

The self-consciousness of literature, however, obviously predates our concern about the aestheticization of traumatic history. Bessie K.’s surprising reference to the bundle in trying to find a palatable, yet accurate, way to describe the death of her infant is not the first time in history that “bundle” had been used to refer to a dead infant. In other words, the presence of surviving characters is only conceivable insofar as they are constituted through the absence—i.e., the sacrifices, the deaths—of the infants. Rather than the child inheriting the parents’ pasts, then, the parents inherit the child’s absence.

The referential problem of parents inheriting their children’s death—that is, the problem of living beyond their children—not only perplexes historians and playwrights, but postmodern philosophers as well. For Jacques Derrida, the double-bind at the heart of the willing sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, for example, is perhaps the most stunning aspect of

what it means for a parent to contemplate life after the death of his infant.¹ After all, Abraham finds himself in an unimaginable ethical quandary when he is commanded to sacrifice his only son for God. According to the Genesis myth, if Abraham answers to God and needlessly sacrifices his son, then he betrays his son; and yet if he saves his son, he betrays God. Derrida suggests in *The Gift of Death* (1995) – *Donner la mort* (1999) – that the sacrifice, the gift of death, is excessive—unnecessary: “absolute duty . . . implies a sort of gift or sacrifice that functions *beyond* both debt and duty, *beyond* duty as a form of debt” (1995: 63; ellipsis and emphasis mine).² Absolute duty, then, carries an excess—a gratuitousness—that does not count simply as paying off debts or carrying out duties. It employs, rather, an ethics of impossibility that can achieve no happy end (1995: 68-70) – (1999: 97-101). This ethics of sacrifice—an act of redemption that, in turn, necessitates a sacrifice—occurs not only at the level of action, but also at the level of representation. Abraham, it seems, is willing to contemplate sacrificing his son, however the impossible depiction of this sacrifice makes the sacrifice itself seem unthinkable. In the case of both killing a child and of representing the murder, something is necessarily lost in response to an ethical command; the bond of the father / son relationship is broken as Abraham considers sacrificing Isaac, and the depiction of this horrific moment ultimately lies beyond the powers of representation. Abraham must obey God, but he must not. Abraham’s story must be told, but it cannot be told.

These choiceless choices are famously portrayed no better than in William Styron’s *Sophie’s Choice* (1979), a Holocaust novel rendering impossibility in terms of a mother’s forced decision in a death camp to save one of her children at the expense of another:

“‘Mama!’ She heard Eva’s thin but soaring cry at the instant that she thrust the child away from her and rose from the concrete with a clumsy stumbling motion. ‘Take the baby!’ she called out. ‘Take my little girl!’

“At this point the aide—with a careful gentleness that Sophie would try without success to forget—tugged at Eva’s hand and led her away into the waiting legion of the damned. She would forever retain a dim impression that the child had continued to look back, beseeching. But because she was now almost completely blinded by salty, thick, copious tears she was spared whatever expression Eva wore, and she was always grateful for that. For in the bleakest honesty of her heart she knew that she would never have been able to tolerate it, driven nearly mad as she was by her last glimpse of that vanishing small form.” (1992[1979]: 529-530)

¹ I take up this issue more fully in a 2014 *CLC Web* article entitled, “Akedah, the Holocaust, and the Limits of the Law.” <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2405>

² “le devoir absolu... implique une sorte de don ou de sacrifice qui se porte vers la foi au-delà de la dette et du devoir, du devoir comme dette” (1999: 92).

Eva's address here haunts Sophie so completely—"She would forever retain a dim impression that the child had continued to look back, beseeching"—that by the end of the passage, Eva is no longer referred to as a child but as a "vanishing small form"—much like the "bundle" of Bessie K.'s and Pinter's narratives. In Derrida's terms, Sophie's choice is much like Abraham's: her responsibility to one child, and indeed to her herself, results in the sacrifice of the other. And there is nothing she can do to save both. She has, indeed, acted beyond duty and debt. She has acted ethically, although the effects prevent any sense of satisfaction.

Sophie's Choice, however, points toward the kind of ethical response Derrida prescribes in his invocation of Bartleby—in particular, Bartleby's infamous answer to an impossible demand: "I prefer not to." In *Sophie's Choice*, there appears to be a connection between Sophie's action (the sacrifice of her daughter) and Sophie's speech—that strange responsibility of responding and not responding. Although she is Polish, she speaks alternatively in German and English: *Bitte* ("Come again"? What"? Literally, "Would ask?") precedes "You mean I have to choose?" Most disturbing, however, because it invokes the Nazi rhetoric of "selection" in the concentration camps, the very selection that leads to Sophie's sacrifice of Eva, is her "*Ich kann nicht wählen*"—"I cannot select" in the place of "I cannot choose." Derrida explains: "This is a strange responsibility that consists neither of responding nor of not responding. Is one responsible for what one says in an unintelligible language, in the language of the other?" (1995: 74).³ When Sophie answers, "*Ich kann nicht wählen*," in the language of the other, she uses what appears to be unintelligible, both in the sense that it is, for her, the language of genocide and in the sense that it is impossible to make intelligible the impending death of a child.

While not inaudible, Sophie's mixed response verges on unintelligible, indicating again how literary representations—even in their very failures—speak to history in a way that can be better understood as fractured, incomprehensible, and impossible to master after all. I belabor this Derridean point about unintelligibility—particularly the ability to respond by not responding—because the catachrestic image of the inaudible cry may offer a model for such a response. Reading the inaudible cry in figures of infanticide—itsself an unintelligible impossibility—provides, paradoxically, the *possibility* of addressing this haunted image from an unknown past.

³ "Étrange responsabilité qui ne consiste ni à répondre ni à ne pas répondre. Est-on responsable de ce qu'on dit dans une langue inintelligible, dans la langue de l'autre?" (1999: 105).

3. KADDISH AND THE CHILD NOT BORN

"No," I said immediately and forthwith, without hesitation and spontaneously, so to say, for it is quite obvious that our instincts actually work against our instincts, so that, so to say, our anti-instincts act instead of, even as, our instincts. (Kertész 1997: 1; emphasis in original)⁴

Holocaust survivor, Hungarian author, and 2002 Nobel Prize for Literature winner, Imre Kertész takes a more radical approach to representing the status of the child in genocide literature in his 1990 novel, *Kaddish for a Child Not Born* (*Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért*). This most striking phrase grounding Kertész's haunting novel, one that I will return to again and again, is, like the figure of infanticide in post war works, another catachrestic image: the child not born (*nem született gyermekért*)—a more extreme linguistic failure to communicate an actual, historical fact, the fact of the extremity of twenty-first century experience leading to the loss of hope in building a new generation. Just as, by definition, a cry is audible (not inaudible as these failed literary attempts tell us), almost by definition, a child has been born, has come into life, has cried upon entering the world. I understand, of course, that on a literal level, Kertész in his work, his elegy, is pondering what it means to bring a child into the world, and, conversely, what it means not to. But as soon as the word child is offered, one thinks of him, or her, as born, as fully realized, as introduced.

The novel begins with a single word "No" – "Nem" – offered, we learn, "immediately and forthwith, without hesitation and spontaneously" (1997: 1) – "rögtön és azonnal, habozás nélkül és úgyszólván ösztönösen" (1990: 7). After some time with this thin novel, you realize that the word "No" is spoken in response to a question posed by the speaker's wife and later by a therapist, Dr. Oblath.

'No' something screamed and howled within me immediately and spontaneously when my wife (incidentally, she's no longer my wife) first mentioned it—you—and my panic-stricken cramp has only slowly, after many long years, been quieted down into some general melancholy. (1997: 4)⁵

The speaker tells us a page later: "all Dr. Oblath did was to ask the innocent question of whether or not I had a child" (1997: 5).⁶ The publisher, Hydra Books, describes *Kaddish for*

⁴ "Nem!" – mondtam rögtön és azonnal, habozás nélkül és úgyszólván ösztönösen, mert egészen természetes immár, hogy ösztöneink ösztöneink ellen működnek, hogy úgyszólván ellenösztöneink működnek ösztöneink helyett" (Kertész 1990: 7).

⁵ "Nem!" – üvöltötte, vonította bennem valami, rögtön és azonnal, amikor a feleségem (egyébként már rég nem a feleségem) először kerített szót róla – rólad –, és szűkülésem csak lassan, tulajdonképpen, igen, hosszú-hosszú évek múltán csitult bennem valami mélabús világfájdalom" (1990: 11).

⁶ "hiszen Oblath doktor mindössze azt ártatlan kérdést tette föl nekem, hogy van-e gyermekem" (1990: 14).

a Child Not Born as “the story of a middle aged man taking stock of his life” when he “explains to a friend that he cannot bring a child into the world where the Holocaust occurred and could occur again” (u.p.). However, the “you” mentioned above, set off by an em dash, seems to locate the addressee as the child not born, the possible but not-to-be child, the impossible being lamented in this kaddish. Indeed, as Eluned Summers-Bremner has argued, “the child who has no father because he will never be born” is in fact nevertheless a living presence in the book that “stands in for him...in so far as this book that stands in for him is the enigmatic instance of life that we hold in our hands” (2005: 230; ellipsis mine). While I agree with Summers-Bremner that *Kaddish* seeks to communicate unspeakable loss after the Holocaust, I also see it as equally worried about a future that not even his wonderful elegiac work can repair.⁷

The novel, for example, is infused with rejection, with sudden and quick bursts of the word no—emphatic negations of this child not to be: “‘No’, I said immediately and forthwith” -- (“‘Nem!’ – mondtam rögtön és azonnal”); “‘No!’ was not a decisive enough” (1997: 68) “‘Nem!’ nem eléggé határozott (1990: 137); “‘No!’ or an expected response, given my unpredictability, and my wife only laughed at me” (68) – “‘Nem!’ lett volna, vagy mintha biztos lett volna következtetélességemben, a feleségem csak nevetett rajta” (137); she knows from how deep inside this “No” sprang; “‘No’ was a ... ‘No!’ only that it was a ‘No!’ I said” (68; emphasis and ellipsis mine) – “‘Nem!’ is ez, csak éppen... ‘Nem!’, mondtam” (137). This catalogue of multiple “No!’s, seven or eight on a page, all fragmented and trailing off, reveal the extent of the despair and obstinacy of our speaker toward the question of a child, a child not born.

I did not know what to do with this image twenty years ago, when considering the figure of infanticide particularly in modernist and Holocaust literature. It does not seem to fit the model of a failed figure of a child’s death. This is something else—the failed figure of a child’s non-birth. But then something uncanny happened in the American Jewish literary tradition after 9/11, motivating me to ask, as has Victoria Aarons in her important collection, *Third-Generation Holocaust Narratives: Memory in Memoir in Fiction*, “How is the Holocaust viewed through the interpretive lens of the events of the twenty-first century?” (2016: xi). For me, the two most prominent works of fiction to take up the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York City also refer back to the Holocaust, and, in so doing, take on Kertész’s vexed and impossible language of the child not born: Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and Winger’s *This Must be the Place* (2008). Both are works that

⁷ For two additional incisive readings of this novel, see Ní Dhúill (2016) and Radnóti (2009).

seem to suggest we are connected via that which we cannot understand: the catachrestic image of a child not born, the very image exemplifying the loss of a future where we would ordinarily expect to find hope and new life.

While Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is generally studied for its representation of a precocious child narrator, Oskar, whose father died in the terrorist attacks and leaves repeated messages saying good bye on an answering machine Oskar buries in the closet, a more overlooked aspect is the representation of Oskar's grandmother's "renter," a mysterious man who moves in after the attacks and who turns out to be Oskar's grandfather. The renter has no words, literally, and communicates via tattoos on his hands: yes and no; in his former life, a life he built in Germany before coming to the United States, he is engaged to Oskar's grandmother's sister (Anna) who is pregnant during the Dresden bombing of WWII.

So I read this as one of several post-9/11 novels that looks back to the history of WWII, but also, like *This Must Be the Place*, I read it as a Holocaust novel as a result of the haunting image of Simon Goldberg, a shadowy figure whom Anna's father is trying to save from the concentration camps. Even in New York, the renter thinks he sees Simon, always among books in the novel, never a physical presence after the war (126-128, 279). While I can understand the argument of Benjamin Schreier, an important critic who also reads *Extremely Loud* alongside a theory of trauma, that it is only our fantasies for reparation motivating critics to read the text as a Holocaust novel; and yet, even without the shadowy figure of Simon (2015: 126-128; 215; 279), I would propose that the novel is more anti-reparative than such critics as Ilka Saal (2011) and Elaine Safer (2006) are willing to suggest.

Oskar's grandfather, like Kertész's narrator, writes letters to an unborn child, who ultimately is a child born to Oskar's grandmother, who is Oskar's father, killed during 9/11. In a short section entitled, "Why I'm Not Where You Are: 5/21/63" (2005: 16-18), Oskar's grandfather writes: "To my unborn child: I haven't always been silent" (16). We learned of the history between Oskar's grandmother and grandfather early on—this time, from the perspective of Oskar's grandmother, sister to Anna who lost her life in Dresden:

*He took his pen and wrote on the next and last page, No children.
That was our first rule.
I understand, I told him in English.
We never used German again.
The next day, your grandfather and I were married. (85)*

The reason for no children is not explained until much later in the novel which is characterized by shifting points of view and the a-chronological timeline, two characteristics of trauma fiction generally. In a compelling flashback, Oskar's grandfather recalls:

[Anna] said, "I'm pregnant."... (ellipsis mine) "I kissed her stomach, that was the last time I ever saw her. At 9:30 that night, the air-raid sirens sounded, everyone went to the shelters, but no one hurried, we were use[d] to the alarms, we assumed they were false, why would anyone want to bomb Dresden?" (210)

The grandfather cannot give up this memory, although he has given up the possibility of future children: The loss of his unborn child with Anna is enough for him to give up on all future possibility. Oskar's grandfather goes on to say: "I kissed her belly, even though there was nothing yet to kiss, 'I love our baby'. That made her laugh,... 'You love an idea'... 'I love our idea'. That was the point, we were having an idea together. ... 'Are you afraid?' ... 'Life is scarier than death'" (2005: 215; ellipsis mine). The compelling insight that the baby before it is born is an idea reinforces the catachrestic image of the child not born, the unborn child. It is as though Foer is recognizing here that before birth there is an idea; after birth there is a child, that the unborn child is a logical impossibility but that nevertheless seems an effective way to refer to the loss of hope and impossible traumas of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The novel's two plot lines—the present, set months after the 9/11 terrorist attacks which feature Oskar's quest to learn more about his father; and the past, set after the Dresden bombing—come together when Oskar discovers empty envelopes addressed "[t]o my child" and "[t]o my unborn child" (236), referring to his father, whom his grandfather never knew because he left when he found out about the pregnancy. The letters themselves are copy edited in Oskar's father's signature red pen.

If this were just one best-selling American novel in the wake of 9/11 that brings together the history of the terrorist attacks with WWII, and intermittent references to Simon, a victim of the Nazi Holocaust, I would think that it is very clever, if singular. But Anna Winger's 2008 novel, *This Must Be the Place*, employs similar devices: a post 9/11 novel set in Berlin, Germany, in a building affected by looting during the Holocaust, in a city affected by bombing, featuring two characters with alternating points of view.

Hope moved to Berlin after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and after miscarrying a baby. Walter lives in the same building; his grandparents are Holocaust survivors who abandoned his mother when she fell in love with a German. Hope tells us, in her opening chapter, of the fantasy of living where "there was a baby," when, in fact: "The fantasy of her European life

had not materialized, but her American life no longer existed" (24). Hope, in other words, is caught wandering between two worlds, the one in Europe that does not yet exist, and the one in America, where her sense of family life died with her child. In fact, the novel barely dares to articulate this child's death, referring to it early on as "the horror of what had happened" (25).

Nevertheless, Hope's sections of this novel are shot through with repeated images of children—children she sees playing in playground of Berlin, memories of the children she taught in New York, the revelation that her white washed flat in Berlin has elaborate wall paper for children who perished during the Holocaust, the discovery that in the basement of her building is a secret school for Jewish children during the war. Once again, the personal loss of a child in this novel becomes inextricably bound up with the public and historical loss of children in genocidal acts. Hope wonders: "The global might be personal now, but how about the other way around? In September, when she came out of her downtown building to see people covered in white powder running for their lives, she had not been entirely surprised to find the outside world finally reflecting her inner chaos" (73). Such a passage refers to the immediate past of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, a reference that, for much of the novel, seems to be its particular thematic concern. When reflecting on the ash-covered people running in the streets of Manhattan as the towers seemed on the verge of collapse, Hope seems to understand it—the sense of chaos, loss, death—as a direct response to her grief in the face of her lost child.

As with *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, I am interested in this novel's confusing and inconsistent use of the metaphor of the child: at once it is literal, a literal fact of history, and it is also a figure for inner chaos, for worldly chaos, for a loss of a sense of the future. The status of the figure is further complicated by the fact that it cannot possibly exist in the real world we occupy: a baby cannot both be dead or nonexistent and alive. This is brought to the forefront when Hope wonders:

How much time had she spent pondering the bewildering fact that it was illegal in the United States to issue a birth certificate and death certificate on the same day? She had been over the details at the hospital and at city hall. It had all been explained to her, but didn't make any sense. She had received the death certificate, the ashes, nothing else. And yet, how could someone die without ever being alive? If a death certificate marked the end of a life, then didn't that life, however short, deserve validation? (2008: 72)

Receiving the death certificate without the birth certificate emphasizes the very ways in which we remain out of time—when time is out of sequence—during personal traumatic events as well as global traumatic experience. The paradoxical nature of the dead baby

who was never born, a child unborn, highlights this vexed historical moment—the ways in which the global is personal now, and vice versa. Hope's question—how do they explain what happened to the children?—simultaneously wonders through its unclear structure how 9/11 can be put into words for the small children Hope taught in the States, but also looks back to a worry about how to communicate the traumatic history of the Holocaust that took the lives of the children who lived in her apartment building in Berlin. The ambiguously placed prepositional phrase “to the children” at once means, how do they give words to the children today? And how do they have words for what happened to the children during the war.

As if in a self-conscious nod to Kertész, Winger ends her novel with a kaddish in the basement of the building in Berlin, in what used to be a Hebrew school for children hiding in the basement during the war. Walter says:

“I am going to do it now. I am going to say Kaddish.”

“Here?”

“When he lit a match and leaned over the five candles, the warm light illuminated the ninety-year old stone walls of the room, once plastered and white, now a dingy beige. On the back wall Hebrew letters had been drawn from right to left in tidy lines, in ink and now faded.” (2008: 302)

The five candles are for Walter's parents, his grandparents, and Hope's unborn son. The unfortunate irony here, in the end, is that Walter cannot read the illuminated writing on the wall, and he does not know the proper prayer, not having access to his Jewish grandparents who denied his existence even after his mother died. Instead, Walter sings folks songs his mother sang to him, pop songs by REO Speedwagon and Madonna.

It seems a bit sacrilegious in such a heavy novel, to end it not with the proper Kaddish but with the lines: “It's time to bring this ship into the shore... and throw away the oars. Forever” (303; ellipsis mine). On the other hand, this 2008 novel seems to feel hopeful in a way that the others do not. In this moment after 9/11, Hope is pregnant with another child and she has found peace through a prayer uttered in the basement of a whitewashed building in Berlin. And yet, the omnipresence of the child unborn, linked to the Holocaust via Kertész and picked up again after 9/11 suggests that we as a culture are still having a difficult time moving on from the past, explaining what has happened to the children. There is a double tension in all of these works to recognize the life of a child but also the worry about what bringing a child into the world in its current state will mean—a loss of innocence most definitely, a loss of life very possibly, a loss of faith in humanity, a loss of faith in language to communicate the horrors of history in the last 100 years.

4. THEORETICAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE INFANS

Dead babies were quickly replaceable when the birth rate was high; and an ignorance of the means to prevent death bred a helpless, resigned mentality.

—Lionel Rose (1986: 5)

Typically, critics point to modernism's self-consciousness regarding the differences between reference and signification as a characteristic unique to literature in the twentieth century. Signification communicates a *particular thing or idea*; in this way, signification uses language to communicate a *literal* meaning. Reference, on the other hand, does not refer to one simple thing, but rather functions as *figurative* language. In other words, a figure is a kind of reference, suggesting comparisons, for example, between the bundle and the baby, and pointing up the different ways for language potentially to depict a traumatic event.

For this reason, the story of the baby and a bundle, like the story of the unborn child, is so compelling because it features the unwitting conflation of two terms—baby and bundle—via a literary maneuver illustrating the failure of language precisely at the moment that it must succeed in conveying the history of genocide. In the case of the bundle, signification would express, or signify, quite simply, a bundle. However, it is reference—the thing of which modernist texts of infanticide are made—that moves beyond the idea of a bundle in order to recall the murdered babies in the 20th century described as bundles even as they took their last breaths.

Literature—through the turn of phrase from the baby to the bundle, from child to unborn—steps in where history fails within several narratives of disaster. In their very failure adequately to represent vulnerable children, a loss of a sense of the future, history borrows from literary language the figure—the figure of the bundle, of the unborn child—in order to trouble the narrative of infanticide. And yet, even history is referential and is often no less literary than literature itself. In the case of the figure of the child in literature of genocide, fiction and history share with the discourse of trauma studies, which uses the tools of post-structuralism and the discourses of the courtroom and psychoanalysis in order to interpret important communicative “failures” that paradoxically succeed in depicting the aftermath of a personal or public crisis.

Such failures, in both history and literature, point up the troubling and inassimilable aspects of a particular event or experience, aspects that would otherwise be incorporated and forgotten in narratives drawing on literal meanings alone. By emphasizing figuration, then, trauma studies offers ways of interpreting literary language that can also provide insight into reading traumatic history. In other words, the aesthetic dimensions of

language that feature surprising excesses provide access to a troubling history that cannot simply be gathered from historical documentation. In this way, the unexpected excess attributed to language—that excess which “speaks beyond” intended meanings—often testifies as compellingly as the direct intentions of the witness in the courtroom. Such an impulse in trauma studies continues to this day, as exemplified in Elissa Marder’s edited collection, *Literature and Psychoanalysis: Open Questions* (2017), where she reflects on the contemporary tendency—in particular, of the volume’s contributors—to “explore how literature and psychoanalysis share a primary concern with what one can never master or get beyond” (257).

The figure of the inaudible, silenced, or unborn infant, who nevertheless cries for witness, seems to be one such reality we cannot “get beyond”; as such, it offers a particularly poignant ethical question, a question of ethics posed most poignantly through literature. Fynsk’s theory of language, particularly the way language functions in relation to the child, paradoxically, without language, follows on from the theory of catachresis introduced in Jacques Derrida’s and F.C.T. Moore’s “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy” (1974), where he illustrates how philosophy’s claims to “objective” or “natural” language are fundamentally misguided—that philosophy itself is steeped in a particular kind of literary language which potentially transmits something inaudible.

Yet, before the twentieth century, it would seem that the death of a child was not unspeakable at all. In fact, infanticide was reported regularly in such pre-twentieth century texts as Victorian narratives of hardship and illegitimate births. Only the modernists began to value children outside of a capitalist exchange system while simultaneously (and paradoxically) slaughtering them in systematic genocide. According to Lionel Rose, for example:

Dead babies were quickly replaceable when the birth rate was high; and an ignorance of the means to prevent death bred a helpless, resigned mentality—‘it’s God’s will’, ‘perhaps it’s for the best’ and so forth—which compounded the cheapening of infant life. When babies became relatively scarce and as improved medical and sanitary understanding eroded the fatalism, so infant life started to become more precious, and we see the beginnings of this change at the end of the nineteenth century. (1986: 5)

Modernist texts, then, convey the preciousness of infant life and the unspeakability of an infant’s death by emphasizing the horror of the moment through figuration. In modernism, infanticide becomes a crime whose literariness emerges in history and where the figure of infanticide acquires reference, but also signifies literal deaths.

The death of an infant seems so horrific, perhaps, because of all that infants have come to represent in the past century: innocence, helplessness, hope for the future, and utter vulnerability. That the most innocent and helpless members of society could be systematically murdered seems incomprehensible. Further, to kill a baby also forecloses changes in the future and all of the hope these changes carry with them. But it also forecloses a narrative of the future. As an unspeakable crime against victims who cannot speak, infanticide challenges our ability to tell the story of an act that must be preserved for future generations.

In carrying forth new value, the figure of infanticide functions as a limit case of poetic tropes in general—but also as a quality of literature’s indirect *potential* for conveying the untranslatable, or as a way of marking particular limits of representation. Given this “unfigurable figure,” it seems as if a study such as Fynsk’s could only come about after the origin of deconstruction, as it appears as a compelling re-reading of catachresis, another version of the inaudible cry. The content of Fynsk’s theory (the image of a dead infant) derives from the very structure of metaphor analyzed by Derrida in “White Mythology” and de Man in “Epistemology of Metaphor”—the figure that cannot exist in reality.

For such thinkers as Jill Robbins, what we have left then is a radical and ethical relationship with the figure, with language itself. In *Altered Reading: Levinas and Literature* (1999), for example, Robbins argues that it is necessary “to face the figure otherwise, as language’s ownmost figurative potential, as that which is most distinctive to language, that is, to face language *as* ethical possibility” (54). In demanding that we “face the figure,” Robbins suggests that the very work of Levinas itself “describes the ethical relation to the other as a kind of language, as responsibility, that is, as language-response to the other who faces and who, ‘in turn’, speaks” (54). To conclude then, I would like to gesture to a renewed commitment to Levinas’s philosophy of ethics regarding the other, an other with a face, as a new standard for reading—a standard that requires us to “face the figure” as we would face an other.

For me, an ethical or responsible reading in the wake of trauma, indeed, in the age of trauma, requires us to face an other, if even in the substitute form of the literary figure, just as we must face the facts. As Sheldon has suggested, “the child, in her innocence and plentitude, promises another generation of species-survival posed as physiological self-similarity even as she begs for protection against the many and varied harms of contemporary industrial practices” (2016: 177). While Sheldon’s approach to the child figure has more to do with a critique of capitalism and postmodern culture than with the potential of trauma theory, I believe we arrive at similar conclusions regarding the vexed

status of the child, particularly when its very life and future is threatened. Twenty years ago, I began to see the repeated and failed representation of infanticide as a sign of the cultural haunting of the genocides of the twentieth century; but now, almost two decades into the twenty-first century, I see the continuation of these figures, in particular, the figure of the child unborn, not only as a testimonial to the past, but also as a forewarning about what terror the future may hold.

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An Approach to 21st Century Literary Representations of the Holocaust

Un enfoque a las representaciones literarias del siglo XXI sobre el Holocausto

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Resumen

En este artículo me centro en dos novelas de dos escritores judeoamericanos de tercera generación que se aproximan al tema del Holocausto de manera distinta. En primer lugar, el análisis de imágenes que recuerdan al Holocausto y que aparecen en *La solución final* (*The Final Solution*, 2004) de Michael Chabon. Esta *novella* muestra las secuelas del horror de los campos de concentración a través de la experiencia traumática de un niño-superviviente de nueve años. La otra novela, *Todo está iluminado* (*Everything Is Illuminated*, 2002) de Jonathan Safran Foer, una historia narrada desde dos puntos de vista (uno cómico y el otro serio), parece ser la manera en la que Foer pretende mostrar si ambos puntos de vista son (o no) reconciliables.

Palabras clave: Holocausto; memoria y escritura; escritores de tercera generación; transmisión.

Abstract

This essay focuses on two novels by two third-generation writers who approach the Holocaust in a different manner. First, I will look at Holocaust-related imagery in Michael Chabon's *The Final Solution* (2004), a novella which addresses the sequels of the concentration camp horror through the traumatic experience of a 9-year-old survivor. The other novel is Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002), a story narrated from two points of view—one comic, one serious—which seems to be Foer's way to show whether these two views are reconcilable or not.

Keywords: Holocaust; memory and writing; third-generation writers; transmission.

1. INTRODUCTION

In “Cultural Criticism and Society” (“Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft,” 1951), Theodor Adorno wrote his well-known “[t]o write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” (Adorno 1967: 34) – “[n]ach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch” (Adorno 1975: 26). Through this often misunderstood phrase, Adorno was probably wondering how it would be possible to write poetry that could comprehend the Holocaust horror. More than half a century after the publication of “Cultural Criticism and Society,” Efraim Sicher’s *The Holocaust Novel* (2005) came out. At the outset of his “Introduction,” Sicher refers to “the difficulties of finding a medium or text that will bear the impossibility of imagining the unimaginable, of rendering into art the negation of art” (3).¹ Countless are the references to the “impossibility of imagining the unimaginable”—i.e. imagining nightmarish incamp experience (let alone explain it). For example, in *Primo Levi. The Passage of a Witness* (*Primo Levi. Le passage d’un témoin*, 2011; not translated into English), Philippe Mesnard refers to Levi’s description of Auschwitz as a place “impossible to understand and to imagine” (translation mine) – “impossible à comprendre et à imaginer” (125).

Apart from Levi, there are a number of survivors who also allude to the impossibility of expressing the Auschwitz inferno. That is the case with Elie Wiesel, who addresses in *Night* (*La Nuit*, 1958) the difficulty of verbalizing what he went through during his concentrationary imprisonment: “But how was one to rehabilitate and transform words betrayed and perverted by the enemy?” (2006 [1958]: ix) – “Trahie, corrompue, pervertie par l’ennemi, comment pouvait-on réhabiliter et humaniser la parole?” (Wiesel 2007 [1958]: 12). For her part, in one poem included in *The Measure of Our Days* (*Mesure de nos jours*, 1971), the third volume of her trilogy *Auschwitz and After* (*Auschwitz et après*, 1970-1971), Charlotte Delbo says that she had to “explain the inexplicable” (1995: 276) – “expliquer l’inexplicable” (1971: 78).

At the end of *Mrs. Auschwitz. The Gift of Speech – Signora Auschwitz. Il dono de la parola*, 2014 [1999]; not translated into English² – the Hungarian-born survivor-witness Edith Bruck includes a letter she received from Maria, a teenage girl who is a survivor of the 1990s wars in the Balkans. Maria expresses her encounter with Bruck like this: “*Meeting you has really helped me realize that there are no words to define the nightmare occurred in*

¹ For an extended analysis of the interrelation between ethics and art, consult for instance Lang’s book-length analysis (2000).

² A French edition of this work—*Signora Auschwitz: Le don de la parole (Entre histoire et mémoire)*—was published in 2015.

Auschwitz” (translation mine) – “*Conoscerla è stato veramente scoprire che non ci sono parole per definire l’incubo che ha subito ad Auschwitz*” (91; emphasis in original).

Last but not least, the Spanish Buchenwald survivor Jorge Semprún specifically refers to the theme of transmission—i.e. of passing the *Konzentrationslager* experience on to the next generation—as a kind of mission impossible. This is what he wrote in *Literature or Life* (*L’écriture ou la vie*, 1994): “The essential truth of the experience, cannot be imparted... Or should I say, it cannot be imparted only through literary writing” (1997: 125) – “la vérité essentielle de l’expérience, n’est pas transmissible... Ou plutôt, elle n’est pas que par l’écriture littéraire” (1994: 167; ellipsis in original).

However, there are survivors who, as in the case of the Hungarian Auschwitz survivor Imre Kertész, approach this issue from a diametrically different perspective. This is how he addresses it in *Kaddish for a Child Not Born* (*Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért*, 1990):

And please stop saying, I most probably said, that Auschwitz cannot be explained, that Auschwitz is the product of irrational, incomprehensible forces, because there is always a rational explanation for wrongdoing; it’s quite possible that Satan himself, like Iago, is irrational. (1997: 31)³

At least two major challenges are faced by a survivor. The first one is how to explain the “unimaginable.” In an interview Aharon Appelfeld (אהרן אפלפלד) granted to Philip Roth (Appelfeld in Roth 2001: 18-39), the Israeli fiction writer and Auschwitz survivor says very clearly that the only thing the Holocaust can cause is silence: “The Holocaust belongs to the type of enormous experience that reduces one to silence. Any utterance, any statement, any ‘answer’ is tiny, meaningless, and occasionally ridiculous. Even the greatest of answers seems petty” (38).

The second challenge is to transmit their experience to subsequent generations, which is a Herculean struggle of memory against forgetting. In this sense, becoming a witness is something essential if we do not want History to repeat itself. Primo Levi believes that since History will be judged one day, “I had to witness for its victims” (translation mine) – “je devais témoigner pour ses victimes” (Mesnard 2011: 11).

As regards Jorge Semprún, he is deeply concerned about the day when the last survivor of the Holocaust nightmare disappears. In *Literature or Life*, he wonders what will happen then: “there would be no more immediate memory of Buchenwald” (1997: 292) – “Il n’y

³ “És hagyjátok ezt abba végre, mondhattam valószínűleg, hogy Auschwitzra nincs magyarázat, hogy Auschwitz az irracionális, az ésszel fel nem fogható erők szüleménye, mert a rossz mindig van ésszerű magyarázat, meglehet, hogy a Sátán maga, akárcsak Jágó, irracionális, teremtményei azonban, igenis, racionális lények” (1990: 65).

aurait plus de mémoire immédiate de Buchenwald” (1994: 374). Understandably, Semprún is not only scared of the disappearance of the last eye witness but, like Aharon Appelfeld, he fears a no lesser evil: silence.

Bearing witness is therefore a must-do task if fighting against silence is a priority. Passing testimony on to others is a central Holocaust-related matter that Ephraim Sicher explores in his aforementioned 2005 book-length study: the idea of transmission—“collective memory”—as the only effective way not to forget⁴: “the burden of collective and personal memory presses on the children of the victims and the perpetrators even more because of their lack of knowledge, because of their need to imagine the unimaginable and to fill the gaps in national and family history” (Sicher 2005: 6). Aarons, Pratt and Shechner round off this idea when they claim that second- and third-generation writers “acknowledge a legacy of loss and accept an obligation to carry memory into the future” (2015: 7). Victoria Aarons had explained it in a similar way: “Such garnered memories are openings for midrashic moments of continuity and extension, *an invitation to carry the weight of memory into the present*” (2012a: 139; emphasis mine).

In 1975—i.e. three decades before Sicher’s book came out—the Brooklyn-born poet Charles Reznikoff’s *Holocaust* was published. This is a book-length poem whose material had been drawn on court records of the 1961 Eichmann trial held in Jerusalem. Reznikoff’s arguably best work seems to serve a threefold purpose: first, it is a powerful “medium or text” to “bear the impossibility of imagining the unimaginable”; second, it is an appropriate way “of rendering into art the negation of art”; and third, it is his commitment to carrying “the weight of memory into the present” and “into the future.” Although with a different purpose, this threefold aim is, in my view, well summarized in the first part of the title of another major Reznikoff work: *Testimony: the United States, 1885-1915* (1978-1979).

The interrelation between “memory” and “imagination” has been taken up by fiction writers and scholars. One of the latter is Jessica Lang, who points out that “Holocaust literature that does not have its immediate origins in the author’s memory must rely on other devices for representing the event” (Lang 2009: 44). According to her, one of the problems is that “as with other historical events for which few or no eyewitnesses remain,

⁴ Jorge/George Santayana’s well-known maxim “[t]hose who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (2011: 172) is at the core of remembering; in connection with the issue of “remembering vs. forgetting,” there is a very revealing *New Yorker* interview with the Holocaust survivor Aharon Appelfeld. At one point of the interview with Philip Gourevitch, Appelfeld refers to this issue as follows: “When I came to Israel (ישראל), the slogan was ‘Forget.’ Until the late sixties—‘Forget’. And if you talk about the Holocaust, then, only the heroic part—partisans, not the camps” (Gourevitch 2018); for an insightful full-length study of Holocaust-oriented memory, see Lipstadt (2016).

the Holocaust is increasingly a subject matter for the imagination" (44). Later, she establishes a crucial difference between first- and second-generation Holocaust writers—for whom "the historical experience 'conveys' a *sense of immediacy and impact*" (46; emphasis mine)—and the third-generation writer, who "views these events as an indirect part of the narrative, one balanced by other, also important, histories" (46). Second-generation Holocaust writers⁵ are not only "writers and artists" who "are children of survivors" but also "members of their generation" (Sicher 2005: 5).⁶ Among others, Cynthia Ozick fits into this description.

Elsewhere (Sánchez Canales 2011: 29-30) I refer to a well-known interview in which Elaine M. Kauvar asked Cynthia Ozick whether the Holocaust should remain history. Her answer was: "It should. I believe with all my soul that it ought to remain exclusively attached to document and history" (Kauvar 1993: 390). In this respect, Ozick was expressing her concern about the danger of denying the Holocaust as a consequence of its fictionalization. At one point of her interview, Kauvar raised a question about the novelist's own fictionalization in "The Shawl" (1980). Ozick's reply was as follows:

I did it in five pages in "The Shawl," and I don't admire that I did it. I did it because I couldn't help it. It wanted to be done. I didn't want to do it, and afterward I've in a way punished myself, I've accused myself for having done it. I wasn't there, and I pretended through imagination that I was. I've also on occasion been punished in angry letters from people who really were there. But I wasn't there, and the story is not a document, it's an imagining. (391)

Ozick's discomfort of writing such a story was due to her belief that the Holocaust should be approached from a non-fictional point of view—as in the case of Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1985 [1961]) and Lucy S. Dawidowicz' *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (1986 [1975]), among others—instead of from a purely artistic perspective, unless the narrative is written by a Holocaust survivor. To give just some examples, Aharon Appelfeld's *Badenheim 1939* – (באדנהיים עיר נופש, 1978) – Imre Kertész's *Kaddish for a Child Not Born* (*Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért*, 1990), Primo Levi's *If*

⁵ For an extended analysis of second-generation writing, see McGlothin's book (2006); consult also Aarons (2012b: 138-139).

⁶ At the end of Edith Bruck's *Signora Auschwitz* (2014 [1999]) there is a letter by a young woman called Maria, who survived the 1990s Wars in the Balkans. At one point of her letter, she writes: "We live in the kind of ignorance that young people do not want to know. They also negate the existence of concentration camps and it is difficult to persuade them; I have tried to tell my companions the story of the camps, the story of entire peoples transformed into ash, your story that could be our future" (translation mine; emphasis in original) – "viviamo nell'ignoranza che i giovani non vogliono sapere, e addirittura negano l'esistenza dei campi di concentramento ed è difficile persuaderli; io ho cercato di raccontare ai miei compagni la storia dei campi, la storia di popoli interi trasformati in cenere, la vostra storia che potrebbe diventare il nostro futuro" (92).

Not Now, When? (*Se non ora, quando?*, 1982), Jorge Semprún's *Literature or Life*, and Elie Wiesel's *Night*. (An in-depth analysis of Kertész' *Kaddish* and Levi's *If Not* by Aimee Pozorski and Cheryl Chaffin, respectively, is included in the present volume.)

In a *New Yorker* interview with Aharon Appelfeld published on January 5th, 2018⁷—i.e. the day after he passed away—this Holocaust survivor and writer expressed his view about the role that fiction plays: “I always felt that fiction was the way to the deepest truths”⁸ (Gourevitch 2018). Ozick, who as shown above experienced the need to fictionalize the Holocaust,⁹ must have felt relieved by Appelfeld's claim. Philip Mesnard appropriately alludes to this issue in his aforementioned Levi biography: “Science-fiction could be... a *veicolo fondamentale* (a fundamental medium) because it speaks a language that nowadays is understood by many, by everyone” (translation mine; ellipsis mine) – “La science-fiction peut être... un *veicolo fondamentale* (un vecteur fondamental), parce qu'elle parle un langage qui aujourd'hui est entendu par beaucoup, par tous” (2011: 332).

A similar need to fictionalize the Holocaust must have been experienced by second- and third-generation writers such as Shalom Auslander, Michael Chabon, Nathan Englander, Jonathan Safran Foer, Allegra Goodman, David Grossman, Cynthia Ozick, Thane Rosenbaum, and Philip Roth, all of whom feel that “the Holocaust has ineradicably shaped their lives” (Aarons, Pratt & Shechner 2015: 6). The way they “view [this] event” (Lang 2009: 46), however, is very unlikely to be similar because, among other reasons, “third-generation narratives reveal attempts to comprehend, give voice to, and demystify the ‘unimaginable’, unrepresentable fracture of the Holocaust, remaking a place for the Shoah's necessary imprint in the twenty-first century” (Aarons 2016: xiii).¹⁰

In this paper, I will focus on two novels by two third-generation writers¹¹ who approach the Holocaust in a different way. First, I will look at Holocaust-related imagery in Michael Chabon's *The Final Solution* (2004), a novella which, in the guise of a detective story, addresses the sequels of the concentration camp horror through the traumatic experience of a 9-year-old survivor named Linus Steinmann. The second novel is Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002). Narrated from two different perspectives, this

⁷ See also note 4.

⁸ Bernard Malamud's biographer Philip Davis explains that the way to “do justice to Malamud” is to study his fiction because “[i]t was fiction that provided the best *context* for human understanding” (2007: x; emphasis in original). I believe this claim can also be extended to Appelfeld's works.

⁹ A number of scholars have written about the inadequacy of approaching the Holocaust from either an artistic or a comic perspective. See, among others, Clendinnen (1999) and Ornstein (2006).

¹⁰ For an approach to literature of contemporary Jewish-American writing from different perspectives, consult Aarons (2019).

¹¹ For fiction writers such as Michael Chabon, Nathan Englander and Jonathan Safran Foer, among others, the term “Post-Roth generation” has been used (Zakrzewski 2003 qtd. in Codde 2011: 676).

narrative examines the theme of the Holocaust from a comic and a serious view. The analysis of these two perspectives intends to show whether these two views are reconcilable—or not—from Foer's standpoint.

2. MICHAEL CHABON'S *THE FINAL SOLUTION*

A first aspect that can be underlined about Michael Chabon's *Final Solution* is that the plot of this novella has nothing to do with the Holocaust. Set in an English village in the summer of 1944, *The Final Solution* is the story of the murder of a British foreign officer named Mr Shane and the disappearance of Bruno, the protagonist's parrot. Finding Bruno might help solve the puzzle of the murder. The title of the narrative is a pun which not only alludes to the solution of the mystery¹² but also to Hitler's well-known mass extermination plans.¹³ In this section, I will analyze Holocaust-related imagery used in Chabon's novella.¹⁴

As explained below, *The Final Solution* revolves around the muteness of the protagonist, 9-year-old Linus Steinman, which epitomizes the source of trauma—the Holocaust itself—and the effect of such trauma throughout the child's life.¹⁵

One of the recurrent leitmotifs in this story is the train. In spite of being spared the awful experience of the death trains and the concentration camps, the children of Holocaust survivors like Linus were transmitted their parents' fears, anxieties and other traumatic experiences.¹⁶ This will likely help us understand—and explain—the origin of Linus's muteness. The allusions to trains in *The Final Solution* seem to underscore the presence of a highly traumatic event like the "cattle car" experience. These "deportation transports" were "the principal locations of victims' suffering and memory" (Gigliotti 2009: 2). The reader learns that Linus, who arrived in England from Germany as a deportee,¹⁷ was one of the ten thousand child refugees brought on the *Kindertransporte* (Children's transports): "the boy and his parents were spared deportation in 1938. Taken off the train at the last moment, I gather" (Chabon 2005 [2004]: 68). Children born before the

¹² Richardson (2010) approaches Chabon's story as a "narrative device of Historian-As-Detective," on the one hand, and as "a standardized feature of contemporary Holocaust fiction," on the other.

¹³ Dawidowicz (1986 [1975]) and Hilberg (1985 [1961]) address, among other issues, the extermination of millions of Jews during the Nazi years; Friedländer (2007) is another in-depth analysis of the years of extermination (1939-1945).

¹⁴ For an extended study of this issue, consult Sánchez Canales (2013).

¹⁵ Chabon's narrative has been interpreted as "an allegory of man's futile quest for understanding of the Holocaust" (Craps & Buelens 2011: 569).

¹⁶ For an extended study of child survivors' testimonies after World War II, consult Cohen (2007).

¹⁷ Marrus (2007) examines the custody of Jewish child survivors of the Holocaust rescued by Catholic families and/or institutions.

Holocaust—as in the protagonist’s case—went through drastic changes in their environment. Many of these children like Linus Steinman, who were separated from their parents, were in urgent need of love and affection. For this reason, they became attached to anything they felt that belonged to the world they had left behind. In Chabon’s narrative, it is Bruno, his inseparable parrot.¹⁸ (In Cynthia Ozick’s 1980 story “The Shawl,” Rosa, a Holocaust survivor whose 18-month-old daughter Magda was killed by an SS officer, is attached to Magda’s shawl.) According to Milton Kestenberg and Judith Kestenberg, this behavior reveals a need to create a space of belonging: “The basic trust that accounts for dependability in a relationship is the mainstay of a permanent sense of belonging” (Kestenberg & Kestenberg 1988: 538).

Significantly, at the outset of the narrative Linus “with a parrot on his shoulder was walking along the railway tracks” (Chabon 2005 [2004]: 1). A few minutes later, the old detective sees the boy trying to cross an electrified fence. Horrified by the child’s imminent electrocution, the old man shouts at him: “For pity’s sake, you’d be fried like a smelt! ... One can only imagine the stench” (4; ellipsis mine). Half way through the story, Linus, who catches his hand on barbed wire, is helped by the detective to get the wire out of his hand. Suddenly, the child bursts into tears: “He took hold of the boy’s hand. On the back, just below the wrist, a puffy nipple of flesh, tipped with the black filament of the barb.... The boy wept freely during this procedure” (78; ellipsis mine). The fact that he “wept freely” and that “[t]he barb [finally] tumbled free” (79) is a reminder of the impossibility of leaving history—as a traumatic event—behind.

Typically, traumatic (Holocaust) memories are usually triggered by external cues such as the trains or the electrified fence, which bring the narrator back to the horrors of the concentration camps. The presence of barbed wire provokes fear and anxiety in the child. Something similar happens to Rosa in Ozick’s homonymous story. Every time she sees a barbed wire fence, she panicks (Ozick 1990 [1989]: 48, 49, 51, 52, 53).

¹⁸ For an account of “train transportation” throughout Nazism, see, for example, “The Journey” (Levi 2016a, I: 9-17) – “Il viaggio” (Levi 2016b, I: 144-148); “The Trip” (Delbo 1995: 172-180) – “Le voyage” (Delbo 1970b: 94-108) – and “Berlin” (Delbo 1995: 181-186; Delbo 1970b: 109-118); and Gigliotti (2006) for an analysis of the deportation train journeys in Thane Rosenbaum’s short story “Cattle Car Complex”—included in his *Elijah Visible: Stories* (1996); consult also Fast (2011), where it is explained that “children’s stories—whether about the Kindertransport, life in hiding, or survival in the camps—form the fabric of the tapestry” (xiii); Reznikoff’s poem “Children” (Reznikoff 1975: 67-70), which is based on a US government publication entitled *Trials of the Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunal* and the records of the well-known Eichmann trial held in Jerusalem in 1961; for an autobiographical account of the “cattle truck” experience, see Semprún (1964/1963).

Other external cues that can help activate the horrors of their imprisonment are fire and heat. These two images, which underline a sense of suffocation, ineluctably bring the experiencer back to their times as Holocaust inmates. In *The Final Solution*, where the summer days are very hot, the ex-detective, currently retired, has become a bee-keeper. At one point, we learn that the old man, who is scared of the heat and fire, finds that it is a way to die an undignified death.

He did not fear death exactly, but he had evaded it for so many years that it had come to seem formidable simply by virtue of that long act of evasion. In particular he feared dying in some undignified way, on the jakes or with his face in the porridge. (Chabon 2005 [2004]: 75-77)

This seems to echo the fear experienced by the millions of Jews killed in gas chambers in a number of concentration camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, Majdanek, Mauthausen-Gusen, Sachsenhausen, Sobibór and Treblinka, among others. Cynthia Ozick uses a similar image when she describes a Miami summer, which she identifies with a burning (dying) Miami—as a symbol of the old, retired people awaiting death—and the hot, burning camps where many people were also awaiting death.

In connection with other Holocaust-related images present in *The Final Solution* are the numbers uttered by Bruno. What makes the old detective suspect that something does not square is the fact that the parrot utters what *seem* to be several series of numbers: 2175473 (“Zwei eins sieben fünf vier sieben drei,” Chabon 2005 [2004]: 3), 4849117 (“Vier acht vier neun eins eins sieben,” 3) and 9938267 (“Neun neun drei acht zwei sechs sieben,” 9). Linus’ parrot, the key character who facilitates the solution of the mystery, disappears. When Bruno is finally found, he is in a bag. Being inside the bag is something Bruno cannot put up with. To my mind, the explicit reference to the parrot’s difficulty to breathe in that confined space points to the awful claustrophobic experience felt by the Auschwitz inmates when they were in the gas chambers. When he is finally taken out of the bag, he begins to utter several series of numbers in German. Needless to say, these allude to the registration numbers prisoners were tattooed upon their arrival at the Auschwitz concentration camp.

At the outset of this section, I said that in *The Final Solution*, whose main plot revolves around a murder case that needs resolving, there are a number of Holocaust-related images. I find Anna Richardson’s explanation in this respect most apropos: “[t]he intricacy of Doyle’s plots in many ways parallels the complexity of the Holocaust; read in this way, Chabon’s choice of generic framework is a subtle attempt to represent the unknowability of the Holocaust in narrative form” (Richardson 2010: 163). It is an approach to the

Holocaust from a fictional perspective. It is up to the reader to decide whether it has been an appropriate—or inappropriate—way to address it.

3. JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER'S *EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED*

In reference to Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*, the editors of *The New Diaspora: The Changing Landscape of American Jewish Fiction* allude to the narrator's phrase "[t]he origin of a story is always an absence" as "a gap in the narrative that one hopes to fill by looking back. From absent or imperfect memory emerge narratives of continuing trauma" (Aarons, Patt & Shechner 2015: 6).¹⁹

In *Everything Is Illuminated*, which focuses on the interrelation between memory and writing, Jonathan Safran Foer addresses the theme of the Holocaust from two different perspectives, one comic—epitomized by Alex(ander) Perchov—and one serious—embodied by the author's alter ego Jonathan Safran. In order to introduce this twofold approach to the Holocaust, I find that the novelist's explanation in an interview to Houghton Mifflin is very timely here:

The novel's two voices—one "realistic," the other "folkloric"—and their movement toward each other, has to do with this problem of imagination. The Holocaust presents a real moral quandary for the artist. Is one allowed to be funny? Is one allowed to attempt verisimilitude? To forgo it? What are the moral implications of quaintness? Of wit? Of sentimentality? What, if anything, is untouchable? (emphasis mine)

On the one hand, the narrative enables Foer to ponder the appropriateness of addressing the Holocaust from a fictional standpoint. (This takes us back to the part of Elaine Kauvar's interview to Ozick when the interviewer asks the novelist about this aspect); on the other, asking whether there is anything "untouchable" directly points to, among other things, the possibility of resorting to comedy and humor.²⁰

In this section, I will attempt to demonstrate that, to Jonathan Safran Foer, there is little room—if any—for comedy when it comes to the issue of the Holocaust. For this reason, I will examine how the use of humor, which to a great extent is epitomized by Alex's efforts to reconcile the perpetrators and the victims, turns out to be fruitless in the overcoming of the Holocaust trauma.²¹

¹⁹ Codde (2011) analyzes the fiction of third-generation authors like Jonathan Safran Foer in light of Jacques Derrida's concept of "traces"—i.e. spectral elements concealed and discernible in the text as "absent presences."

²⁰ For reasons of space, here I will not go into the issue of humor as a coping strategy. However, the reader interested in this topic can consult Cory (1995), Eckhardt (1992), Gilman (2000) and Kift (1996), among others.

²¹ Feuer (2007) and Propst (2011), for instance, examine Holocaust memory and reconciliation.

In *Everything Is Illuminated*, Foer introduces two completely different characters: Jonathan Safran, an American Jew, and Alex(ander) Perchov, a half-Jew/half-Gentile Ukrainian. Alex is a funny lad whose humorous tone helps the author—and the reader—reflect on the possibility and desirability of framing the debate on the Holocaust in comic book form. However, as I pointed out elsewhere (2011a: 255), “Foer’s attempt ‘to heal the rift, or wound’ is finally thwarted by his rejection of Alex’s comic, optimistic tone and his implicit defence of the idea that the post-Auschwitz era can only be approached in serious terms.”²²

In connection with humor and its interrelation with hope, Roy Eckardt’s 1992 study is illuminating. According to Eckardt, the individual who tries to transform tragedy into comedy can change fate into freedom. Furthermore, tragedy can provide the human being with a sense of courage. However, only comedy can instil in us a sense of hope because, as explained in the case of Auslander’s *Kugel*, if there is humor, there is hope, and if there is hope, there is humor.²³

If we want to look at the role of humor in a novel like *Everything Is Illuminated*, it should be said that a comic, humorous attitude toward life like Alex’s clashes with Jonathan’s pessimistic—i.e. tragic—writing. On the one hand, Alex’s optimism is meant to be a kind of cure to alleviate decades of suffering and to contribute to narrowing the rift between the perpetrators and the victims.²⁴ Jonathan finds the Ukrainian youth’s attitude extremely irritating. Throughout the narrative, Alex does not stop trying to be friends with Jonathan. However, he ends up realizing that this will be mission impossible. Early in the story, Alex writes something in his first letter that reveals the implausibility of his plan: “We became like friends while you were in Ukraine, yes? In a different world, we could have been real friends” (Foer 2002: 26).

Jonathan’s narrative begins as a fantastical reconstruction of his ancestors’ lives in Trachimbrod from March 18, 1791—the first record of the Trachimbrodian history—to June 18, 1941—the day the Nazis bombed the *shtetl* (שטעטל) and reduced it to ashes.²⁵ The reconstruction of the history of Trachimbrod intermingles with Jonathan’s journey to Ukraine to visit his grandfather Safran’s *shtetl*—or what remains of it—and meet

²² For an extended analysis of the role of humor in *Everything Is Illuminated*, see Sánchez Canales (2011a).

²³ See note 20.

²⁴ In an essay entitled “Notes toward a Meditation on ‘Forgiveness’” included in Wiesenthal (1976: 184-190), Cynthia Ozick addresses the issue of forgiveness. (This essay is not included in the German edition of Wiesenthal’s book.)

²⁵ For an in-depth study of the use of magic realism in *Everything Is Illuminated*, see, for example, Adams (2009).

Augustine. Augustine is the last surviving Trachimbrodian who could help Jonathan reconstruct a 50-year-plus gap in his family history. One of the reasons why the comic element is used at the outset of the novel—and not after the *shtetl* was bombed by the Nazis—is that, at this early stage of the history of Trachimbrod, the local inhabitants enjoyed the Edenic innocence present in the folkloric, magic-realist world of 20th century Yiddish writers like Isaac Bashevis Singer (צחק באשעוויס זינגער).²⁶ It makes sense, then, to think that for Jonathan, it is not disrespectful to resort to comedy to depict quasi-idyllic Jewry before millions of Jews were murdered in numerous concentration camps. It is also clear that with the extermination of millions of Jews at the Nazi hands, the human being left behind a quiet, haven-like life and entered a new world.²⁷

Through comedy, Jonathan depicts not only an imagined world but also a remembered one. In this way, he can find comfort in recalling a pre-existent order in which life was more peaceful and simple. The optimism displayed at the beginning of the novel gives way to bitter pessimism, especially in the second half of *Everything Is Illuminated*. Halfway through the narrative, Jonathan tells Alex that he used to approach harsh reality through humor: “I used to think that humor was the only way to appreciate how wonderful and terrible the world is, to celebrate how big life is” (Foer 2002: 158). However, with the passing of time, he realized he was mistaken because “now I think it’s the opposite. Humor is a way of shrinking from that wonderful and terrible world” (158).

Toward the end of the narrative, Alex’s joy starts to falter until his funny comments virtually disappear in his last letters. He eventually understands that he must give up his American dream and face the grim reality of taking charge of his little brother Igor after his grandfather’s suicide.

In conclusion, in spite of Alex’s humor and comedy—as an epitome of forgiveness—it seems that to Foer there is little (if any) room for hope in the reconciliation process between the perpetrators and the victims.

4. CONCLUSION

In this essay, I have placed an emphasis on the idea that the theme of the Holocaust, which is part of our “collective memory” (Sicher 2005), is “an invitation to carry the weight of memory into the present” (Aarons 2012a: 139). The way(s) how to pass the testimony on

²⁶ Farrell (1992) gathers some of the most significant interviews with I. B. Singer. The Jewish-American storyteller and novelist of Polish extract discusses his own fiction as well as the fiction of many other writers; for a full-length study of the “Jewish fool”—*schlemiel* (שלימיאל)—, consult Pinsker (1991) and Wisse (1971).

²⁷ For a sociological approach to the Holocaust, see Bauman (1999 [1991]); see also Newman and Erber (2002) for a study of this genocide from a social-psychological perspective.

to the next generation(s) has/have been open to heated debates for decades. As explained at the beginning, there are those who think this can only be done through the testimonies of the ones who were actually ‘there’—i.e. Holocaust survivors. The advocates of this approach think that it could be done in the form of a historical document or in fiction form. There is another way to address this issue—as does the so-called second- and third-generation writer, who “views these events as an indirect part of the narrative” (Lang 2009: 46). Also as pointed out at the outset of this essay, the Holocaust survivor and writer Aharon Appelfeld explicitly said in his last interview that fictionalizing stories—including a traumatic event like the Holocaust—is “the way to the deepest truths.” Whatever the approach is, the really important thing is that, as the Jewish-American historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi (יוסף חיים ירושלמי) said in connection with the interrelation between “collective memory” and Jewish history, “[t]he collective memories of the Jewish people were a function of the shared faith, cohesiveness, and will of the group itself” (1982: 94). So be it.

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Literary Reflections of Elitocide: Georgy Demidov and Precursors

Reflexiones literarias del elitocidio: Georgy Demidov y precursores

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Resumen

Mientras que el asesinato de elites data de épocas antiguas, ya sea como parte de un genocidio, como oferta a cambio de esclavitud de una comunidad, o bien como expresión de un *resentimiento* social, debido a las atrocidades cometidas en el siglo XX las historias de elitocidio han reunido la masa crítica suficiente como para que surja este concepto. El presente artículo se centra en las reflexiones literarias sobre el elitocidio, muchas de las cuales solo se pueden reconocer como tales una vez que el fenómeno en sí ha cristalizado en la memoria colectiva. Tratamientos de carácter literario sobre la cuestión del elitocidio incluyen obras de Dostoyevski (traducida al español como *Los endemoniados* o *Demonios* [*Бесы*], 1871–1872), de H. G. Wells (*La máquina del tiempo*, 1895) y de Nabokov (*Barra sinestra*, 1947), aunque el ejemplo fundamental abordado aquí es el tema de la destrucción de las personas de mayor talento que aparecen en las historias del Gulag de Georgy Demidov.

Palabras clave: elitocidio; Gulag; distopía; *resentimiento*; abyección

Abstract

Whereas the killing of the elites, whether as part of genocide, as a bid for enslavement of a community, or as an expression of a social *ressentiment*, dates back to ancient times, it is owing to the atrocities of the twentieth century that histories of elitocide assembled the critical mass for the concept to emerge. This paper is devoted to literary reflections of elitocide, many of which can likewise be recognized as such only after the phenomenon itself has crystallized in collective memory. Literary treatments of the issue of elitocide include works by Dostoevsky (*The Devils* [*Бесы*], 1871–1872), H. G. Wells (*The Time*

Machine, 1895), and Nabokov (*Bend Sinister*, 1947), but my main example is the theme of the destruction of the most talented in the Gulag stories by Georgy Demidov.

Keywords: elitocide; Gulag; dystopia; *ressentiment*; abjection.

1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of “elitocide” was launched in 1992 by the British journalist Michael Nicholson, reporting from the war-torn Yugoslavia. Based on Raphael Lemkin’s term “genocide,” introduced in 1944,¹ *elitocide* means the killing of the educated or of the leadership of an ethnic group. The practice of decapitating an ethnic group, whether by murder or by deportation, is old (the latter was the case of the Babylonian exile of the Jewish elite in the sixth century BC), but in collective memory it seems to have reached a critical mass only in the twentieth century, with the killing of Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Constantinople in April of 1915 and the conscription (followed by lethal abuse) of able-bodied male Armenians, the killings of Polish intellectuals and officers by the Nazis and then by the Soviets during World War II, the preemptive abuse and killings of Jewish intellectuals and potential young ghetto fighters at the start of ghettoization in Vilnius, Theresienstadt, and elsewhere, the massacre of educated urban Cambodians, or just wearers of spectacles, by the Pol Pot regime, the priority targeting of the educated in the Rwanda genocides in the 1970s,² and the massacres of the Bosnian intelligentsia in the early 1990s.³

Literary reflections of elitocide can be found in the memoirs of survivors, such as Grigoris Balakian’s (Գրիգորիս Պապեան) *The Armenian Golgotha* (Հայ Գողգոթան, 2009); their echoes appear in the works by the next generations, e.g. Peter Balakian’s *The Black Dog of Fate* (1997) or Michael J. Arlen’s *Passage to Ararat* (1975). Elitocidal eventualities are refracted in dystopian fictions—Zamiatin’s (Замятин) *We* (Мы, 1924), Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), or Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* (1953): outstandingly gifted or cultivated characters are given a choice of either harnessing their abilities to the agenda of the regime or being annihilated, the two options not mutually exclusive.

I believe that though representations of vices that fuel the killing of the elites made the specter of elitocide haunt literature since ancient times, it was the history of the twentieth-century atrocities that has allowed the literary theme of actual or virtual elitocide to be

¹ See Lemkin (1944: 79–95); for a detailed historical survey of genocidal events, see Kiernan (2007).

² Consult Goldhagen (2009: 137–139).

³ For an extended analysis of this issue, see Gratz (2011).

retroactively recognized as a topos. My test-case for the redescription of some conventional fictional narrative choices as representations of elitocide is the fictionalized Gulag testimony of the scientist and writer Georgy Demidov (Георгий Демидов, 1908–1987).

2. ELITOCIDE FROM ABOVE AND FROM BELOW. LITERARY REFRACTIONS

In his 2011 article on elitocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, Dennis Graz notes that destruction of the elites is likely to be (and in Yugoslavia was) a preface to and facilitation of genocide. This is true of elitocide as part of ethnic warfare—the fate of Armenians in 1915, Jews in 1939–1945, Rwandans in 1994, Bosniaks in 1992–1995. It is less true in class warfare, where two different phenomenological motivations of elitocide transpire.

One is the decapitation of a population with the purpose of enslaving or subduing it. In general, and in the twentieth century in particular, resistance movements needed leadership not only for the direction of their activities but also for their very existence; hence elitocide was expected to preempt wide-scale resistance. When Western Ukraine, Moldova, and the Baltic republics were forcibly joined to the Soviet Union in 1939 and 1940, not only were the “bourgeois” political leaders and businessmen arrested and transported to Siberia but also great numbers of intellectuals, including lawyers, teachers, and other authority-wielding professionals. The German invasion of 1941 put an end to this process, but then continued it in its own way, shooting or incarcerating the chosen, sometimes otherwise identified and sometimes the same—such as the 48 Lithuanian intellectuals (including the writer Balys Sruoga), arrested in March 1943 and sent to the Stutthof concentration camp.⁴ Soviet deportations of intellectuals were resumed after the liberation of the territories from the Germans. Even when the victims were not incarcerated in labor-camps, exile in Siberia meant high mortality from hunger and disease. This is elitocide from above. In the Soviet Union it was accompanied by mobilization of the new elites, to create a culture that, according to the Soviet formula, would be “national in form and socialist in content.”

Less historically specific is the motive for elitocide from below, a violently vengeful form of *ressentiment*, turning the tables on the elites under the slogan of equality. Both classical and modern literatures recognize the threat of popular *ressentiment*, as if writers were apprehensive of the fate of Orpheus at the hands the Maenads. Under despotic regimes,

⁴ See Sruoga’s Stutthof memoir *The Forest of the Gods* (2005 [1957]) – *Dievų miškas* (1989 [1957]).

the elitocidal tendency from below, usually either absent, repressed, or sublimated, gains sway when the affects behind it resonate with the agenda of the authorities. It is the phenomenon of the grass-roots elitocidal resentment implicitly sanctioned from above that is represented in the fiction of Georgy Demidov, with Fedor Dostoevsky (Фёдор Достоевский) as his precursor, Vladimir Nabokov (Владимир Набоков) as his oblique supporter, and Varlam Shalamov (Варлам Шаламов) as his literary opponent.

Arguably, however, the pre-history of the literary theme of elitocide also includes classical tragedy, a genre dominated by the elevated stature of the hero, “the leader,” who is superior to his or her human environment and “has authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours” (Frye 1990 [1957]: 34). The fall of the mighty, with the concomitant horror and pity, grants the elite audience a metaphysical experience with a reach beyond catharsis. The “truly aesthetic listener” of Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie*, 1872) “sees the tragic hero . . . in his epic clearness and beauty, and nevertheless rejoices in his annihilation. . . . He feels the actions of the hero as justified and is nevertheless still more elated when these actions annihilate their agent” (Nietzsche 1966 [1872]: 131).⁵ For the tragic artist himself, the destruction of the mighty, as individuality is devoured by the Dionysian impulse, is a path to the “highest artistic primal joy, in the bosom of the primordially One” (131).⁶ Yet one might speculate about the effect of tragedy on the audience with a less “truly aesthetic” mind-set, some of the “groundlings” of the Shakespearean theater: what part may have been played by the satisfied resentment at the fall of a stuck-up Hamlet, a crotchety Lear, or an upstart Othello? If Elias Canetti is right that we feel superior to the dead owing to the very fact that we are alive and they are not (1978: 227; 1980: 281), then perhaps the tragic fall of the leader on the theater stage caters to the vengefulness of those made to feel abject.

An everyday refraction of sublimated resentment transpires in post- or late-romantic 19th-century English and French novels, where the dominant concern is with the clash between the individual and society. Against the background of what was perceived as the despotism of mediocrity, one’s romantic or otherwise exceptional personality—that of a Julien Sorrel, a Dorothea Brooke, or a Michael Henchard—dooms one to destruction or, less radically, to the loss of status, power, or promise: indeed, the very title of George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1871) points to the power of those who march in the middle. In these novels, however, the diffusion or erasure of the outstanding individual’s potential is an

5 “sieht den tragischen Helden . . . in epischer Deutlichkeit und Schönheit und erfreut sich doch an seiner Vernichtung. . . . Er fühlt die Handlungen des Helden als gerechtfertigt und ist doch noch mehr erhoben, wenn diese Handlungen den Urheber vernichten” (1988 [1872]: 140-141).

6 “eine höchste künstlerische Urfreude im Schoosse des Ur-Einen” (1988 [1872]: 140).

epiphenomenon of the perceived social trends rather than anyone's deliberately sought goal.

In a recognizable form, a top-down elitocide is adumbrated in Dostoevsky's 1871–1872 novel *The Devils* (*Бесы*). Like Socrates' (Σωκράτης) utopia in Plato's (Πλάτων) *Republic* (*Πολιτεία*, c. 380 BCE), the imaginary society is not staged in the storyworld but is offered as a social-engineering theory in a text-within-a-text, viz. in the radically pseudo-Marxist socio-philosophical reflections of the character Shigalev (Шигалев). The "Shigalev system" (Dostoyevsky 1953: 419), the so-called "Shigalevshchina" ("шигалёвщина," Dostoyevsky 1982 I: 403, the suffix echoing the names of rebellions of the past—Khovanshchina (Хованщина), Pugachevshchina [Пугачёвщина]), is socially rather than ethnically oriented. It is a paradoxical combination of Socratean elitism with elitocide, mainly the destruction of the talented representatives of the lower class. It posits a division of society into "two unequal parts. One-tenth is to be granted absolute freedom and unrestricted powers over the remaining nine-tenths" (Dostoyevsky 1953: 405).⁷ The one-tenth is the ruling class—harking back to Socrates' wise men and anticipating Aldous Huxley's alpha meritocrats or, *mutatis mutandis*, Stalin's (Сталин) apparatchiks (аппаратчики). They are invested with "absolute freedom" not of the negative but of the positive kind, as power over the others. It is among those others, the nine-tenths of the population, that total equality is to be enforced. These nine-tenths "must give up their individuality and be turned into something like a herd, and by their boundless obedience will by a series of regenerations attain a state of primeval innocence, something like the original paradise" though having to work (405).⁸ According to the enthusiastic gloss of the aggressively neurotic anarchist Peter Verkhovensky (Пётр Верховенский), the evil force of *The Devils*, "All slaves are equal in slavery" (418),⁹ and the means of achieving the desired stratification include a deliberate lowering of

the level of education, science, and talents, [because a] high level of scientific thought and talents is open only to men of highest abilities; no need for the highest abilities! Men of the highest ability have always seized the power and become autocrats, and

⁷ "две неравные части. Одна десятая доля получает свободу личности и безграничное право над остальными девятью десятыми" (1982, VIII: 390).

⁸ "[Те же] должны потерять личность и обратиться вроде как в стадо и при безграничном повиновении достигнуть рядом перерождений первобытной невинности, вроде как бы первобытного рая [хотя, впрочем, и будут работать]" (1982, VIII: 390).

⁹ "Все рабы и в рабстве равны" (1982: VIII: 403). The foundational idea of Shigalev's dystopia may remind one of the grim serf-falanstery dystopia of Ugrium-Burcheev in Saltykov-Shchedrin's 1870 novel *The History of a Town* (*История одного города*; see Ermilov 215–16). Demidov uses the non-capitalized "ugrium-burcheev" ("угрюм бурчеев") as a common appellation for obtusely cruel camp commanders (2008: 184).

they've always done more harm than good; they are either banished or executed. A Cicero will have his tongue cut out, Copernicus will have his eyes gouged out, a Shakespeare will be stoned. . . . We shall reduce everything to one common denominator. Full equality." (418–19, translation amended)¹⁰

Order and uniformity are to be achieved through a variety of means, including blood baths, drunkenness, slander, denunciations—all quite to Peter Verkhovensky's taste.

And yet Verkhovensky feels that he is powerless without the support of an outstanding individual, the exquisitely handsome and rich young aristocrat Nikolai Stavrogin (Николай Ставрогин), deeply attractive to Verkhovensky owing, among other things, to his experimentation with absolute freedom as entailed by disbelief in God: Stavrogin keeps testing whether, indeed, in the language of *The Brothers Karamazov* (Братья Карамазовы, 1879-1880), if there is no God, then everything is permitted. *Pace* Socrates, he does evil for the sake of doing evil. Hence, Verkhovensky takes him for a candidate to the "one-tenth," or rather mistakes him for one, since for the one-tenth problems with conscience are expected to be as non-existent as for an accomplished agent of genocide in Himmler's Posen speeches. Though Stavrogin repulses "Shigeleвшchina" as insane and Verkhovensky as abject, the latter kisses his hand in a burst of adulation.

Seven decades later this gesture is replicated in Vladimir Nabokov's dystopian novel *Bend Sinister* (1947)¹¹: in their schooldays, the future dictator Paduk stealthily kisses the hand of his bullying classmate, the future philosopher Adam Krug, despite Krug's viscerally disgusted rejection (Nabokov 1974: 88). Both Dostoyevsky's creepy anarchist and Nabokov's Paduk are akin to what, in his book on Gogol (Гоголь), Nabokov described as the Russian subspecies of the "geographical races" of Devils: "the 'Chort' is for good Russians a shrimpy foreigner, a shivering puny green-blooded imp, with thin German, Polish, French legs, a sneaking little cad ('podlenky') with something inexpressibly repellent ('gadenky') about him" (Nabokov 1961: 5–6)—a far cry from Bulgakov's (Булгаков) Westernized Volland yet akin to him in the threat of contamination. "To squash him is a mixture of nausea and ecstasy; but so revolting is his squirming black essence that no force on earth could make one perform this business with the bare hand; and a shock of electric disgust darts up any instrument used, transforming the latter into a prolongation

¹⁰ "[Первым делом] понижается уровень образования, наук и талантов. Высокий уровень наук и талантов доступен только высшим способностям, не надо высших способностей! Высшие способности всегда захватывали власть и были деспотами. Высшие способности не могут не быть деспотами и всегда развращали более, чем приносили пользы; их изгоняют или казнят. Цицерону отрезывается язык, Копернику выкалывают глаза, Шекспир побивается камнями. . . . Всё к одному знаменателю, полное равенство" (1982: VIII: 403).

¹¹ See also Toker (2001: 333-341).

of one's very body" (6). What aligns this type of the abject with Milton's magnetizing Satan and his debased avatars such as Claggart in Melville's *Billy Budd* (1924) is vengeful ressentiment. In *Bend Sinister* the theme of ressentiment is borne by the characters of the newly empowered, such as the arriviste Dr. Alexander, the oversexed enforcer Max, or the University cafeteria employee Pietro. Tellingly, only the latter seems to survive by the end of the novel: the former two fall victim of the regime that they have faithfully served, as in the leap-frog history of Stalin's Great Terror.

The counterpart of the "Shigalevschina" of *The Devils* is "Ekwilism," the foundational idea of Paduk's dystopia in *Bend Sinister*.¹² As in Dostoevsky, the inventor of the theory is not the one to implement it. The former, Fradrik Skotoma, Nabokov's version of Shigalev, demands total equality of the citizens not only in terms of property but also in terms of individual capacities. Here the dead metaphor of "capacity" is awakened and literalized with the help of the fantasy of the One as "world consciousness." People are represented as "vessels" that contain "unequal portions of human consciousness" (1974: 75), so that "the difference between the proudest intellect and the humblest stupidity depend[s] entirely upon the degree of 'world consciousness' condensed in this or that individual" (76). This metaphor degrades "human consciousness" to a uniform material substance containing a "certain computable amount" at every "given level of world-time." So long as this given amount of consciousness is "contained in a given number of heterogeneous bottles—wine bottles, flagons and vials of varying shape and size," its distribution is "uneven and unjust, but could be made even and just either by grading the contents or by eliminating the fancy vessels and adopting a standard size" (75). The assumption of the finite amount of consciousness at any time contrasts with Krug's wish to believe in "infinite consciousness" possibly attainable after death (192).

In non-metaphorical terms, if "socialism had advocated uniformity on an economic plane" and if "religion had grimly promised the same in spiritual terms as an inevitable status beyond the grave," Ekwilism maintains that "no levelling of wealth could be successfully accomplished, nor indeed was of any real moment, so long as there existed some individuals with more brains or guts than others" (75). Nor would metaphysical, spiritual equality be achieved so long as there existed

those favoured ones (men of bizarre genius, big game hunters, chess players, prodigiously robust and versatile lovers, the radiant woman taking her necklace off after the ball) for whom this world was a paradise in itself and who would be always

¹² I agree with Julian Connolly (1999) that Nabokov's attitude to Dostoyevsky was complex and dynamic, and at times closer than his later-life rejection may suggest.

one point up no matter what happened to everyone in the melting pot of eternity.
(76)

According to this conception, therefore, the restructuring or the “liquidation” of the most capacious of the vessels would lead to a more equitable redistribution of the “world consciousness” among the rest of humanity. When Ekwilism becomes the state’s official ideology, an outstanding intellectual, regarded by others as an epitome of their own intellectual strivings and powers, begins to encounter more and more frequent varieties of the vengeful resentment of the servants of the regime, especially people of the kind that in the Soviet Union were known as *vydvizhentsy* (выдвиженцы), those put forward, chosen for promotion by the regime.

Nabokov’s sensitivity to possible resentment against intellectuals is also evident in his 1935 dystopia *Invitation to a Beheading*, where the peasant-jailor Rodion first lavishes plain-folk tenderness on the imprisoned puny intellectual Cincinnatus but eventually loses patience with his needs:

“Wait a minute!” cried Cincinnatus. “I have finished all the books. Bring me again the catalogue.”
“Books...” Rodion scoffed huffily and locked the door behind him with pronounced resonance. (1979: 48)

A dystopian reversal of Shigalev’s point about the treatment of the nine-tenths as the herd is staged in H. G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* (1895), where the hard-worked ape-like Morlocks underground cater to the beautiful elf-like Eloi while actually raising them as cattle to feed upon. The Morlocks’ hunting sallies for Eloi are scavenging expeditions after those left behind by the flight of others, the older and weaker ones.¹³

H. G. Wells takes Disraeli’s representation of British classes as “the two nations” a few steps further: humanity seems to have diverged into two different species. Yet the resentment against the cultivated is often shown pertaining even to those born in the downtrodden masses’ own midst. This is reflected in the adventures of the guillotine during the French Revolution (refracted in such literary works as Anatole France’s 1912 *The Gods are Athirst [Les dieux ont soif]*): once erected, the guillotine demands food; the aristocrats and their supporters no longer suffice and the supply has to come from elsewhere. As an emblem of resentment, this “national shaver” eventually allows its frenzy to trump class solidarity: the revolutionary terror devours its own. It seems that on

¹³ In Andrey Platonov’s (Андрей Платонов) *Chevengur* (Чевенгур, 1972) the revolutionary masses do not cannibalize the educated (the “bourgeoisie”) whom they perceive as “weaklings” (квелье), but slaughter or drive them to death, purging the sense of abjection from themselves by transferring it to their victims.

facing the social rise of the talented from one's own midst, it is oneself who becomes abject, discarded, left behind. The Shigalevian Ekwilist Stalin hated to see brilliant people around himself,¹⁴ but he also managed to get thousands of working-class demonstrators to demand death penalties for "bourgeois specialists" accused of "wrecking," as well as for yesterday's revered leaders now playing the roles of agents of Western imperialism. Social sciences can hardly account for his success in mobilizing the masses without the phenomenological rule of thumb: the endemic individual resentment can get pooled into elitocidal waves.

3. WASTED TALENTS

Dominance of the concern with the regime's destruction of particularly talented people is the distinctive feature of the Gulag stories of Georgy Demidov, a camp survivor whose work about prisons and camps appeared relatively late on the Russian literary scene. Demidov belonged to the younger generation of Soviet scientists and engineers whom the regime promoted in parallel with persecuting the "bourgeois specialists." Whereas Lenin (Ленин) considered the old-time intellectuals and scientists indispensable during the transition period, Stalin was hostile to this social stratum and made the transition period one of a short duration. But the younger generation of scientists and engineers fostered by the regime were not necessarily its thoughtless slaves either; high IQ favors critical or at least autonomous thinking. As Demidov put it in the story "The Intellectual (the Cauchy Criterion)" – "Интеллектуал (Признак Коши)," by contrast to the proletariat "that was not burdened by any doubts regarding its historical justification, Russian intelligentsia, *even its new representatives*, still bore the load of political, ethical, and various other doubts" (2008: 101; emphasis mine).¹⁵ A large percentage of this new scientific elite was also eventually sent to the camps, leaving their social berths open for newly raised successors: a leap-frog process that among those who escaped the purges often created the illusion of a progressively wider distribution of status, goods, and well-being.

¹⁴ Telling in this respect is the famous story of the journalist Mikhail Koltsov's (Миха́йл Ко́льцо́в) conversation with Stalin about the Spanish Civil War. As Koltsov told his brother Boris Efimov (Борис Ефи́мов), the look that Stalin had given him on parting meant "Slishkom pryток" ("Слишком прыток," "Too quick/smart"). Koltsov read his own death sentence in Stalin's eyes (Beliaev et al. 1989: 95).

¹⁵ "[В отличие от пролетариата,] не отягощенного никакими сомнениями относительно ее исторической оправданности, русская интеллигенция, даже в лице новых своих представителей, все еще несла на себе груз политических, этических и всяких иных сомнений" (2008: 101).

Unless otherwise noted in "Bibliographical References," the translations from Russian are mine.

Demidov was arrested in 1938, during the Great Terror; he was badly beaten during interrogations and on one occasion attacked his interrogator. However, he did sign a self-incrimination, not as a result of torture but when threatened with the arrest of his wife and daughter. He was sent to Kolyma (Колыма) camps. In the early post-war years he made friends with Varlam Shalamov (Варлам Шаламов) in the Debin (Дёбин) hospital for prisoners, where Shalamov was a medic and Demidov maintained the X-ray laboratory. Shalamov's play "Anna Ivanovna" ("Анна Ивановна") is dedicated to Demidov. When in 1965 a typescript of the play fell into the hands of mutual friends, a connection was reestablished between them. Yet their renewed friendship did not last: apparently, in their conversations about Demidov's writing Shalamov took a mentor's tone which alienated Demidov, always an independent thinker and rebel (like, for that matter, Shalamov himself). Shalamov's 1967 near-hagiographic story "The Life of Engineer Kipreev" ("Житие инженера Кипреева") is based on Demidov's camp biography, but has been interpreted as expressive of Shalamov's doubt about Demidov's ability "to write not only about Kolyma but also his own story" (Lundblad-Janjić 2016: 51).¹⁶ Demidov appears under his own name, and with reference to the major facts of his camp biography, in Shalamov's 1965 story "Ivan Fyodorovich" ("Иван Федорович"). In Shalamov's corpus this story is one of the few that dwell on elitocide. Its protagonist is a fictionalized extension of the historical Ivan Fedorovich Nikishov (Никишов), the brutal, autocratic, and corrupt official who headed the Kolyma enterprises in 1839–1948. If the imprisoned intellectuals, be they the famous theater director like Leonid Varpakhovskii (Леонид Варпаховский) or the brilliant inventor Demidov, refuse to kowtow to him, he dismisses them from their professional jobs and condemns them to murderous hard labor.

When his original sentence was extended for another eight years in 1946, Demidov decided that he had to liberate his wife and daughter from "his existence" in their lives (Demidova 2008: 6; translation mine, here and hereafter)¹⁷: a telegram was sent to his wife with the false news of his death. She did not believe it. After 1956 the contact between them was renewed, in the shape of letters and visits. Unable to catch up with the fast-moving progress of science and barred from residence in the central big cities, Demidov remained in the North, working as an engineer in Ukhta (Ухтá), and writing at nights and on Sundays. Literary testimony about the Gulag became the purpose of his life.

¹⁶ See also Lundblad-Janjić (2016: 53–63) for a detailed discussion of the personal/professional relationship between the two writers and its refractions in "The Life of Engineer Kipreev." On the significance of anachronisms in the story see the annotations of Valerii Esipov (Валерий Ёсипов, 2013).

¹⁷ "избавить [тебя и маму] от своего существования" (2008: 6).

His works circulated among friends and friends of friends, apparently a circle too narrow to be called the Samizdat (самиздат); he refused to have the typescripts smuggled abroad. His literary work soon got the attention of the authorities: he was offered admission to the Writers' Union on condition that he change his subject—why not write about workers in modern factories, material that he also knew well? Demidov refused, and again found himself under a cloud. Upon retirement he settled in Kaluga (Калуга). A disabling blow was dealt to him in 1980, when the KGB confiscated all his manuscripts, and all their copies held by friends.¹⁸ After that, up to his death in 1987, Demidov was depressed and no longer able to write; his autobiographical novel *From Dawn to Twilight* (*От рассвета до сумерек*), in which he was going to give a systematic representation of his camp ordeal, remained unfinished, ending with the mid-1930s (so far only its first part, ending on the year 1920, has been published). Ironically, he died shortly after the Chernobyl (Чернобыль) disaster: *glasnost'* and *perestroika* (Гласность / перестройка) were beginning, and Gulag literature (лагерная литература) was about to start coming out again in Russia. In 1988, his daughter Valentina Demidova (Валентина Демидова), with whom he had developed a warm friendship, managed to obtain his manuscripts from the KGB archives (with the help of A. N. Yakovlev [А. Н. Яковлев], secretary of the Politburo) and started the long labor of their publication.

Demidov's great intellectual potential became evident early in his life. He was not exactly one of the *vydvizhentsy*: it was the great Soviet physicist Lev Landau ([Лев Ландау], also eventually arrested in 1938 but released after Petr Kapitsa [Пётр Капица] intervened on his behalf) who recognized the talent of a third-year student of Kharkov University (Харковский университет) and transferred him to his own laboratory. When Demidov's former fellow-students were working on their graduation papers, he was already completing his PhD thesis. Yet in later life he had to watch how far behind he was left by the careers of those not plucked out. His daughter records his saying that, on realizing that his arrest was not a matter of some temporary mistake, he wept not for his family or his child but for losing his place in physics (Demidova 2011: 67). The quashing of talents by the regime became the most insistently recurring theme of his tales. Referring to a purge in the shipbuilding institute in the story "Without a Tag" ("Без бирки"), the narrator mentions that arrests for "wrecking" swept away both veteran and new shipbuilding-scientists as well as some students "from among the most gifted" – "из числа наиболее способных" (2008: 144). The protagonist of "The Intellectual (The Cauchy Criterion)"

¹⁸ My sources for this biographical information are his daughter's reminiscences (Demidova 2008 and 2011).

wonders “[w]hat was the use of having been born exceptionally gifted . . . if one perished in such an absurd anomalous way among the gloomy hills somewhere at the very edge of the world” (2008: 107).¹⁹ Demidov’s most famous short story, “The Stiff” (“Дýбарь”), which appeared in the popular weekly *Ogoniok* (*Огонёк*) in 1990, is actually one of the few of his works that do not explicitly deal with elitocide, except symbolically: the eponymous “stiff” of the story is a beautiful baby who has died four hours after being born in the Gulag.

4. THE GULAG FATE OF SCIENTISTS IN GEORGY DEMIDOV’S STORIES

The most concentrated of the numerous representations of elitocide in Demidov’s corpus are the stories “The Intellectual (the Cauchy Criterion)” and “Without a Tag.” In the former, the protagonist, nicknamed “the Scientist” (“Учёный”) in the camps, is to some extent Demidov’s self-portrait. He is a former scientist who has survived two years in a horrible camp, where prisoners worked in a mine at the top of a steep hill which they had to climb every morning in preparation for the full work-day. This talented person used to escape the misery of his predicament with the help of scientific or philosophical thought. It helped that he had inherited the strong constitution of his peasant ancestry; in his student days, moreover, not having been of a pure proletarian origin, he did not get a government scholarship and earned a living loading and unloading railway freight cars in the evenings.²⁰ On the day staged in the story, while climbing the hill in the morning, he again attempts to distract his attention from physical suffering and occupy his mind with, for instance, mathematical calculations. These calculations give a precise explanation of the “vicious spiral” (Ekart 1954: 60) down which, metaphorically speaking, he is sliding while literally climbing the hill: the climb consumes half the daily calories which the most productive workers receive in their food ration; the remaining half cannot cover the work-day at the mine; with the workers’ weakening and the decrease in their production results, the food ration is reduced, and the workers start moving down to complete exhaustion.²¹ Many of them die of heart attacks during the climb. Whoever collapses on the way gets viciously kicked by the guards on a fake suspicion of malingering but mainly out of the guards’ resentment of this nuisance and their total unconcern for human life. The Scientist begins to fear that on this day he will not be able to conquer the last and steepest lap of the

¹⁹ “Стоило родиться на свет на редкость одаренным человеком..., чтобы таким нелепым, противоестественным образом погибнуть среди угрюмых гор, где-то на самом краю света” (2008: 107).

²⁰ This is also an autobiographical touch: Demidov himself lacked “pure” proletarian origins: his mother was a peasant and his father a country mechanic.

²¹ On Shalamov’s and Kafka’s treatment of prolonged starvation, see Toker (2010: 191–201).

ascent, to surmount the Cauchy maximum of the climb. He thinks also of the socio-political views of the French mathematician August-Luis Cauchy (whose criterion for the maximum of the function he has adopted for conceptualizing his effort): Cauchy believed that attempts of “violent transformation of society, no matter how benevolent their intentions, are inevitably pernicious” (Demidov 2008: 111).²² This thought leads him to the one about the age-old hostility of the authorities, who claim a monopoly on thinking, to “professionals of intellectual labor,” and “hence the permanent struggle of dictatorships with their own intelligentsia,” a struggle that “started in ancient Egypt, ran through the history of the imperial Rome like a red thread, let alone through that of the semi-theocratic medieval European states with their inquisition” (111–112), but was first rationalized by the Chinese Emperor Qin Shi Huang (3rd century BC), who, “starting the epoch of absolute autocracy, ordered to put all philosophers in his empire to death. In, moreover, such ways as drowning them in outhouses.”²³ The Scientist muses that the methods of the despot’s elitocidal campaign against free-thinking scholars have become obsolete (some were revived by the Nazis) but not his political principles: “Otherwise a mathematics professor would not be climbing this mountain instead of working on the theory of divergent series” (112).²⁴

During the last lap of the climb, the neighboring hill, called “The Bacchante” (“Вакханка,” 113), suddenly lives up to its name—it sways drunkenly: the Scientist has fallen down to the ground. The last thoughts of this Orpheus (the Scientist had played a cello in the orchestra in his youth) are a comparison of the spring season in his native parts with the gloomy spring in Kolyma. After an effort he recollects one of the signs of spring in the camps: the guards have started wearing hard summer boots instead of the felt boots of winter. Which means that now the Scientist is well aware of his death’s approach: the pain from a blow of the guard’s hard-booted foot penetrates his waning consciousness. The last line of the story, partly reminiscent of the grim punchlines in the stories of Shalamov, is

²² “попытки насильственного преобразования общества, с какими благими намерениями они не производились, неизменно пагубны” (2008: 111).

²³ “профессионалам мыслительной работы” . . . “извечная война единоличных диктатур и деспотий с собственной интеллигенцией” . . . “началась еще в древнем Египте, красной нитью прошла через историю императорского Рима, не говоря уже о средневековых политеократических европейских государствах с их инквизицией. [Но первым, кто поставил эту войну на продуманную, рационалистическую основу, был, наверное, китайский император Цинь Ши-Хуанди.] Для начала эпохи абсолютного единоличного управления он повелел в своей империи умертвить всех философов. И, притом, такими способами, как утопление в нужниках, например” (2008: 111–112). This information has been called into question by some recent historians of China.

²⁴ “Иначе профессор математики не карабкался бы на эту сопку вместо того, чтобы заниматься теорией расходящихся рядов” (2008: 112).

“The second blow the Scientist already did not feel” – “Второй удар Ученый уже не почувствовал” (114).

In the collection *Wonder Planet* (*Чудная планета*) this story, dated 1973, is followed by the 1966 story “Without a Tag,” forming a mini-cycle.²⁵ The protagonist of that story, Mikhail Kushnarev (Михаил Кушнарев), is, unlike the Scientist of “The Intellectual,” a descendant of the hereditary Russian intelligentsia. A talented shipbuilding engineer, he is represented as a version of the archetype of an eccentric. Having read Schopenhauer and Spengler preserved in his deceased father’s library (his stepfather is, on the contrary, a professor of dialectical materialism), he developed a depressively pessimistic viewpoint from which he was only distracted by his work in hydromechanics but which amply sufficed for him to be targeted during the Great Terror. The viewpoint came back in full force in the camps, especially since his first job in Kolyma was in the grave-diggers’ team. For all his philosophical skepticism, Kushnarev came to see the mode of burying Kolyma prisoners as sacrilege. The corpses would be placed in common graves with the plywood tags bearing their file numbers attached to their left feet. Kushnarev becomes obsessed with aversion to being buried this way. Therefore he escapes from the camps twice, hoping to die in the taiga so that his body would not be found. However, whereas “the Scientist” uses his mental and spiritual powers to extend his body’s survival, Kushnarev finds that his body’s instinct for self-preservation keeps overpowering his wish to die and merge with the universe, avoiding the false individuation represented by the plywood tag (with its durable graphite inscription, as we learn from the stories of Shalamov). The bulk of the story is devoted, with some suspense, to his finding a way to the desired return to nature. A great deal of ingenuity is expended on that pursuit, making it clear that in a society that did not practice elitocide such ingenuity would be much more fruitfully employed, as would that of the diesel-engine designer who is fortunate to work as a diesel operator in the camps (“Batsilla the Artist and His Masterpiece” [“Художник Бацилла и его шедевр”]), a genetics researcher who works as a porter (“The Decembrist” [“Декабристка”]), or the bridge-constructor who loses his fingers to frost in mining camps (“On the Crossroads of Captivity” [“На перекрестках невольничьих путей”]).

Kushnarev is not the only victim of elitocide in the story. Before he makes his entrance, the story tells us about the erection of special-regime camps in Kolyma in 1948, for, as it were, particularly dangerous enemies of the Soviet state. The curiosity of the prisoners about this extraordinary contingent of alleged enemies is replaced by surprise: the transport of

²⁵ I have not succeeded in finding out whether this felicitous decision about the sequence of the stories was made by the author himself or by his daughter.

prisoners to the new grim barracks largely consists of the intelligentsia and the valued professionals, whose services in the more centrally located Kolyma enterprises and camps are now being dispensed with. The elderly agronomist who has managed to grow vegetables in the tundra, the surgeon whose scalpel had saved many lives, the doctor who could see what was inside the patient without any X-rays; the automobile mechanic who was called a “doctor” too—a doctor for cars (2008: 127–29). In Demidov’s story there is no *Schadenfreude* among the regular prisoners who now find themselves in better conditions than these victims of in-camp repressions. What has operated against these professionals is a combination of the “[p]athological cruelty and suspiciousness in the higher echelons” and “toadying, thoughtlessness, and careerism” in the lower rungs of the apparatus (131)²⁶; during the renewed wave of terror three years after the war, the local commanders’ upward responsibility, to be reflected in their accounts of the “measures” taken in their own autocratic domains, had been translated into digging up the files of surviving prisoners with “enemy-of-the-people” charges and condemning them to special-regime hard-labor camps without any regard to their positive influence on the Kolyma economy and society. Here it is not the diffuse resentment but a direct causality that has been at work—“the forms of the oppressive ugliness of autocratic dictatorship were concentrated [in the Gulag] as in the focus of a magnifying glass” (130).²⁷ By contrast, in the stories “The Boss” (“Начальник”) and, in particular, “People Perish for Metal” (“Люди гибнут за металл”) Demidov does show how the accelerated demise of the talented people and members of intelligentsia in the camps is further speeded up by the resentment of the semi-literate camps bosses who feel abjectly left behind by their better educated colleagues but, unable to direct their anger at the latter, vent it on prisoners who have been through Universities.

Talented scientists victimized by the regime are also the protagonists of Demidov’s stories “Fone-Kvas” (“Фонэ квас”) and “The Orange Lampshade” (“Оранжевый абажур”) in the collection *The Orange Lampshade* (*Оранжевый абажур*, 2009) dealing with the arrests and interrogations of 1937, the peak year of the Great Terror. Demidov implicitly enters a dialogue with Solzhenitsyn’s (Солжени́цын) representation of the similar theme in the novel *The First Circle* (*В крúге нёрвом*, 1968/1990). There the scientists are made to work in an in-camp research institute, a so-called “sharashka” (“шарашка”) based on the Marfino research-institute (Мáрфино) where Solzhenitsyn himself was employed for

²⁶ “Патологическая жестокость и подозрительность на самом верху, [сочетаясь с] угодливостью, недоумием и карьеризмом [снизу]” (2008: 131).

²⁷ “Довлеющие над страной уродства единоличной диктатуры сконцентрировались здесь как в фокусе увеличительного стекла” (2008: 130).

some time after his arrest. The protagonist of that novel, however, practically *chooses* to descend to the further circles of the camp hell, and so experience what the hard-labor camps are really about.

5. OTHER VICTIMS OF ELITOCIDE

Demidov's theme of the waste of talents in the Gulag is not limited to the representations of scientists. The story "The Duet" ("Дуэт") tells of gifted and well trained opera soloists in a transit prison, heading for the camps in which there will be no place for their singing. If the protagonist of that story is, like Kushnarev, obviously a hereditary member of the intelligentsia, the opera-singer Lokshin (Локшин) in the story "People Perish for Metal" (allusion to the Russian version of Mephistopheles' song about the Golden Calf in Gounod's *Faust*), a well-trained lyrical tenor, is of peasant origin, which does not prevent a sadistic camp commander to drive him to his death, represented as considerably more heroic than his life had been. In "Literary Classics and Camp Amateur Art Activities" ("Классики литературы и лагерная самодеятельность") the frustrated creative energies of a literary scholar find expression in malicious practical jokes,²⁸ while distinguished professional actors, directors, and performers among prisoners are first forbidden to touch the musical instruments for which they long and then are allowed to stage, ironically, "amateur" performances (*самодеятельность*), eventually quashed by a humorless and malevolently resentful commander. The story "Batsilla the Artist and His Masterpiece" focuses on a talented and largely self-taught graphic artist who might have become a great painter under normal circumstances.²⁹ The third story of *The Orange Lampshade*, "The Two Procurators" ("Два прокурора"), deals with a young and idealistic Soviet lawyer whose conscience does not allow him to play by the new rules.

In the story "The Little Ring" ("Перстенок") in Demidov's third collection, *Love Behind the Barbed Wire* (*Любовь за колючей проволокой*, 2010), criminal convicts are likewise represented as a waste of human potential. In her preface to that volume, Marietta Chudakova (Мариэтта Чудакова), who had served on the Presidential pardons commission in the 1990s, notes that a large proportion of the cases that she reviewed were those of recidivists who were first set on the criminal track and arrested as teenagers in the Stalin years (2010: 7). Many of these youngsters were children of the repressed, who were never helped to build up their lives in normative society. Whereas in

²⁸ Near-sadistic practical jokes are also an issue in Demidov's *From Dawn to Sunset*, where they are likewise indulged in by young people who find no better outlets for creative energies.

²⁹ The story includes details that can be read as autodescriptive comments on Demidov's own art as a self-taught writer (see Toker 2019).

the early years of the Soviet regime professional petty crime was considered a relic of the bourgeois past, Demidov's criminal characters are products of socialist conditions. His view of them is less uncompromisingly negative than that of Shalamov. Scenically rendered episodes in some of Demidov's stories, including "Amok" ("Амок" in *Wonder Planet*) and "The Little Ring," come a little too close to an admiring romantization of the criminals' defiant ways (Shalamov regarded such a romantization as a belletristic error).³⁰ In this respect Demidov's scenes tend to swerve away from the condemnation of the practices of professional criminals in his ample authorial comments.

6. TESTIMONY AND "LITERARINESS"

Judging by Valentina Demidova's memoirs, one of the main points of Demidov's disagreement with Shalamov concerned the life of emotion: as he said to his daughter after an intense quarrel with Shalamov, "You have to understand: we lived there. . . . Not many survived after general works, and all the same—people lived there. These people loved, had friendships... And I must write about that" (Demidova 2011: 63–64).³¹ Partly, the difference lay in their temperament and physical strength: in his youth Demidov could boast robust health (despite deprivation in the years of World War I), though even he was repeatedly driven to near-death in the camps, whereas the tall and handsome Shalamov was "asthenic" since his early teens, when his father, the orthodox priest, was denied ways of making a living.³² In the camps tall people were more vulnerable to hunger than those of smaller stature, since food rations did not take body size into account. A recurrent motif of Shalamov's stories is the levelling down or even erasure of most emotions with the depletion of the body; Demidov supplements this testimony by representing a kind of

³⁰ See Toker (2017b).

³¹ "Ну ты пойми, мы там жили. [Это страшная, невозможная каторга.] Там немногие выживали после общих работ, и все равно—там жили люди. Эти люди любили, дружили... И не писать об этом я не могу" (2008: 63–64).

³² In his autobiographical tale of childhood, "The Fourth Vologda" ("Четвертая Вологда"), Shalamov writes: "The family was suddenly reduced to indigence. Most ordinary hunger. . . . Mother wept later too, saying that from such a sturdy child I turned into an asthenic, but mother's natural beliefs were Lamarckian, and she is wrong. It is my genes that are asthenic. And mother wept, kissed my hands, asked me to forgive her that she raised me not physically strong. But the real tests of my asthenic body were still ahead—in the gold mines of Kolyma": "Семья осталась нищей внезапно. Самый обыкновенный голод. . . . Мама и позже плакала, что из меня, из такого крепыша в детстве, вышел астеник, но мама, стихийная ламаркистка, – ошибается. Это у меня гены только астенические. А мама ведь плакала, целовала мне руки – просила прощения, что вырастила меня таким физически некрепким. Но моему астеническому телосложению главные испытания были еще впереди – в золотых колымских забоях» (1998, IV: 129).

suspended animation, when the suffering body and mind enter a trance-like state, as a defense mechanism: long years of forced labor have taught the prisoners

to fall into a half-insensate state, somewhat similar to the anabiosis of lower organisms. . . . With most people this blunting reached the stage when we no longer felt not only spiritual but also physical suffering, at least not keenly. Tormenting emotions and countless pain signals that the suffering body sends to the brain were ultimately just turned off. (2008: 179)³³

Shalamov likewise testifies that consciousness of sundry pains awakens only after the main suffering is removed, yet what for Demidov is explicable by analogy with anabiosis is for Shalamov, in particular in the story "Sententia" ("Сентенция"), a state verging on a mystical unity with the seemingly inanimate world. A further difference in the two writers' interpretation of psychological processes on the way to total exhaustion is that in Shalamov the erasure of most emotions is a symptom of the hunger disease,³⁴ whereas in Demidov it too is a matter of self-protection.

Mainly, however, though both the writers sought ways of testifying to camp experience through their narratives, there is a striking difference in their thematic agenda. Shalamov's protagonists, most of them intellectuals persecuted by the regime, undergo the kind of suffering that is part of a general human predicament; the pain of the wasted individual talent is, in their cases, blotted out, like most of their individual feelings. The state in which Shalamov's protagonists find themselves is that of depletion of physical, mental, and emotional energies, when their former intellectual flowering seems too remote and irrelevant or even to be regretted. When a character of the 1954 story "At Night" ("Ночью") makes a medical remark and is asked "Are you a doctor, then?" – "Ты врач, что ли?" – he remains silent:

It seemed a very long time ago that he had been a doctor. And had he ever been one? Far too often, the world beyond these mountains and seas seemed to him like a dream or a fiction. What was real was the minute, the hour, the day from reveille to the order to stop work. He never let his mind wander any further and he could not have found the strength to do so. Like everyone else. (Shalamov 2018: 12)³⁵

³³ "впадать в полубесчувственное состояние, нечто подобное анабиозу низших животных. . . . У большинства из нас это притупление достигало такой степени, что не только душевных, но даже особенно острых физических страданий мы уже не испытывали. Мучительные эмоции и бесчисленные болевые сигналы, посылаемые в мозг страдающим телом, в конце концов были просто выключены" (2008: 179).

³⁴ See Winick (1979).

³⁵ "Время, когда он был врачом, казалось очень далеким. Да и было ли такое время? Слишком часто тот мир за горами, за морями казался ему каким-то сном, выдумкой. Реальной была минута, час, день от подъема до отбоя – дальше он не загадывал и не находил в себе сил загадывать. Как и все" (1998: 14).

The brain is usually the last body organ to be preserved when the proteins of the muscles have been attacked by prolonged starvation. The first-person protagonist narrator of Shalamov's "Sententia"—translated by John Glad as "Sententious" (in Shalamov 1994) and by Donald Rayfield as "Maxim" (in Shalamov 2018), has already shed long-term memory, which is of no help with functioning in the goner's state. When that state is somewhat improved, long-forgotten words return to the protagonist's consciousness, giving him extraordinary joy. Yet in the absence of words, memories, thinking, what the consciousness of the protagonist registers is the remainder of his life-force and its kinship with the would-be inanimate world around him: "Not even a stone seemed dead to me, let alone the grass, the trees, the river" (1998 I: 362).³⁶ By withholding the protagonist-narrator's name, Shalamov suggests that this experience is of a general, serial kind, not restricted to refined intellectuals: it is the literary representation of that experience, by a Lazarus returned from the dead, that endows it with the intellectual nuance.

The theme of the regime's waste of the talents of extraordinary people is stronger in Shalamov's "Vishera: An Anti-Novel" ("Вишера. Антироман") than in his *Kolyma Stories* (*Колымские рассказы*). "Vishera" contains a string of portraits of outstanding talented personalities whom Shalamov had met during his first imprisonment, in the camps around Vishera in Northern Urals, in 1929–1931. In contrast to Demidov's treatment of his heroes, however, the insistently recurrent though oblique motif of these tales is not so much the criminal waste of these people's talents but the reduction of their own spiritual stature under the pressure of camp realities.

In his disputes with Demidov, Shalamov objected to any kind of "literaturnost'" ("литературность") or belletristic quality, in camp testimony. One of the aspect of his "literariness" is, indeed, Demidov's choice of extraordinary incidents or personalities in the camps, in lieu of focusing on routine experience, as in Solzhenitsyn's *One Day of Ivan Denisovich* (*Один день Ивана Денисовича*, 1962), or on serial fates, as in Shalamov's stories. In other words, Demidov foregrounds "the typifying" rather than the typical (Toker 2017a: 134–136), that is, not the common experience of life and death in the camps (which is, indeed, massively present in the background of his plots) but striking events that typify the camps in the sense that only in the camps could they take such shapes—a technique also present in the work of many other Gulag writers (such as Gustav Herling-Grudziński or Isaak Filshhtinskii [Исаак Фильштинский]). After the waning of the supernatural in fictional narratives, the extraordinary, in the shape of most handsome or

³⁶ "Даже камень не казался мне мертвым, не говоря уже о траве, деревьях, реке" (1998 I: 362). See discussion in Toker (2019).

gifted heroes and heroines, the coincidences, the unexpected encounters, the tantalizing enigmas, turned into the most narratable vehicle of storyworlds—until modernist narrative experiments in which the main action unfolded in individual inner life. Shalamov regarded himself as an heir of the Russian modernist literature of the Silver Age; Demidov's literary training seems to have largely elided that corpus.

Toward the end of the story "Batsilla the Artist and His Masterpiece" Demidov's first-person narrator walks to his own barracks through the Kolyma terrain, still under the impression of a painting by the camp artist that he had just seen in the living quarters of the free workers. Suddenly his mind's eye begins to see "a multitude of crosses with crucified victims on the neighboring slopes" (280–281),³⁷ as in the background of that painting, the foreground being taken by the crucifixion of the artist himself, the extraordinary as one of the many. Under the slopes, moreover, the narrator's spontaneous imagination conjurs up "innumerable camps cemeteries" – "бесчисленные лагерные кладбища." Under the influence of the artist's "grim allegory" ("мрачной аллегории"), combined with those of the gloomy landscape and the narrator's fatigue, "the real and the imaginary" become almost "indivisible" in his perception: "I saw, almost physically, the endless forest of crucifixes, blending in the somber distance" (281).³⁸ The episode can be read as autometadescriptive. Painstakingly constructing the camp setting and staging a polyphony of testifying camp voices, his own voice now blending with them now separating out, Demidov at times seems to yield to dreams of larger-than-life heroes and martyrs, as if to mythologize the composite figures of the wasted human potential.

The typifying extraordinary in Demidov's stories may strike one as a regression from Shalamov's economic modernist prose into earlier narrative modes. It may also be read as recording the author's Apollonian dream amidst the intoxication of camp and post-camp weariness. Mainly, however, I see it as thematically conditioned: the extraordinary is not just a plot mechanism but the main exponent of the theme of war against the most gifted, waged from above by the regime that distrusts the power and freedom of their minds and from below by the resentful stunted guards and petty camp tyrants staving off their own sense of abjection. It is, however, the critical mass of the elitocidal events of the recent decades that allows one to recognize Demidov's stories as direct or oblique accounts of serial elitocide.

³⁷ "на окрестных склонах множество крестов с распятыми на них людьми" (280–281).

³⁸ "реальное и воображаемое оказались почти неразделимыми. . . . Я почти физически видел бесконечный лес распятий, теряющихся в мрачной дали" (281).

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Annotated Bibliography

Bibliografía anotada¹

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N.B.: In “A Good Day” (“Una buona giornata”) included in *If This Is a Man – Se questo è un uomo* (1947/1958) – Levi refers to Auschwitz as “the Tower of Babel; and that is what we call it, *Babelturm, Bobelturm*” (Levi 2016a, I: 69) – “la Torre di Babele, è così noi la chiamiamo: *Babelturm, Bobelturm*” (Levi 2016b, I: 193). This extermination camp was a multilingual inferno which fostered human beings’ incommunication and dehumanization. For her part, the Gulag writing scholar Leona Toker, one of the contributors in this special issue, also points to Levi’s “theme of the Babel tower,” and refers to the Gulag camps’ “heteroglossia” which “became a part of the counterculture” (2000: 98). And for his part, Philippe Mesnard, one of Primo Levi’s biographers, points out that “[Levi] believes in the humanity of languages, in the humanizing virtue of the spoken exchange and the sense it stems from” (translation mine; not translated into English) – “[Levi] croit en l’humanité des langues, en la vertu humanisante de l’échange parlé et du sens qui en provient” (Mesnard 2011: 461). Behind this claim is our idea of listening to the witness-survivors’ voice in the original version supported by the corresponding translation into English so that it can be more widely read.

1. PRIMARY SOURCES

a. Works by Holocaust/Gulag Witnesses

Améry, J. *At the Mind’s Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities*. Trans. Sidney Rosenfeld & Stella P. Rosenfeld. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1980 (*Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne. Bewältigungsversuche eines Überwältigten*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1977 [1966]). The author’s main line of reasoning is that torture was not only one of the

¹ I am indebted to Leona Toker, Aimee Pozorski and Cheryl Chaffin, who have greatly contributed to improving the quality of this section. Any mistakes or errors, however, are my sole responsibility.

countless cruelties used by the Nazis to destroy inmates' mental sanity. His argument is that it was actually at the core of Nazism.

Bruck, E. *Signora Auschwitz: Le don de la parole (Entre histoire et mémoire)*. Trans. Patricia Amardeil, Paris: Éditions Kimé, 2015 (*Signora Auschwitz. Il dono della parola*. Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 2014 [1999]). This memoir, whose title makes reference to how a student addressed the author to ask her one Holocaust-related question, deals with a witness-survivor's approach of memory as fate.

Delbo, C. *Auschwitz and After*. Trans. Rosette C. Lamont. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1995. This one-volume book gathers the three volumes originally published in French. (See the annotation for each volume below.)

Delbo, C. *Auschwitz et après. Aucun de nous ne reviendra*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1970a, Vol. 1. In this first book of her Auschwitz-based trilogy, where prose and poetry are combined throughout the narrative, the memoirist evokes her extreme suffering through a number of scenes starting when she arrived at Auschwitz.

Delbo, C. *Auschwitz et après. Une connaissance inutile*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1970b, Vol. 2. In the second book of the trilogy, the author continues to recreate her inferno-like experience through a number of images which, as in the case of *Aucun de nous*, are narrated in prose and in poetry.

Delbo, C. *Auschwitz et après. Mesure de nos jours*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1971, Vol. 3. Once liberated from her imprisonment, the memoirist reflects on how to carry on living a traumatic post-Auschwitz existence.

Demidov, G. *Liubov' za koliuchei provolokoi: Povesti i rasskazy (Любовь за колючей проволокой: Повести и рассказы)*. Moscow: Vozvrashchenie, 2010. This volume includes the Gulag stories that the author, a young talented engineer, wrote after his 14-year imprisonment in the Kolyma region (Siberia).

Demidov, G. *Oranzhevyi abazhur: Tri povesti o tridsat' sed'mom (Оранжевый абазур: Три повести о тридцать седьмом)*. Moscow: Vozvrashchenie, 2009. In the collection—translated as *The Orange Lampshade*—the stories focus on the arrests and interrogations of 1937, the peak year of the Great Terror.

Demidov, G. *Chudnaia planeta: Rasskazy (Чудная планета: Рассказы)*. Moscow: Vozvrashchenie, 2008. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth, his daughter collected some of the most memorable of his stories and published them in this volume translated as "Wonder Planet" or "Miraculous Planet."

Kertész, I. *Kaddish for a Child Not Born*. Trans. Christopher C. Wilson and Katharina M. Wilson. Northwestern University Press, 1997 (*Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért*. Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1990). In this novella the witness-survivor addresses his traumatic experience of the Holocaust through a confession that accounts for the reasons why he cannot bring a child into this world.

Levi, P. *The Complete Works of Primo Levi*. Ann Goldstein (ed.), New York: Norton, 2016a, 3 vols. (*Opere complete*. Marco Belpoliti (ed.), Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 2016b, 2 vols.). These three-volume/two-volume works by the well-known Auschwitz survivor includes fiction and non-fiction. On the other hand, it should be noted that the new edition in Italian

came out exactly two decades after the first—and previous—one which, as in the case of *Complete Works*, gathers the memorist's complete fiction and non-fiction.

Levi, P. *If Not Now, When?* Trans. William Weaver, New York: Penguin Books, 1995. This novel is the story of a group of Jewish partisans and resistance fighters whose goal is to sabotage the Nazi war machinery. The narrative starts in Belorussia (Soviet Union) and ends in Milan (Italy). (This edition is used in Cheryl Chaffin's "Auschwitz as University.")

Levi, P. *Other People's Trades*. Trans. Raymond Rosenthal, London: Abacus, 1991. This volume includes fifty-two essays written between 1969 and 1985 by the Italian Holocaust survivor. Among them, the reader will find reviews, autobiographical sketches and scientific curiosities. (This edition is used in Cheryl Chaffin's "Auschwitz as University.")

Levi, P. *Survival in Auschwitz. (If This Is a Man)*. Trans. Stuart Woolf, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996 [1958]. This is the author's first book about his concentrationary experience in Auschwitz. (This edition is used in Cheryl Chaffin's "Auschwitz as University.")

Levi, P. & de Benedetti, L. *Auschwitz Report*. Trans. Judith Woolf. New York & London: Verso Books, 2006 (*Rapporto sulla organizzazione igienico-sanitaria del Campo di concentramento per Ebrei di Monowitz (Auschwitz-Alta Sileisa)*. *Opere complete*. Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 2016b, I, 1177-1194). This report, redacted in 1945 and published in "Minerva medica" the following year, was written by Primo Levi and Leonardo de Benedetti for the Russian authorities. The original title—*Report on the Sanitary and Medical Organization of the Monowitz Concentration Camp for Jews (Auschwitz-Upper Silesia)*—is self-explanatory. (This work is *not* included in *The Complete Works of Primo Levi*.)

Rousset, D. *The Other Kingdom*. Trans. Ramon Guthrie. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947 (*L'univers concentrationnaire*. Paris: Éd. Pluriel, 2011 [1965]). Written by a former Buchenwald prisoner, this is a seminal autobiographical work that addressed the horror of the Nazi extermination camps.

Semprún, J. *Literature or Life*. Trans. Linda Coverdale. New York: Penguin Books, 1997 (*L'écriture ou la vie*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994). This novel ponders the Buchenwald survivor's difficulty of addressing the traumatic concentrationary experience through writing. In order to do it properly, he thinks that first one should forget the horror so that he can remember it gradually. If not, he could have committed suicide as in the case of Primo Levi and Jean Améry, among others.

Semprún, J. *The Long Voyage*. Trans. Richard Seaver. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964 (*Le grand voyage*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1963). This novel gives an account of a five-day journey in a freight car that took more than one hundred people to the Buchenwald Nazi camp. Among them, is the first-person narrator Manuel, a 21-year-old Spanish member of the French resistance and the author's alter ego.

Semprún, J., Wiesel, E. *Schweigen ist unmöglich*. Trans. Wolfram Bayer. Suhrkamp Verlag AG, 1997 (*Se taire est impossible*. Paris: Éditions Mille et une nuits, 1995). On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Buchenwald, the former Holocaust prisoners Jorge Semprún and Elie Wiesel talk about their concentrationary horror.

Shalamov, V. *Kolyma Stories*. Trans. Donald Rayfield. New York: New York Review of Books, 2018. This is a new translation (with some controversial lexical choices) that

includes all the stories of Shalamov's first three story cycles. In his book review about the author's stories, William Boyd, the reviewer, claims, for instance, that Shalamov is the equal of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

Shalamov, V. *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh (Собрание сочинений в четырех томах)*. I. P. Sirotinskaia (ed.), Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura/Vagrius, 1998. These are the *Collected Works* in four volumes by the Russian writer, journalist and Kolyma survivor.

Shalamov, V. *Kolyma Tales*. Trans. John Glad. London: Penguin, 1994. Selected short stories that describe life in the hard Soviet labor camps in north eastern Siberia.

Solzhenitsyn, A. *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-56: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*. Edward E. Ericson, Jr (ed.), London: The Harvill Press, 2007 (*Archipelago Gulag*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975, 3 Vols.; *Архипелаг ГУЛАГ: Опыт художественного исследования*. Paris: YMCA Press, 1987, 4 Vols.). In this masterpiece of Gulag writing, the witness-survivor explains in detail the eleven years he spent in Soviet labor camps and in exile against the background of the history of the Gulag and the experience of other prisoners. The autobiographical part of his narrative ranges from his initial arrest to the death of Stalin in 1953 and its aftermath.

Solzhenitsyn, A. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Trans. Ralph Parker. New York: Penguin Books, 2000 [1962] (*Один день Ивана Денисовича*. Moskva: Sovetskii Pisatel, 1997). This is the author's first published (fiction) work. It tells the story of how a prisoner survives his imprisonment in a Soviet labor camp in Karaganda, in northern Kazakhstan.

Sruoga, B. *Forest of the Gods*. Trans. Aušrinė Byla. Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2005 [1957] (*Dievų miškas*. Kaunas: Šviesa, 1989 [1957]). One of the earliest memoirists about the Nazi concentration camps, this Lithuanian writer gives a detailed account of his imprisonment in the Stutthof camp (Poland).

Wiechert, E. *Forest of the Dead*. Trans. Ursula Stechow. Greenberg, 1947 (*Der Totenwald. Ein Bericht*. Berlin: Union Verlag, 1977 [1946]). The author of this novel, a former head of the Confessional Church and an active critic of Nazism, gives an account of his four-month imprisonment in the Buchenwald camp.

Wiesel, E. *Night*. Trans. Marion Wiesel. New York: Hill and Wang, 2006 [1958] (*La nuit*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2007 [1958]). In this memoir the French Auschwitz survivor of Romanian extract explains how he and his family were deported to Auschwitz and to Birkenau, and the subsequent ordeal he and his father went through.

Wiesenthal, S. *The Sunflower*. New York: Schocken Books, 1976 (*Die Sonnenblume*. Gerlingen: Bleicher Verlag, 1981 [1969]). Central to this book about a survivor's experience in a Nazi camp that addresses the delicate issue of forgiveness and reconciliation is the story of Simon, a young Jew who is summoned to the deathbed of a Nazi soldier who has been wounded in combat. The version in English includes essays by Jacob Kaplan, Primo Levi, Salvador de Madariaga and Cynthia Ozick, among others; the original German version also includes essays. For instance, by Jean Améry, Saul Friedländer and Albert Speer.

b. Other Primary Sources

Bellow, S. *The Bellarosa Connection*. New York: Penguin Books, 1989. This novella explores the significance of memory through the story of Harry Fonstein, an immigrant saved from the Nazis thanks to an underground operation led by the Broadway producer Billy Rose.

Bible Gateway. <https://www.biblegateway.com/> [18 January 2019]. This open access Website offers the possibility of reading the Bible in different versions and in seventy-two languages.

"Bundle." *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, 2018. <http://www.oed.com/> [24 January 2019]. Regarded as the accepted authority on the English language, this dictionary is a guide to the history, the meaning and the pronunciation of around 600,000 words.

Chabon, M. *The Final Solution*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2005 [2004]. This novella, set in the England of 1944, is a detective story in which an octogenarian bee-keeper investigates the disappearance of a parrot. The title of the book has very significant implications for the solution of the mystery.

Dostoyevsky, F. *The Devils*. Trans. David Magarshak. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953 (*Bessy [Бесы]. Sobranie sochinenii [Собрание сочинений]*. Moscow: Pravda, 1982, Vol. 8). Set in the Russia of the 1860s, this novel, written after the author's return from his exile in Siberia, deals with the nihilism that pervaded the Russian society of the time.

Foer, J. S. *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*. Mariner Books, 2005. Narrated by a 9-year-old child named Oskar Schell, this novel tells the story of Oskar Schell who, after one year his dad was killed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks, finds a key in a vase that had belonged to his father. Finding where that key belongs will help him discover many things about his dad.

Foer, J. S. *Everything Is Illuminated*. Penguin Books, 2002. The author's first novel tells the story of Jonathan Safran, an American Jew who travels to Ukraine, the country from which part of his family is. The purpose of his visit is to find out more about Trachimbrod, a shtetl destroyed during the Holocaust.

Nabokov, V. *Bend Sinister*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974. Set in the fictitious European city of Padukgrad, one of the axis of the novel is what is known as "Ekwilism," a philosophy which, imposed by a totalitarian government, fosters the idea that everyone should be and think alike.

Nabokov, V. *Invitation to a Beheading*. Trans. Dmitri Nabokov in collaboration with the author. New York: Putnam, 1959. This novel is the story of the last days in jail of a Kafka-style character named Cincinnatus C., who has been imprisoned and sentenced to death after being accused of what the authorities call "gnostical turpitude."

Nietzsche, F. *The Birth of Tragedy. Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: The Modern Library, 1966 [1872] (*Die Geburt der Tragödie*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988 [1872], Vol. 1). This book gathers some of the German philosopher's best works: *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Seventy-Five Aphorisms from*

Five Volumes, Beyond Good and Evil, On the Genealogy of Morals, The Case of Wagner, and Ecce Homo.

Ozick, C. *The Shawl*. New York: Vintage International, 1990 [1989]. This is a fictional account—in short story form—of the experience that Rosa, a Holocaust prisoner, and her baby Magda go through during their imprisonment in a Nazi camp.

Pinter, H. *Ashes to Ashes*. New York: Grove Press, 1996. In this one-act play, set in 1940s Britain, the dramatist addresses the issue of the Holocaust through the recollections of Rebeccah, one of the two characters in this play.

Reznikoff, C. *Holocaust*. Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1975. Arguably the author's best work, this is a book-length poem whose material is drawn on court records of the well-known Eichmann trial held in Jerusalem in 1961.

Rilke, R. M. "Day in Autumn." Trans. Mary Kinzie, Poetry Foundation, Retrieved from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/50937/day-in-autumn>. [21 July 2018] (*Rainer Maria Rilkes Gedichte*. Ed. Joerg K. Sommermeyer. Berlin: Orlando Syrg Taschenbuch, 2018, 101-102). The subject matter of this 12-line poem is the transition from summer to autumn.

Styron, W. *Sophie's Choice*. New York: Vintage International, 1992 [1979]. This novel revolves around the relationships between Stingo, a young writer from the South, Nathan Landau, a Jewish scientist, and Sophie, a Polish Catholic survivor of the German Nazi concentration camps and Nathan's lover. The theme of "Judeocide" is at the center of the story.

Winger, A. *This Must Be the Place*. Riverhead Books, 2008. This novel tells the relationship between Hope, an American woman who wants to leave her past behind and decides to escape from the United States to Berlin, and Walter Baum, a once successful actor, whose past is, like Hope's, full of pain and trauma.

2. SECONDARY SOURCES

a. Holocaust/Gulag-related Studies

Aarons, V. (ed.). *The New Jewish American Literary Studies*. Cambridge, UK & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019. This volume, which approaches third-generation Jewish American writing from different perspectives, addresses key questions such as race, identity, gender, sexuality and assimilation, among others.

Aarons, V. "Bellow and the Holocaust." *The Cambridge Companion to Saul Bellow*. Cambridge. Victoria Aarons (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2017, 55-67. DOI: [10.1017/9781316266175.007](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316266175.007). The major themes of Bellow's works are explored in this *Companion*: among others, the presence of specific movements such as existentialism; the city as protagonist in his narratives; the Holocaust; antisemitism; aging and death.

Aarons, V. (ed.). *Third-Generation Holocaust Narratives. Memory in Memoir and Fiction*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016. This volume includes nine essays that explore third-generation Holocaust writing and the intergenerational transmission of trauma and memory. The book closes with a third-generation narrative that leads the reader to the author's family history.

Aarons, V. "The Certainties of History and the Uncertainties of Representation in Post-Holocaust Writing." *Studies in American Jewish Literature*. 2012a, Vol. 31, No. 2, 134-148. This essay focuses on the witness-survivor's Holocaust-induced trauma and the risks they run when they decide to bear witness to their experiences.

Aarons, V. "Jewish American Fiction." *The Cambridge Companion to American Fiction After 1949*. John Duvall (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2012b, 129-141. This book chapter is an overview of first, second, and third-generation Jewish American writers, including canonical figures such as Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth, and more contemporary writers such as Allegra Goodman, among others.

Aarons, V., Patt, A. J. & Shechner, M. (eds.). *The New Diaspora. The Changing Landscape of American Jewish Fiction*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2015. This book gathers reprints selections of short fiction from writers like Nathan Englander, Jonathan Safran Foer and Rebecca Goldstein, among others. The second part of the volume gathers fiction of authors who work in America—but are not American by birth—such as Russia (Maxim Shrayder), Canada (Robert Majzels) and Israel (Avner Mandelman), to give just a few names.

Adams, J. "The Dream of the End of the World: Magic Realism and Holocaust History in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*." *Clio*. 2009, Vol. 39, No. 1, 53-77. In this essay, the author, who explores the use of magic realism in Foer's first novel, advocates that this literary genre is a necessary approach to history.

Adorno, T. "Culture Criticism and Society." *Prisms*. Trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber. MIT Press, 1967. 17-34 ("Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft." *Prismen*. Kulturkritik Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 1975, 7-26). In this classic essay about the concept of critical theory, the German sociologist focuses on the role any critic plays inside—and outside—culture.

Applebaum, A. *Iron Curtain. The Crushing of Eastern Europe*. New York: Penguin Books, 2012. This volume covers a 4-decade period of the history of Communist regimes which shows how opposition was destroyed and how people had to choose whether to fight, to collaborate or to escape.

Applebaum, A. *Gulag. A History of the Soviet Camps*. New York: Penguin Books, 2003. A seminal work about how the victims of the Gulag system, defined by its author as "Russia's forgotten holocaust," lived, suffered, were killed or survived in order to bear witness to one of history's most horrendous crimes.

Aragay, M. "Writing, Politics, and *Ashes to Ashes*: An Interview with Harold Pinter." *The Pinter Review*. (1995-96): 4-15. In this interview the well-known British playwright of the theater of the absurd talks about his 1996 play, which addresses the theme of the Holocaust.

Bauman, Z. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Oxford University Press, 1999 [1991]. The thesis of this book is that it is necessary to interpret the events of the Holocaust as rooted not only in the nature of modern society but also in the main categories of modern social thought.

Belpoliti, M. and **Gordon, R.** *The Voice of Memory: Primo Levi Interviews, 1961- 1987*. New York: New Press, 2001. This book includes thirty-six interviews with the Italian Auschwitz survivor, where he addresses, among other issues, his experience as a concentration camp inmate, his work as a writer, as a chemist, and his Jewishness.

Belpoliti, M. *Primo Levi di fronte e di profilo*. Milan: Guanda, 2016. This is an in-depth study of the Italian Holocaust survivor and writer's life and works. The author of this volume pays special attention to the writer's first book *If This Is a Man*.

Chaffin, C. *After Poland: A Memoir Because of Primo Levi*. Common Ground Research Networks, Champaign: Illinois, 2018. This book, written after the author's travel to Poland, explores the ethical implications of the Italian survivor's deportation to the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1944.

Chudakova, M. "“You Were Right, Virgin Mary!..” (“Ty prava, Bogoroditsa!..” [“Ты права, Богородица!..”]). *Liubov' za koliuchei provolokoi* (Любовь за колючей проволокой). Georgy Demidov, Moscow: Vozvrashchenie. Demidov 2010: 5–7. The Russian historian and literary critic included this essay in the Kolyma survivor's collection *Love Behind the Barbed Wire*.

Chudakova, M. "“Not to Bend One's Conscience, One's Intentions, or One's Neck...’.” (“Ne gnut' ni sovesti, ni pomyslov, ni shei” [“Не гнуть ни совести, ни помыслов, ни шеи”]). *Oranzhevyi abazhur* (Оранжевый абазур). Georgy Demidov, Moscow: Vozvrashchenie. 2009, 5–13. The Russian historian and literary critic included this essay in the Kolyma survivor's collection *The Orange Lampshade*.

Chudakova, M. "The Echo of Kolyma: For the Hundredth Anniversary of Georgy Demidov" (“Ekho Kolymy: K 100-letiyu Georgiya Demidova” [“Эхо Колымы (К 100-летию Георгия Демидова”]). *Chudnaia planeta: rasskazy* (Чудная планета: рассказы). Georgy Demidov, Moscow: Vozvrashchenie, 2008, 339–353. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Kolyma survivor's birth, the prestigious Russian historian and literary critic wrote this essay included in *Wonder Planet* (or *Miraculous Planet*).

Clendinnen, I. *Reading the Holocaust*. Cambridge University Press, 1999. This book-length study about the Holocaust approaches this issue not only from the point of view of the victims but of the perpetrators as well.

Codde, P. "Keeping History at Bay: Absent Presences in Three Recent Jewish American Novels." *Modern Fiction Studies*. 2011, Vol. 57, No. 4, 673-693. This essay argues that the literary work of third-generation Jewish American writers such as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated* and *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, and Nicole Krauss's *The History of Love* are haunted by Jacques Derrida's concept of “traces,” the spectral elements concealed and discernible within the text as “absent presences.”

Cohen, B. "The Children's Voice: Postwar Collection of Testimonies from Child Survivors of the Holocaust." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*. 2007, Vol. 21, No. 1, 73-95. This essay not

only analyzes the publication of children's testimonies occurred in the immediate postwar period but also the evolution of anthologies of children's testimonies.

Cory, M. "Comedic Distance in Holocaust Literature." *Journal of American Culture*. 1995, Vol. 18, No. 1, 35-40. This paper addresses the use of comedy in Holocaust literature as a coping strategy. The author specifically explains that one of the functions of humor in this context is to define the boundaries of our moral response to the events of the Holocaust.

Craps, S. & Buelens, G. "Traumatic Mirrorings: Holocaust and Colonial Trauma in Michael Chabon's *The Final Solution*." *Criticism*. 2011, Vol. 53, No. 4, 569-586. The authors of this essay advocate the idea that Chabon's novella challenges the conventional reading of the Holocaust as an unimaginable, incomprehensible event and argue that the Nazi horror should be returned to the realm of history.

Dawidowicz, L. S. *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945*. New York: Bantam Books, 1986 [1975]. This is a detailed analysis of the Holocaust, from the origins of German Anti-Semitism to the extermination of six million Jews in the so-called "Final Solution" ("Endlösung").

Demidova, V. "To the Future about the Cursed Past" ("Budushchemu na proklyatoye proshloe...") [Будущему на проклятое прошлое...]]. *Shalamovskii sbornik* (Шаламовский сборник) 4, 2011, 63-77. In this essay, the Kolyma survivor's daughter addresses the works of her father as a literary artist and as a witness.

Demidova, V. "Reminiscences about Father" ("Vospominania ob otse" ["Воспоминания об отце"]). *Chudnaya planeta: rasskazy* (Чудная планета). Georgy Demidov, Moscow: Vozvrashchenie, 2008, 6-12. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Kolyma survivor's birth, his daughter published a festschrift included in this special book.

Ekart, A. *Vanished without Trace: The Story of Seven Years in Soviet Russia*. Trans. Egerton Sykes & E. S. Virpsha. London: Max Parrish, 1954. This is a personal account told by a Pole who disappeared without a trace in the Soviet Union of 1940 and could finally return to Poland in 1947.

Ericson, E. E., Jr. *Solzhenitsyn and the Modern World*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1993. Published a couple of years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, this book is an attempt to show how Solzhenitsyn's views on the West, on democracy and other topics had been misunderstood and, therefore, misinterpreted for decades.

Esipov, V. "Kommentarii k 'Kolymskim rasskazam'" ("Комментарии к 'Колымским Рассказам'"). Varlam Shalamov. *Kolymskie rasskazy. Izbrannye proizvedeniya* (Колымские рассказы. Избранные произведения). St. Petersburg: Vita Nova, 2013. <https://shalamov.ru/research/249/> [22 October 2018]. This article, written in Russian and not translated into English, annotates Varlam Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales*.

Fast, V. K. *Children's Exodus: A History of the Kindertransport*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2011. This book, which draws on unpublished journal, articles and interviews, gives a detailed account of the people and politics behind Britain's evacuation of almost 10,000 Jewish children from the Nazi occupied territories.

Feuer, M. "Almost Friends: Post-Holocaust Comedy, Tragedy, and Friendship in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish*

Studies. 2007, Vol. 25, no. 2, 24-48. DOI: [10.1353/sho.2007.0020](https://doi.org/10.1353/sho.2007.0020). This essay looks at the relationship between the two main characters, Alex, a grandchild of perpetrators, and Jonathan, a grandchild of survivors, and focuses on the existing tension between them. This is underscored by the former's desire to win the latter's friendship.

Friedländer, S. *The Years of Extermination. Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945*. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, New Delhi & Auckland: Harper Perennial, 2007. This monumental history of the Holocaust offers a wide range of documents, including extracts of letters, memoirs and journals.

Gigliotti, S. *The Train Journey: Transit, Captivity, and Witnessing in the Holocaust*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2009. This volume is an in-depth study of the transportation of some 3 million Jews to their deaths between 1941 and 1944: the departures from the ghettos, their captivity in trains and their arrival at the camps.

Gigliotti, S. "'Cattle Car Complexes': A Correspondence with Historical Captivity and Post-Holocaust Witnesses." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*. 2006, Vol. 20, No. 2, 256-277. By analyzing the Jewish-American writer Thane Rosenbaum's short story "Cattle Car Complex," this essay looks at critical complexes regarding the construction of historical captivity in deportation train journeys and explores fictional and testimonial accounts of that experience.

Gilman, S. L. "Is Life Beautiful? Can the Shoah Be Funny? Some Thoughts on Recent and Older Films." *Critical Inquiry*. 2000, Vol., 26, No. 2, 279-308. By claiming that works such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* debunk the American assumption that serious themes cannot be dealt with in the graphic novel form, the author of this essay explores the role of comedy and humor in connection with the Holocaust.

Goldhagen, D. J. *Worse than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity*. New York: Public Affairs, 2009. This book is an in-depth analysis of genocides occurred across the world: among others, those in Tibet, North Korea, the former Yugoslavia, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Darfur.

Gordon, R.S.C. *The Holocaust in Italian Culture: 1944-2010*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2012. This is a seminal work about how postwar Italy failed to confront the Holocaust. The chapters devoted to Primo Levi and to the so-called "grey zone" are particularly interesting.

Gourevitch, P. "Aharon Appelfeld and the Truth of Fiction in Remembering the Holocaust." *The New Yorker* (5 January 2018). <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/postscript/aharon-appelfeld-and-the-truth-of-fiction-in-remembering-the-holocaust> [26 February 2018]. In this interview with Aharon Appelfeld—published one day after he passed away—the Holocaust survivor offers his view about a number of issues of interest, including his concentrationary experience and its connection with his fiction.

Hilberg, R. *The Destruction of the European Jews*. New York & London: Holmes & Meier, 1985 [1961]. This seminal work is an in-depth study of what the Nazis called "The Final Solution" ("Die Endlösung")—the deportation, imprisonment and eventual extermination of six million Jews. This is a revised version of the historian's 1961 classic work.

Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team. "Simon Dubnow" at <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ghettos/dubnow.html> [30 May 2018]. This entry about Simon Dubnow, one of the great Jewish historians and thinkers in modern times, partly focuses on his contribution to Autonomism, the movement that fostered Jewish national autonomy in the Diaspora.

Jones, A. *Genocide. A Comprehensive Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2006. This work, which mainly caters to graduate students and non-specialists, explains the origins of genocide and gives a detailed account of a number of genocides occurred throughout the 20th century such as the Holocaust and the Gulag.

K. Bessie & Jakob. "Interview for the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimony." Yale University Sterling Memorial Library, Room 331C, New Haven, CT. 20 May, 1983. This is an interview in which K. Bessie and Jakob provided videotaped testimony. Throughout this interview, they gave a detailed account of their story of survival and loss.

Kestenberg, M. & Kesterberg, J. S. "The Sense of Belonging and Altruism in Children Who Survived the Holocaust." *Psychoanalytic Review*. 1988, Vol. 75, No. 4, 533-560. In this experimental study, the authors found that child Holocaust survivors show diminished sense of belonging and a greater than average altruism. They conclude that a number of aspects that define the interaction between belonging and altruism are, among others, the importance of early relationships, reactions to survival and organization.

Kiernan, B. *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. This is a comprehensive volume that explores the issue of genocide from ancient times to the present. An in-depth analysis of the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust by the Nazis, the Communist Terror under Stalin's dictatorship, and the Cambodian and Rwandan genocides is provided.

Kift, R. "Comedy in the Holocaust: The Theresienstadt Cabaret." *New Theatre Quarterly*. 1996, Vol. 48, No. 12, 299-308. The author analyzes the case of the concentration camp at Theresienstadt (Czech Republic), a ghetto used by the Nazis to deceive the world about the actual tragic fate of the Jews. This article also addresses the theme of comedy as a psychological coping strategy.

Lang, B. *Holocaust Representation: Art within the Limits of History and Ethics*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. This book focuses on the delicate relation between ethics and art within the framework of contemporary discussions of the events of the Holocaust.

Lang, J. "The History of Love, the Contemporary Reader, and the Transmission of Holocaust Memory." *Journal of Modern Literature*. 2009, Vol. 33, No. 1, 43-56. The author examines the presence of the Holocaust in Nicole Krauss's *The History of Love* and argues the existence of strategies unique to the novelist's voice as a third-generation Holocaust writer.

Langer, L. *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995. This book approaches the theme of the Holocaust from a disquieting, but hopeful perspective on the basis that the testimony of witnesses—expressed in journals, diaries, memoirs, etc.—can help us think about one of the most devastating episodes throughout history.

Langer, L. *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1991. This in-depth study of the Holocaust, which draws on the Fortunoff Video Archives for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University, approaches the Shoah through the oral testimonies of survivors.

Lipstadt, D. E. *Holocaust: An American Understanding*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016. This volume explores the events of the Holocaust within the framework of the American society. More specifically, it deals with many American people's attempt to make sense of the Nazi horror, and how they resorted to the Holocaust as a way to interpret their own history.

Lipstadt, D. E. *Denying the Holocaust. The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*. New York: The Free Press, 1993. The author of this book shows that, in spite of the thousands of Holocaust survivors and the countless evidence in document form, there are many people, including historians, who deny the existence of the Holocaust. According to these, a tragic event like the Holocaust should be explained as a hoax perpetrated by a Zionist conspiracy not very different to the one presented in *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1903).

Lundblad-Janjić, J. L. 2016. "Writer or Witness: Problems of Varlam Shalamov's Late Prose and Dramaturgy." PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley. http://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/etd/ucb/text/LundbladJanjix107_berkeley_0028E_16803.pdf [5 January 2019]. This dissertation revolves around the Kolyma survivor's experience as a writer and as a witness, and the problems that arise as a consequence of the interrelation between both.

Marrus, M. R. "The Vatican and the Custody of Jewish Child Survivors after the Holocaust." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*. 2007, Vol. 21, No. 3, 378-403. This essay, which draws on unexamined Jewish sources so far, addresses the interaction between Jewish leaders and the Vatican as regards the post-Holocaust custody of Jewish children who were rescued by Catholic families or institutions immediately after the end of the Holocaust.

Mesnard, P. *Primo Levi. Le passage d'un témoin*. Paris: Fayard, 2011. This biography about a major survivor-witness of the Holocaust, originally written in French and not translated into English, covers the key aspects of Levi's life until his suicide in 1987. As the title indicates, this biographer approaches Levi's post-Holocaust life as an extraordinary to bear witness.

Miller, A. G., Buddie, A. M. & Kretschmar, J. "Explaining the Holocaust: Does Social Psychology Exonerate the Perpetrators?" Leonard S. Newman & Ralph Erber (eds.), *Understanding Genocide: the Social Psychology of the Holocaust*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 301-324. As the title of this book chapter indicates, the authors' purpose is to look at the fact that social-psychological explanations of the Holocaust tend to exonerate perpetrators, with an emphasis on the impact that such social-psychological explanations may have on those people who read them.

Newman, L. S. & Erber, R. (eds.). *Understanding Genocide: the Social Psychology of the Holocaust*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. This volume gathers a number of essays by prominent social psychologists who approach the Holocaust from the point of view of the victims and of the perpetrators. One of the issues addressed is why some individuals help members of 'targeted groups' while others simply observe their victimization.

Ní Dhúill, C. "Refusing the Child: Weininger, Edelman, Kertész." *Poetics Today*. 2016, Vol. 37, No. 3, 369-385. The author looks at three different ways to refuse a child: first, the idealist antinatalism of Otto Weininger's 1903 *Sex and Character*; second, the impossibility of fatherhood through the Auschwitz-provoked in Imre Kertész's *Kaddish for a Child Not Born* (1990); and third, the refusal of reproductive futurism in Lee Edelman's 2004 *No Future*.

Ornstein, A. "Artistic Creativity and the Healing Process." *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*. 2006, Vol. 26, No. 3, 386-406. This essay explores the healing potential of the art created in Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War.

Ozick, C. "Notes toward a Meditation on 'Forgiveness.'" *The Sunflower*. Simon Wiesenthal (ed.), New York: Schocken Books, 1976, 184-190. In her reflection about the issue of forgiveness, the author writes about the sources of pity, the connection between moral tenderness and moral responsibility, and vengeance and forgiveness.

Pearce, J. *Solzhenitsyn. A Soul in Exile*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011, rev. and updt. ed. This new biography, which includes some personal interviews with Solzhenitsyn and exclusive material, was written with the close collaboration of the Gulag survivor, his wife Natalya and their son Yermolai Solzhenitsyn.

Pipes, R. *Communism. A History*. New York: The Modern Library, 2001. In this volume the author goes through the Soviet Union's evolution from the October 1917 revolution to Stalin's Great Terror and World War II, and the reception of communism outside the USSR, including the Third World.

Pozorski, A. "Akedah, the Holocaust, and the Limits of the Law in Roth's 'Eli, the Fanatic.'" *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*. 2014, Vol. 6, No. 2: <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2405> [24 January 2019]. One of the major themes of this essay is, on the one hand, the discussion of the limits of the law in the face of vulnerable children and, on the other, within the context of the history of the Holocaust.

Propst, L. "'Making the Story?' Forms of Reconciliation in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* and Nathan Englander's *Ministry of Special Cases*." *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.* 2011, Vol. 36, No. 1, 37-60. DOI: [10.1353/mel.2011.0003](https://doi.org/10.1353/mel.2011.0003). This essay, a comparative study between two novels by two third-generation Jewish American novelists, explores different ways of connecting people who have been divided by an atrocious event. Respectively, the Holocaust and the *desaparecidos* during Videla's military dictatorship.

Radnóti, S. "Polyphony in Kertész's *Kaddish for an Unborn Child* (*Kaddis a Meg Nem Született Gyermerkért*)." *Comparative Central European Holocaust Studies*. Louise O. Vasvári et al., (eds.), Purdue University Press, 2009, 122-132. The author of this book chapter argues that *Kaddish*, a novel about the impossibility of fatherhood in a post-Holocaust world, is a musical text—rather than a narrated story—and, as such, is presented through a series of musical motifs.

Richardson, A. "In Search Of *The Final Solution*." *European Journal of English Studies*. 2010, Vol. 14, No. 2, 159-171. DOI: [10.1080/13825577.2010.481464](https://doi.org/10.1080/13825577.2010.481464). This essay analyses the relationship between the detective story as a genre and the Holocaust narrative in Michael Chabon's 2004 novella.

Saal, I. "Regarding the Pain of Self and Other: Trauma Transfer and Narrative Framing in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*". *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies*. 2011, Vol. 57, No. 3, 451–476. Since coping with trauma entails, in the author's view, not only the repair of physical damage but also the reconstruction of shattered narrative structures, the reconstruction of language is essential for the purpose of giving testimony to pain and suffering, on the one hand, and for healing of the world, on the other.

Safer, E. "Illuminating the Ineffable: Jonathan Safran Foer's Novels." *Studies in American Jewish Literature*. 2006, Vol. 25, 112–132. This essay focuses on the role of memory in *Everything Is Illuminated* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by the third-generation writer Jonathan Safran Foer.

Sánchez Canales, G. "Holocaust Imagery in Michael Chabon's *The Final Solution*." *Americana: E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary*. 2013, Vol. 9, No. 1. <http://americanajournal.hu/vol9no1/sanchez-canales> [24 July 2018]. This essay attempts to give an insight of the background of Chabon's *The Final Solution* by analyzing a number of Holocaust images that function as a reminder of the Nazi horror through the story. These images are: trains, electrified fence/barbed wire, heat and burning, and numbers in German uttered by the parrot.

Sánchez Canales, G. "'In a Different World, We Could Have Been Real Friends': Two Opposite Approaches to the Problem of Holocaust in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*." *The American Uses of History: Essays on Public Memory*. Tomasz Basiuk, Sylwia Kuźma-Markowska & Krystyna Mazur (eds.), Frankfurt am Main: Peter Verlag, 2011a, 255–266. This essay mainly focuses on the use of humor and comedy in Foer's 2002 novel, which is partly epitomized by Alex's efforts to reconcile the so-called 'perpetrators' and the victims. As explained at the end of the paper, this effort turns out to be fruitless in the overcoming of the Holocaust trauma.

Sánchez Canales, G. "'Prisoners Gradually Came to Buddhist Positions': The Presence of PTSD Symptoms in Rosa in Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl*." *Studies in American Jewish Literature*. 2011b, Vol. 30, 29–39. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/450989/pdf> (21 August 2018). The author explores three symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl*: the reexperiencing of a traumatic event through images, flashbacks and nightmares; the use of violence as an 'escape valve' to lessen feelings of discomfort; and impairment at social, occupational and personal levels resulting in social withdrawal.

Scolnicov, H. "Ashes to Ashes: Pinter's Holocaust Play." *Cycnos*. 2001, Vol. 18, No. 1, 15–24. This paper, which focuses on Rebecca's remembrance of these atrocities of the Holocaust, argues that such memories should be regarded as acquired, rather than as experienced.

Sicher, E. *The Holocaust Novel*. New York: Routledge, 2005. This seminal work about the Holocaust novel as a genre is an in-depth study of the Holocaust and post-Holocaust novel in which Elie Wiesel's *Night*, Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, among others, are analyzed.

Summers-Bremner, E. "Imre Kertész's *Kaddish for a Child Not Born*." *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature*. Louise O. Vasvári and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (eds.), Purdue University Press, 2005, 220–231. In this book chapter the author argues that *Kaddish* is the novelist's attempt to show the impossibility of fatherhood in a post-Holocaust world.

Thomson, I. *Primo Levi: A Life*. New York: Picador, 2002. This is a biography of the well-known Italian chemist, Auschwitz survivor and writer that explores his life, Auschwitz-based works, his fiction, poetry and essays.

Toker, L. *Gulag Literature and the Literature of Nazi Camps: An Inter-Contextual Reading*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019. This book-length study of Gulag and Nazi-camp literature explores the works of Gulag survivors such as Varlam Shalamov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, among others, and those of Nazi camps survivors such as the former Auschwitz prisoners Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel, and the ex-Buchenwald prisoner Jorge Semprún.

Toker, L. "The Sample Convention, or, When Fictionalized Narratives Can Double as Historical Testimony." *Narration as Argument*. Paula Olmos (ed.), Heidelberg: Springer, 2017a, 123–140. This book chapter, which examines the cases when fictionalized narratives can double as historical evidence to mass violence, places an emphasis on the Gulag survivor Varlam Shalamov.

Toker, L. "Varlam Shalamov's Sketches of the Criminal World." *Born to Be Criminal: The Discourse on Criminality and the Practice of Punishment in Late Imperial Russia and Early Soviet Union. Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Riccardo Nicolosi & Anne Hartmann (eds.), Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017b, 233–245. This book chapter analyzes the figures of political prisoners and criminal convicts in Shalamov's Gulag-based stories.

Toker, L. *Return from the Archipelago. Narratives of Gulag Prisoners*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000. This seminal full-length study about Gulag fiction includes chapters such as "Soviet Labor Camps: A Brief History" and "Gulag Memoirs as a Genre." A significant part of the volume is devoted to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Varlam Shalamov, two major figures in Gulag writing.

"What Is Genocide?" *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* <https://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/defining-genocide> [22 May 2018]. This is a good introduction to the theme of genocide which caters to the non-specialist reader interested in this issue.

b. Other Secondary Sources

Beliaev, N. Z.; Efimov, B. E. & Efimov, M. B. (eds.). *Mikhail Kol'tsov, kakim on by (Михаи́л Кольцо́в каким он был)*. 2nd edition. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1989. This is a book-length study about Mikhail Kolt'sov, a Soviet journalist and Stalin's key figure during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

Canetti, E. *Crowds and Power*. Trans. Carol Stewart. New York: The Seabury Press, 1978 [1962] (*Masse und Macht*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1980 [1960]). This book, which focuses on the reasons why crowds obey their rulers, devotes plenty of space to analyzing the rise of Nazism from a psychological perspective.

Connolly, J. "Nabokov's (Re)visions of Dostoevsky." *Nabokov and His Fiction: New Perspectives*. Julian Connolly (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 141–157. The author's thesis is that the young Vladimir Nabokov found Dostoevsky's work inspiring to the extent of influencing his own creative writing. More specifically, he argues that Dostoevsky's fiction offered Nabokov provocative models of human imagination.

Davis, P. *Bernard Malamud: A Writer's Life*. Oxford University Press, 2007. This account of one of the finest Jewish American novelists and storytellers includes exclusive interviews with Malamud's family, friends and colleagues, as well as extracts of his letters, journals and manuscripts.

De Felice, R. *The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History*. 3rd ed., Trans. Robert L. Miller. New York: Enigma Books, 2015. (*Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*. Torino: Einaudi, 1961). This volume gives a detailed account of Fascist anti-Semitism and the persecution of the Jews in Mussolini's Italy between World War I and World War II.

de Man, P. "The Epistemology of Metaphor." *Aesthetic Ideology*. Andrzej Warminski (ed.), Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996 [1978], 34-50. This essay focuses on the idea that the relationship—and the distinction—between literature and philosophy cannot be made on the basis of a distinction between aesthetic and epistemological categories.

Derrida, J. *The Gift of Death*. Trans. David Willis. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995 (*Donner la mort*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1999). This book examines the limits of accepting death whether by sacrifice, murder or suicide.

Derrida, J. & Moore, F.C.T. "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy." *New Literary History*. 1974, Vol. 6, No. 1, 5-74. This long essay revolves around the Derridean idea that the issue of metaphor is at the core of those issues that deal with the relations of language, thought, and reality.

Eckardt, A. R. "Divine Incongruity: Comedy and Tragedy in a post-Holocaust World." *Theology Today*. 1992, Vol. 48, No. 4, 399-412. <http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/jan1992/v48-4-article2.htm> [8 October 2017]. The author of this article argues that forgiveness, never a purely human achievement, is what humor actually comes down to.

Ermilov, V. F. M. *Dostoevsky* (Ф. М. Достоевский). Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1956. In this full-length study about the author of *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment*, the Soviet literary critic makes bitter attacks against the Russian novelist's fiction which he terms as "failed" realism.

Escohotado, A. *Los enemigos del comercio. Una historia moral de la propiedad. De Lenin a nuestros días*. Barcelona: Espasa Libros, 2016, Vol. 3. This third volume is a full-length study of the origins of communism—and its presence in the 21st century—from an economic, historical, political and social viewpoint.

Farrell, G. (ed.). *Isaac Bashevis Singer: Conversations*. Jackson & London: University Press of Mississippi, 1992. This volume includes key interviews with one of the most significant writers in Yiddish or Polish extract and recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1978.

Frye, N. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990 [1957]. In this classic book the Canadian theorist approaches the theory, scope, and techniques of literary criticism. This study has greatly influenced deconstructivist critics, among others.

Fynsk, Ch. *Infant Figures: The Death of the 'Infans' and Other Scenes of Origin*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000. By "the death of the infans," the author of this volume means that a

death haunts the limits of representation. Or put it differently, he supposes an imaginary that interrupts the image and a real that escapes represented reality.

Gillen, F. "History as a Single Act: Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*." *Cycnos*. 1997, Vol. 14, No. 1, 91-97. <http://revel.unice.fr/cycnos/?id=1230> [26 January 2019]. A key theme of the author's analysis of post-Holocaust-set *Ashes to Ashes* is that there is an essential conflict, which echoes and reverberates in different forms throughout time: dominance vs. submission, victims vs. victimizers, and the discovery through imagination and empathy of the human being's ability not to be victimized.

Gratz, D. "Elitocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Its Impact on the Contemporary Understanding of the Crime of Genocide." *Nationalities Papers*. 2011, Vol. 39, No. 3, 409-424. This essay is a detailed analysis of the concept of elitocide—the systematic extermination of leading figures of a group or a society—and its impact on the crime of genocide. The author focuses on the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995).

Hartman, G. "Memory.com: Telesuffering and Testimony in the Dot Com Era." *Raritan—A Quarterly Review*. 2000, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1-18. This essay examines the implications of the television enterprise and its impact on society's memory and the communicative environment.

Houghton Mifflin Publishing. "An Interview with Jonathan Safran Foer about *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*" and "A Conversation with Jonathan Safran Foer about *Everything Is Illuminated*" (28 March 2006). http://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm?author_number=1120 [1 May 2018]. This webpage includes two interviews with the third-generation Jewish-American writer Jonathan Safran Foer who talks about his first two novels.

Jiménez Losantos, F. *Memoria del comunismo: De Lenin a Podemos*. Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2018. This book explores the nature of communism, its philosophical and political roots, and the movement's most serious mistakes conducive to the murder of around 100 million people in one century.

Kauvar, E. M. "An Interview with Cynthia Ozick." *Contemporary Literature*. 1993, Vol. 34, No. 3, 359-394. In this long, exhaustive interview with Cynthia Ozick, the Jewish-American novelist addresses a number of key aspects of her fiction, including the controversy that arose after the publication of *The Shawl*.

Lemkin, R. *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Analysis, Proposals for Redress*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944. This book, based on the author's address to the 1933 "Fifth International Conference for the Unification of Penal Law" and published one decade later, advocates that attacks on racial, religious and ethnic groups should be considered international crimes. This work introduces the term "genocide."

Longenbach, J. *The Resistance to Poetry*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. The author of this book argues that not only is resistance to poetry what creates the wonder of it but also that self-resistance is what provokes pleasure in the reader.

Marder, E. "Introduction: Open Questions, Opaque Transmissions." *Paragraph*. 2017, Vol. 40, No. 3, 257-258. DOI:[10.3366/para.2017.0233](https://doi.org/10.3366/para.2017.0233) [7 February 2019]. The author briefly addresses her reflection about the contemporary tendency to explore how literature and psychoanalysis share a concern that one cannot actually master.

Nabokov, V. Nikolai Gogol. New York: New Directions, 1961 [1944]. This is a peculiar intellectual biography of the author of *Dead Souls*, which focuses on the so-called “nose-consciousness” and the “sense of the physical,” among others, two aspects that pervade the Russian literary master’s fiction.

Payne, S. G. *En defensa de España. Desmontando mitos y leyendas negras.* Barcelona: Espasa Libros, 2017. In this book, originally written in Spanish, the author debunks a number of legends, myths and stereotypes created throughout the History of Spain.

Pinsker, S. *The Schlemiel as Metaphor: Studies in Yiddish and American Jewish Fiction.* Southern Illinois University Press, 1991 (revised and enlarged ed.). This classic book-length study analyzes the figure of the *schemiel*—Jewish fool—in the fiction of writers such as Isaac Bashevis Singer, Saul Bellow and Bernard Malamud, among others.

Prager, D. & Telushkin, J. *Why the Jews? The Reason for Antisemitism, the Most Accurate Predictor of Human Evil.* New York, London, Toronto, Sydney & New Delhi: Touchstone, 2016 (revised ed.). This seminal work examines the issue of antisemitism from a historical perspective, from the ancient world to the Holocaust, without obviating the current crisis in the Middle East.

Revel, J-F. *The Flight from Truth: The Reign of Deceit in the Age of Information.* Trans. Curtis Cate. New York: Random House, 1991 (*La Connaissance inutile.* Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset & Fasquelle, 1988). Written more than three decades ago, the author explores the dissemination of fake information—nowadays known as “post-truth”—as a pernicious weapon used by all kinds of governments, especially of a dictatorial nature, to have citizens under control.

Robbins, J. *Altered Reading Levinas and Literature.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999. Drawing on thinkers such as Derrida, Blanchot, and Bataille, this book examines how literature relates to the ethical philosophy of the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas.

Rose, L. *The Massacre of the Innocents: Infanticide in Britain 1800-1939.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986. The author, who focuses on the Victorian age, approaches the theme of infanticide. He explains that women at that time, struggling against not only economic disabilities but also against the social stigma of having an illegitimate child, often resorted to infanticide as the only way out.

Roth, P. *Shop Talk: A Writer and His Colleagues and Their Work.* New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001. This volume gathers a number of interviews conducted by the Jewish-American writer. Among others, he discusses the literary works of fellow writers such as Primo Levi, Aharon Appelfeld and Milan Kundera.

Santayana, J./G. *The Life of Reason, Introduction and Reason in Common Sense.* Marianne S. Wokeck & Martin A. Coleman (eds.), Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: The MIT Press, 2011. This first volume of the American philosopher and essayist of Spanish extract analyzes the key role that instinct and imagination have played when the human being has moved from chaotic experience to rationality.

Saraskina, L. *Besy: Roman-Preduprezhdenie (Бесы: роман-предупреждение).* Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990. This full-length study of Dostoevski's life and works, originally

written in Russian and not translated into English, includes valuable material such as the Russian literary master's letters.

Schreier, B. *The Impossible Jew: Identity and the Reconstruction of Jewish American Literary History*. New York University Press, 2015. The author addresses the issue of Jewish identity through a detailed analysis of the works by Abraham Cahan, Philip Roth and Jonathan Safran Foer.

Sheldon, R. *The Child to Come: Life after the Human Catastrophe*. University of Minnesota Press, 2016. Through an analysis of the catastrophe discourse from the 1960s to the present time, the author examines the figure of the imperiled child in an endangered Planet Earth. Among others, the fiction of Margaret Atwood, Cormac McCarthy and Joanna Russ is examined.

Tertsch, H. *La venganza de la Historia*. Madrid: El País Aguilar, 1993. This book, originally written in Spanish and not translated into English, addresses the reasons that account for the dismemberment of countries like the former Yugoslavia, USSR and Czechoslovakia, among others, prior to the fall of totalitarian regimes like Nazism and communism. "The Big Scam" – "La gran estafa" – "Intellectuals and Hell" – "Los intelectuales y el infierno" – and "Bad Neighbors" – "Malos vecinos" – which focus on the devastating influence of totalitarian systems are especially recommended.

Toker, L. *Towards the Ethics of Form in Fiction: Narratives of Cultural Remission*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2010. One of the major aims of this book is to show that cultural remissions can not only provide a break from the determinacies of our daily existence but also to return us to that existence with some alteration of our beliefs, perceptions, and values.

Toker, L. "A Brief History of Ekwilism." *Critical Interfaces: Contributions in Philosophy, Literature and Culture in Honour of Herbert Grabes*. Gordon Collier, Klaus Schwank and Franz Wieselhuber (eds.), Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2001, 333–341. This book chapter examines the concept "Ekwilism"—a sinister ideology fostered by a fictitious totalitarian government in Vladimir Nabokov's 1947 *Bend Sinister*.

Volkman, E. *A Legacy of Hate. Anti-Semitism in America*. New York, Toronto & Sydney: Franklin Watts, 1982. This book-length analysis of anti-Semitism in America is an in-depth study of this issue from a historical perspective, which ranges from the Colonial times to the 1970s.

Weizmann, C. *Trial and Error. The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1949. This autobiography, written by the first President of the State of Israel and prestigious biochemist, is a first-hand document that covers key historical aspects ranging from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century such as the Zionist movement, World Wars I and II, the Balfour Declaration and the creation of the State of Israel, among others.

Winick, M. (ed.). *Hunger Disease*. Trans. Martha Osnos. New York: Wiley, 1979. This is a report by a group of doctors on themselves and on people dying of starvation in the Warsaw ghetto during the early 1940s.

Wisse, R. R. *The Schlemiel as Modern*. University of Chicago Press, 1971. In this book the figure of the *schemiel*—Jewish fool—is studied in the fiction of writers such as Isaac Bashevis Singer, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth, among others.

Yerushalmi, Y. H. *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1982. This book, which is a meditation about the rift existing between Jewish memory and Jewish historiography, addresses key periods such as the Middle Ages, the expulsion of the Sephardic Jews, and Jewish dilemmas in the modern times.

Zakrzewski, P. *Lost Tribe: Jewish Fiction from the Edge*. New York: Perennial, 2003. This volume, preceded by an introduction about third-generation Jewish-American writers, collects short stories by Nathan Englander, Jonathan Safran Foer, Rachel Kadish. Michael Lowenthal and Judy Budnitz, among others.

Contributors

Cheryl Chaffin has published personal and scholarly essays, poems, and book reviews. Cheryl has an MFA in Writing and a Ph.D. in Humanities. She is a professor of English composition, literature, and creative writing at Cabrillo College in California. In 2014 she travelled to Poland on fellowship with Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellows. *After Poland: A Memoir Because of Primo Levi* was published in 2018 with Common Ground New Directions for the Humanities. She is currently composing a second book, *The Bright Dream: A Writer's Return to Italy*.

Aimee Pozorski holds a Ph.D. in English from Emory University (2003) where she also earned a certificate in psychoanalytic studies. She has authored *Roth and Trauma: The Problem of History in the Later Works* (Continuum), *Falling After 9/11: Crisis in American Art and Literature* (Bloomsbury), and *AIDS-Trauma and Politics* (Lexington). She has edited or co edited numerous volumes on the topics of Philip Roth, American Modernism, and HIV/AIDS representation. Her areas of expertise include contemporary American literature, trans-Atlantic modernism, theories of trauma and ethics, and narrative medicine. She co-edits, along with Maren Scheurer, the peer-reviewed journal, *Philip Roth Studies*. She is Professor of English at Central Connecticut State University, where she also directs the English graduate program and co directs American Studies.

Gustavo Sánchez Canales teaches English at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid where he was Vicedean for Research and Innovation (2014-2016). He served as Vicedean for International Relations between 2011 and 2013. His research focuses on contemporary Jewish-American Literature. He has published book chapters, articles and essays on Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, Bernard Malamud, Cynthia Ozick, Chaim Potok, Rebecca Goldstein, Allegra Goodman and Michael Chabon, among others.

Leona Toker (English Department, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) is the author of *Nabokov: The Mystery of Literary Structures* (1989), *Eloquent Reticece: Withholding Information in Fictional Narrative* (1993), *Return from the Archipelago: Narratives of Gulag Survivors* (2000), *Towards the Ethics of Form in Fiction: Narratives of Cultural Remission* (2010), and *Gulag Literature and the Literature of Nazi Camps: An Intercontextual Reading* (2019). She has put together the collection *Commitment in Reflection: Essays in Literature and Moral Philosophy* (1994) and has co-edited *Rereading Texts / Rethinking Critical Presuppositions: Essays in Honour of H.M. Daleski* (1996) and *Knowledge and Pain* (2012). Since 2003 she is Editor of *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*.

